

Tridentine Community News

January 14, 2024 – Second Sunday After Epiphany

Truth Imitating Fiction:

*Papa Stronsay and Martin Sheen's **The Catholics***

For years there has been chatter on Latin Mass forums about an obscure 1973 movie, *The Catholics*, that starred a young Martin Sheen, Trevor Howard, and Michael Gambon. That movie has quietly been posted to YouTube for all to view at no charge, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q3m4ENNeOE>

The plot concerns a young priest (Sheen), dispatched by a Vatican official to get the monks of a monastery located on a remote island off Ireland to give up their ministry of offering the Tridentine Mass. Pilgrims from around the world had been visiting them for the now-rare privilege of hearing the Traditional Mass celebrated. There are wry attempts at humor, with references to “Vatican IV” having decreed the TLM to be obsolete, along with a sad reference that the Shrine at Lourdes had been shut down. Rome had decreed that the Mass was no longer the representation of the Sacrifice of Calvary; the Mass was to be thought of as merely symbolic. There was no Real Presence. Worldwide the Faith was in decline.

Considering how long ago the film was written and produced, it seems almost prescient in predicting the liturgical arguments that developed in the 1970s and beyond. Perhaps most notable about the film is its remarkable resemblance to the story of the Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer, a.k.a. the Transalpine Redemptorists, the similar group of monks founded fifteen years later, in 1988, who established themselves as a bastion of the Traditional Mass on the remote island of Papa Stronsay, off Scotland.



Some stills from the movie and some photos of Papa Stronsay will make the point. First we see the movie's monastery, and then the real Papa Stronsay monastery. Both sport an ancient chapel and modern guest houses. Both are reached from the mainland only by a monastery boat.

Next we see a similar number of monks, first from the movie, and second in real life. While the habits are different, both groups of monks lead contemplative lives but also travel to offer the Tridentine Mass to the faithful.



The movie ends on a sad note, with the monks having an uncertain future. The true story of the Transalpine Redemptorists actually ends on a happy note, however. After initially being affiliated with the SSPX, they were regularized with Rome in 2012 and now have daughter houses in the dioceses of Christchurch, New Zealand and Great Falls-Billings, Montana. Read more about them at: <https://www.papastronsay.com/>

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 01/16 6:00 PM: High Mass at *St. John Resort Chapel, Plymouth* (St. Marcellus I, Pope & Martyr) – Celebrant: Fr. Clint McDonell

Sun. 01/21 10:00 AM: High Mass at *Old St. Mary's* (Third Sunday After Epiphany) – Celebrant: Fr. Cy Whitaker, SJ