

Tridentine Community News

August 23, 2009

Assumption Church Restoration to Proceed

More than a few readers of this column have been concerned about the future of Windsor's Our Lady of the Assumption Church. Not because of parish vitality – Assumption is a reasonably large parish, serving a diverse spectrum of Catholics – but because of the condition of the building.

A few years ago, it was noticed that the mortar holding the bricks together was degenerating into powder. The exterior walls are therefore in danger of falling apart. Inside, apart from one location where plaster is falling from the ceiling, the church looks deceptively fine. There is little indication that the building is in such danger.

A study was conducted which concluded that the cause was, at least in part, water damage from leaks in the balustrade above. Continuous vibration from traffic on the Ambassador Bridge cannot be helping. Indeed, standing in the quiet church, one can feel fairly frequent mild shudders. The solution is essentially a complete rebuilding of the walls.



The damage is so extensive that architects pegged the cost of complete restoration at \$9.8 million (Canadian), a staggering amount of money. The parish cannot raise such funds entirely on its own, and certainly not quickly enough to save the church. All parties concerned realized that the church was in real danger of closing. It sits on prime real estate, thus there is a temptation to cut losses and sell. Furthermore, the recent merger of Assumption with nearby

Holy Name of Mary Parish – with Holy Name of Mary still maintained as a worship site – made some people question whether the parish was being prepped for a move to the other church.

Detroiters accustomed to having numerous historic churches around may be surprised to learn that Assumption is one of only two architecturally intact historic churches in Windsor, the other being St. Alphonsus, next to the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel exit. Unlike Detroit, in the post-Vatican II years, the core city of Windsor continued to be a relatively thriving residential area. Other historic churches were able to raise funds to “wreckovate” their interiors. That didn't happen as much in Detroit, as most of the historic parishes were losing parishioners in the 1960s and 70s, and thus too poor to consider such projects.

Assumption has an important place in Canadian Catholic history: Founded in 1728 as “The Mission of Our Lady of the Assumption

Among the Hurons of Detroit”, it is the oldest parish in Ontario, and has the oldest church building in Windsor, dating from 1845. Huron Church Road, the highway leading to and from the Ambassador Bridge, is named after Assumption. From 1859-1869, Assumption served as the Cathedral of the Diocese of London, during that period known as the Diocese of Sandwich (the historic name of that portion of Windsor). Assumption still serves as the location for major diocesan events in Windsor due to its size. Assumption now sits on the campus of its sibling Assumption University, and that school's offspring, the University of Windsor. It is Assumption's unique historic role that fueled hope that some way to save it might be found.

Worries were somewhat put to rest last Sunday, August 16. It was announced that the Diocese of London, Ontario will be keeping Assumption Church open. Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Daniels will be supervising the restoration project and will be speaking to the parish on September 13. The news is so significant to the region that it was the central cover story on the Tuesday, August 18 edition of the Windsor Star. The source of the funding has not yet been revealed, nor has it been stated whether the entire cost of the restoration has yet been obtained.

This is, of course, good news for the Tridentine Mass at Assumption, as the building is an ideal home for the classic liturgy.

St. Albertus Tridentine Mass Next Sunday

A reminder that the next quarterly Tridentine Mass at St. Albertus Church will be held next Sunday, August 30 at noon. The celebrant will be Fr. Louis Madey of Orchard Lake's Ss. Cyril & Methodius Seminary. These Masses are scheduled so as not to conflict with the monthly noon Tridentine Mass at St. Joseph Church, and therefore to provide you with occasional noontime Mass options.

Communion Curio

Those who attend the Extraordinary Form Mass in our churches are accustomed to seeing some of the finest vestments and ecclesiastical supplies available. Our chasubles, thuribles, candlesticks, altar cloths, processional crosses, and the like are true works of art.

Every once in while, we run across something quite unusual. When preparing for a recent Tridentine Nuptial Mass at Sweetest Heart of Mary, Fr. Borkowski retrieved a miniature ciborium. Originally used at Masses held in the convent chapel, this doll-sized cup can hold no more than twenty hosts. It's just so...cute!

