

Tridentine Community News

March 3, 2024 - Third Sunday in Lent

The Impressive Track Record of the Las Vegas Tridentine Mass Community

The Internet is full of commentators, writers, and people who have a lot to say in general about the state of the Church and its many liturgical imperfections. But how are things ever to improve? Commenting without taking action doesn't accomplish very much, other than to prove that misery loves company. No, the way things get better is when volunteers step forward to perform the often thankless work that is required to create and sustain quality liturgy. Today we present a perfect example of how things can go when someone steps forward to take on this challenge.



This column has previously made mention of the hard work of Andrea Leal, a mother of six who somehow finds the time to serve as choir director and principal organizer of the Las Vegas Tridentine Mass. It wasn't that long ago...in March, 2011...that the Las Vegas chapter of the Catholic business leaders club, Legatus, invited this writer to speak to their

members with advice on how to get a weekly Sunday TLM started there. At that time there was a regular Novus Ordo Latin Mass at St. Bridget Church, a monthly First Friday evening Tridentine Mass at St. Bridget, and occasional Novus Ordo Latin Masses at the historic downtown St. Joan of Arc Church. Even at that well-attended presentation, no one stepped forward to take charge and do the necessary work. The diocese was supportive and even offered a priest celebrant who attended that talk, but alas, without a lay leader to create and sustain momentum, nothing came of it.



That is, until Andrea arrived on the scene and got to work. By 2016 there was a weekly Sunday TLM at St. Bridget Church. Andrea built a stellar choral program, largely around children singers. She relentlessly promoted the effort, with a beautiful web site that includes recordings of the choir (<http://extraordinaryvegas.com/>), a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/latinmasslasvegas>), a YouTube channel with some choreographed videos of singing in the acoustically stunning, historic St. Joan of Arc Church (<https://www.youtube.com/@scholacantorumgloriaedeica3149>), and a series of articles on Corpus Christi Watershed's web site, including a practical series on how to start your own TLM, including musical cues for a new TLM music director (<https://www.cwatershed.org/author/andrea-leal/>). She is also one of the organizers of the annual Sacred Music Symposium in Los

Angeles, a platform that allows her to promote her choir and Mass (<https://www.cwatershed.org/symposium/>).

Attendance exploded: It went from 30 to 100 people per week, then after Covid jumped to 450. Weekday Masses for major Feast Days were added, occasionally at different churches in Las Vegas, thereby exposing more people to the traditional liturgy. Ash Wednesday Mass in 2022 set an attendance record, with 900 faithful attending.

Part of the reason things work so smoothly in Las Vegas is because Las Vegas Auxiliary Bishop Gregory Gordon years ago was the pastor who encouraged Andrea to learn Gregorian Chant. Partnering with diocesan authorities has always been a priority with her, arguably evidenced by the kindhearted letter Archbishop George Leo Thomas issued in 2023, moving the Las Vegas TLM from St. Bridget to the largest church in the diocese, the Shrine of the Most Holy Redeemer (<https://theshrine.lv.org/>). The first Masses at the Shrine attracted about 650 people, though attendance has tapered off somewhat as the novelty has worn off.

After their principal celebrant retired, the diocese assigned their Judicial Vicar, their top canon lawyer, as Chaplain of the TLM community [below photo by Missio Dei Media]. This follows a pattern in other dioceses where chancery officials are given responsibility for Latin Mass communities (e.g.: Lincoln, Nebraska; Boise, Idaho; and here in the Archdiocese of Detroit where local TLM celebrant Msgr. Ronald Browne holds the same office of Judicial Vicar).



We here in Metro Detroit have cooperated with the Las Vegas Latin Mass community over the years: We have loaned them vestments and even a celebrant, Fr. Thai Nguyen, to cover for their traveling chaplain. In return, Andrea helped coach Detroit music director Johnny Kash when he was learning to play for the then-new TLMs at Ss. Peter & Paul Westside.

No amount of Internet commentating will accomplish what a dedicated and focused volunteer like Andrea has done. Over the span of just seven years she and her team, which has grown to approximately 50 volunteers, took the community from a state of wishful thinking to one of the largest TLM sites in the world. May other laypeople emulate what she has done and cooperate with their own local clergy to make the Traditional Latin Mass flower in other places across the globe.

Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail info@windsorlatinmass.org. Previous columns are available at www.windsorlatinmass.org.