

Tridentine Community News

March 14, 2021 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Metro Detroit's Surreptitious Tridentine Masses in the 1970s and 80s

The modern era of the Traditional Mass arguably began in either 1989 or 1991, depending on what you consider the boundaries of the metro Detroit area. In 1989, the Flint Tridentine Community debuted at All Saints Church. In 1991, the Windsor Tridentine Mass Association, since renamed the St. Benedict Tridentine Community, debuted at the Assumption High School Chapel. However, neither of these can claim the title of being the first Traditional Mass sites in metro Detroit after Vatican II.

What ultimately became the Society of St. Pius X Chapel in Redford (since renamed St. Anne and relocated to Livonia) began as an offshoot of Holy Family Parish in Detroit. Parishioners there and their pastor at the time, Fr. Bonfilio Bottazo, were fiercely devoted to the Tridentine Mass. In 1971 “Fr. Bonfil” left Holy Family and became part of an independent effort to offer the Traditional Mass in homes and rented facilities, ultimately resulting in an invitation to the SSPX to establish their first chapel in the United States, at a former PIME Missionaries’ house in Armada, Michigan. Even after that split took place, Holy Family themselves offered nothing but an odd hybrid Extraordinary-Ordinary Form Mass, starting with Prayers at the Foot of the Altar from the Traditional Mass, leading into a Novus Ordo Latin Mass celebrated *ad orientem*. Every Mass at Holy Family was celebrated this way until the last Sicilian Benedictine priest administrator, Fr. John Stopponi, passed away in 2005. Fast forward to today, and the Tridentine Mass has reassumed a major role at Holy Family, with three Low Masses per week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 12:00 Noon, and High Masses on special occasions.



St. Mary of Redford Parish, currently experiencing a rebirth under the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Spirit, has made the Traditional Mass a central part of the parish’s new identity. But the Old Rite actually has quite a history there: St. Mary of Redford used to hold a Monday-Friday 6:00 AM Tridentine Low Mass celebrated by retired pastor Msgr. Edward Hickey up through the 1980s. This writer recalls waiting outside the church

in the freezing darkness waiting for the doors to open. This was before the wreckovation of the original High Altar; the old altar under its baldacchino memorably glistened under bright spotlights while the rest of the church remained dark for the early morning Mass. The Archdiocese was not going to harass Msgr. Hickey, for he had been pastor of the parish during its heyday as the largest parish in the Archdiocese. He also enjoyed a reputation as a man

of culture for using his family inheritance to support his parish and diocese and to establish the Cloister Art Gallery, filled with works he had purchased.

Fr. David Przedwiecki, OFMI, a Franciscan priest, had served as an Associate Pastor of St. Hyacinth Church in the early 1980s. Perhaps in part inspired by the Novus Ordo Latin Masses St. Hyacinth offered at the time, Fr. David began to celebrate the Tridentine Mass privately at St. Hyacinth’s High Altar. He went on to form the City of Mary Monastery in Mt. Morris, near Flint, but his community was never recognized by the Diocese of Lansing. The monastery closed prior to his death in 2016.



One of the Flint Tridentine Community’s first celebrants, Fr. Stanley “Rocky” Rokicki, was an Archdiocese of Detroit priest known for his love of the Traditional Mass. Rumor had it that he offered the TLM quietly at

his parish, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary West Side. The *Michigan Catholic* newspaper reported that when that parish closed in 1989, Fr. Rocky celebrated a Tridentine Mass as its closing Mass. Surprisingly, there was no controversy over his action.

In the years between the debut of St. Josaphat’s Tridentine Mass, the only one in the Archdiocese of Detroit allowed under the *Ecclésia Dei* indult from 2004 until *Summórum Pontíficum* allowed any priest to celebrate the Mass without his bishop’s permission in 2007, other priests in town quietly offered private Masses, in part to gain experience before making their public debut at St. Josaphat. St. Josaphat always encouraged priests, young and not so young, to learn the TLM. Many of these practice Masses were held under strict secrecy, for fear that chancery officials would discipline the priests who dared to learn the Traditional Mass on their own. It turned out that the encouragement and development of a sizable set of local priests capable of celebrating the Tridentine Mass directly led to Detroit having the largest number of Traditional Mass sites of any metro area in North America, with approximately 39 sites currently operating and more on the way.

It’s easy to take for granted the supportive and positive environment towards the Traditional Mass we find in metro Detroit nowadays, but let us never forget that our current successes are built on the backs of pioneers who often had to hide their love for the immemorial Liturgy.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 03/16 6:00 PM: High Mass at *Our Lady of Good Counsel, Plymouth* (Tuesday in the Fourth Week in Lent) – Celebrant: Fr. Athanasius Fornwalt, FHS