

Tridentine Community News

July 17, 2022 – Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Rood Screens

What we think of as a traditional Roman Rite church layout – sanctuary, Communion rail, nave, cruciform design – was actually initially codified after the Council of Trent by St. Charles Borromeo in a document published in 1577 entitled, *Instrucciónes Fábrica et Supelléctilis Ecclesiástica*. Prior to that time, it was more common to find the sanctuary and nave separated by a rood screen, the western equivalent to the iconostasis found in Eastern Rite churches. Borromeo did not dictate or even mention the removal of rood screens, but he did specify that the High Altar be visible to all, which could explain the subsequent falling into disuse of the rood screen.

The rood screen serves a similar purpose as the Communion Rail: a form of demarcation between the sacred events taking place in the sanctuary and the profane world represented by the nave, where the congregation sits. Rood screens take various forms. Still fairly commonly seen in Catholic churches in England, two examples are below.



The photo above of the Shrine of St. Augustine in Ramsgate, England is an example of the design style of architect Augustus Pugin. This rood screen is a wooden structure in essence expanding upward from the usual Communion Rail location. Note the use of kneelers in this church for distribution of Holy Communion; distribution through the rood screen is not particularly practical.



Another example at left comes from St. James Spanish Place in London, at which a metal rood screen encloses a Side Altar area. Note the ornate kneeler pads at the rail.

Did you know that we have a church here in the Archdiocese of Detroit which has a feature quite similar to a rood screen? St. Hedwig Church at Junction and Michigan on the west side of Detroit has four Side Altars. The two at the extreme sides of the church are enclosed in black metallic fencing which can be sealed off. It's not entirely clear why the church was built this way, but it may be because the parish was originally staffed by Conventual Franciscans who may have wanted to be able to celebrate private Masses more...privately.



Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 07/19 6:00 PM: High Mass at *Our Lady of Good Counsel, Plymouth* (St. Vincent de Paul, Confessor) – Celebrant: Fr. Clint McDonell