

# Tridentine Community News

February 12, 2023 – Sexagésima Sunday

## *Detroit's Palestrina Institute*

To understand our present and future, we must have some understanding of our past. The question regularly comes up, how did metro Detroit become such a hot spot for the Latin Mass? One reason is that in the years following Vatican II, before the indults that reauthorized public celebration of the Tridentine Mass, there was a thriving Novus Ordo Latin Mass scene in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Three parishes in particular stood out for offering the Latin Mass in that time period:

Old St. Mary's did and still does offer a Novus Ordo Latin Mass on most Sundays. Fr. Eduard Perrone was the music director there before entering seminary.

St. Hyacinth Church during the pastorate of Fr. Francis Skalski offered a Novus Ordo Latin Mass one Sunday per month.

Holy Family Church offered an odd hybrid Tridentine-Novus Ordo Latin Mass *ad orientem*. Mass began with the Tridentine Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, then morphed into a Novus Ordo Latin Mass once the priest ascended the altar.



St. Joseph Church offered the most Tridentine-y Novus Ordo Latin Mass of all, celebrated *ad orientem* with a full crew of altar servers and an ambitious music program led by the late Thomas M. Kuras. Tom offered a comprehensive repertoire encompassing Gregorian Chant, Ambrosian Chant, and sacred polyphony, with an Aspérge at the beginning of Mass and Benediction

after Mass every Sunday. This writer served at the altar there during the heady years of the 1980s and 90s when the holy and tradition-friendly Fr. Thomas Bresnahan was pastor.

Tom was able to offer such an unusual choral program in large part because of the formation he received as one of the last students of the Palestrina Institute, a unique formation program for church musicians that the Archdiocese of Detroit operated from 1941 – 1971. It was a diploma-granting, five-year course of study. Tom's mentor there was Lode Van Dessel, a composer and then-organist at St. Aloysius Church. (Information taken from biography of Thomas Kuras at:

[http://www.musimem.com/kuras\\_eng.htm](http://www.musimem.com/kuras_eng.htm))

Prayer Pilgrimages bus tour director and current St. Joseph Shrine music director Michael Semaan brought to our attention a history of the Palestrina Institute by former student Francis Brancaleone published in the Spring, 2018 edition of *Sacred Music*, the magazine of the Church Music Association of America:

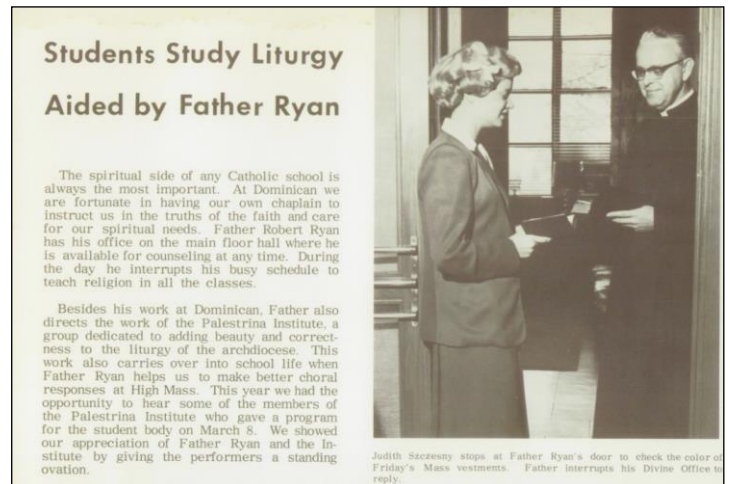
<https://media.musicasacra.com/publications/sacredmusic/pdf/sm145-1.pdf>

The article explains that Archbishop Edward Mooney in 1938 endorsed the formation of the Palestrina Institute as an outgrowth

of a Liturgical Music Summer School that had been held at Detroit's Academy of the Sacred Heart, interestingly the same school that later relocated to Bloomfield Hills and whose chapel has hosted the Oakland County Latin Mass Association.

The Institute's mission was "to provide for the instruction of Choirmasters, Organists, and Singers in the understanding, appreciation, and execution of the approved music of the Church."

In a quote obtained from longtime Archdiocese of Detroit archivist Roman Godzak, "The time is rapidly approaching, when the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit will insist that all liturgical functions in her places of worship be conducted according to the regulations set down by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Apostolic See."



From the article: "The curriculum was thorough and well-conceived with instruction in Gregorian chant, chant notation, singing, breathing (an important element in the proper rendition of chant), chironomy (chant conducting), and accompaniment. Instruction in the liturgy, church law, music theory, ear training, history, choir technique, vocal pedagogy with a specialty in boy choirs, organ registration, modulation, improvisation, diocesan legislation, bibliography, how to deal with pastors and choirs, and the deportment of a church musician." The full curriculum is documented in great detail in the article. [Photo of Palestrina Institute Assistant Director Fr. Robert Ryan from the 1962 Dominican High School Yearbook]

Though one might think that the glory days of the Palestrina Institute are in the past, as recently as 2018, there was a short-lived effort to bring back the Institute, this time with a primary focus on instruction on playing the pipe organ. However, the two individuals who were pushing for its resuscitation ended up leaving the employ of the Archdiocese of Detroit, and the idea has been shelved for the time being. Hopefully diocesan leadership will see the value of training the next generation of music directors and keeping Detroit a center for traditional liturgy.

## *Tridentine Masses This Coming Week*

Sun. 02/19 10:00 AM: High Mass at *Old St. Mary's* (Quinquagésima Sunday) – Celebrant: Fr. Cy Whitaker, SJ

Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail [info@windsorlatinmass.org](mailto:info@windsorlatinmass.org). Previous columns are available at [www.windsorlatinmass.org](http://www.windsorlatinmass.org).