

by Scott P. Richert

The Bells of St. Mary's

P. Introibo ad altare Dei.

R. Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.

From the outside, St. Mary's Oratory in Rockford resembles scores of other Catholic churches built in the Midwest in the late 19th century, with its red-brick exterior, steep roof, stained-glass windows, and a bell tower that reaches for the sky. When you first walk through the front or side door into the modern entryway, you would have every reason to assume that the sanctuary will also look like those found in far too many of St. Mary's sister churches today—blond wood pews, no altar rail, high altar replaced by a wooden table, abstract stained glass where old masterpieces used to be, statues (if, indeed, there are any) hidden away behind banners decorated with modern translations of Bible verses in felt lettering, confessionals abandoned in favor of a "reconciliation room," tabernacle tucked neatly into a corner chapel that can only be accessed by leaving the sanctuary.

Yes, the blond wood pews are there, put in place after a fire in the 1970's destroyed the original high-backed pews that matched the carved and gilded Communion rail. Everything else, however, is right where you would not expect it these days, including the altar rail and the high altar. Despite signs of water and smoke damage that show through the paint, St. Mary's sanctuary would still be familiar to any of her earliest parishioners—and so would the liturgy celebrated therein.

Erected in 1885, St. Mary's was the second Catholic church built in Rockford and the first on the west side of the Rock River. Formerly surrounded by parks and residences, today the church shares its block with a drug-treatment center and the Winnebago County Courthouse. Because of residential flight from downtown, by the mid-1990's, St. Mary's could no longer sustain itself as a parish. Bishop Thomas Doran, wanting to keep the church open, designated St. Mary's a shrine in 1997 and entrusted its care to the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest, whom Bishop Doran had invited to the diocese in 1996 to min-

ister to a community of Catholics devoted to the celebration of the pre-Vatican II Roman Rite in Latin, popularly known as the Tridentine Mass.

In October 1984, Pope John Paul II granted permission for every bishop to allow the celebration of the Tridentine Mass in his own diocese. Since then, the number of Tridentine Masses has grown steadily, and today, 115 American dioceses offer at least one, according to the website of the Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*, an organization devoted to the promulgation of the old Mass (www.ecclesiadai.org). (In *Ecclesia Dei*, an apostolic letter issued in July 1988, the Pope urged his brother bishops to provide a "wide and generous application" of his permission.) St. Mary's Oratory, however, is unique in both the scope of its celebration (its rector, Fr. Brian A.T. Bovee, offers the Tridentine Mass every Sunday and twice on weekdays) and its exclusivity (most churches that offer the old Mass also celebrate the *Novus Ordo* that arose out of Vatican II). Any Catholic who works in downtown Rockford and wishes to attend Mass at noon has only one option—the Tridentine Mass at St. Mary's.

Confiteor Deo omnipotenti . . .

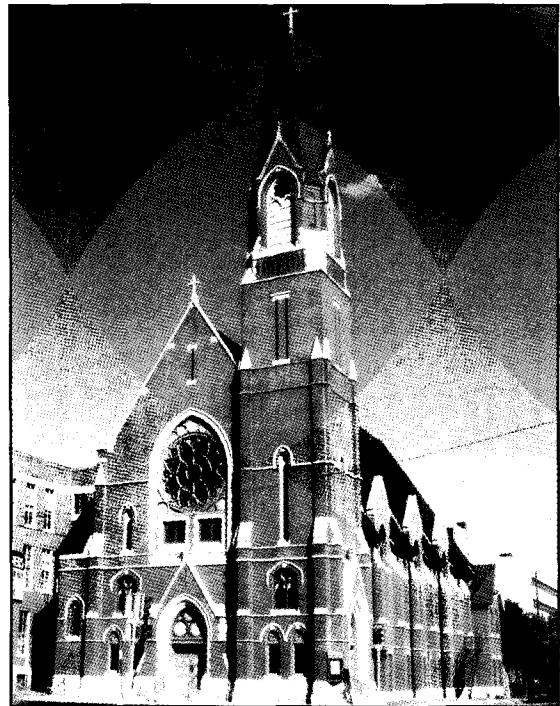
While Bishop Doran, of course, deserves the ultimate credit for reviving the Tridentine Mass in Rockford, the initial impetus came from the Latin Mass Community of Rockford, a group of dedicated laymen, some of whom had been attending a non-approved Tridentine Mass in Rockford. Through the efforts of (among others) Joe and Peg Fallon, Mark and Eileen Chambers, Bruce and Ruth Howell and their daughter Mary, and The Rockford Institute's own Christopher Check, the Latin Mass Community raised several hundred signatures petitioning Bishop Doran to restore the old Roman Rite. In early 1996, members of the community celebrated their first



Mass in the chapel of the Corpus Christi Monastery of the Poor Clares in southwest Rockford. Today, five years after Bishop Doran entrusted St. Mary's to the Institute of Christ the King, average attendance at Sunday Mass has grown from 125 to 390.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. . .

Most of the community's growth can be attributed to the dedication of the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest, and particularly of the seemingly indefatigable Father Bovee. Canonically erected in 1990, the Institute, founded by Msgr. Gilles Wach, is dedicated to "the glory of God and the sanctification of priests in the service of the Church and souls through doctrinal and spiritual for-



St. Mary's Oratory of Rockford.

Tom Krause



Bishop Doran celebrates the Sacrament of Confirmation.

mation.” The Institute currently has about 60 seminarians and 35 priests, all of whom celebrate the Tridentine Mass exclusively. Its three apostolates in the United States, ably guided by prior and superior Msgr. Michael R. Schmitz, are all in the Upper Midwest, and its U.S. headquarters is in Wausau, Wisconsin.

While a certain tension too often exists between traditionalist communities and the rest of the Church, the Institute adheres to its motto, *Veritatem facientes in caritate* (“Furthering truth through charity”). Many Catholics who belong to other parishes in Rockford occasionally attend Mass at St. Mary’s, where they are welcomed by a Latin Mass Community that sees itself as an integral part of the



Bishop Thomas Doran of Rockford.

universal Church.

*V. Sursum corda.
R. Habemus ad
Dominum.*

That community has grown greatly over the past six years, and not simply by attracting new congregants, some of whom travel an hour and a half each way to attend Mass at St. Mary’s. New visitors often expect a largely older con-

gregation, but the bulk of the Latin Mass Community is well under 50, and the birthrate among its members is phenomenal: The Harringtons and Schroeppers have eight children each; the Vernetts and Pribbles, seven; and the Klaskes are currently expecting number seven. The number of families with four, five, or six children is too great to count.

The birthrate reflects an optimism about life that is somewhat at odds with the popular image of the Tridentine Mass as a relic of a bygone age. That optimism is reflected in the other activities of the Latin Mass Community, including an annual conference featuring such traditionalist luminaries as Michael Davies, the president of *Una Voce International*, and Fr. James McLucas, editor of *Latin Mass* magazine. An award honoring laymen who have contributed to the revival of the Tridentine Mass has been given to, among others, Davies, Mary Kraychy of Coalition Ecclesia Dei of Illinois, and Alice von Hildebrand, the widow of renowned Catholic philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand.

Many of the families at St. Mary’s homeschool their children, and the community has inspired two independent Catholic schools, both dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart—one for younger children, founded by Mark and Eileen Chambers and Lou and Clare Bageanis, and one for junior- and senior-high students, founded by Michael Brunner, who is the primary

teacher.

The optimism of St. Mary’s congregation is bolstered by the beautiful music it hears each week, courtesy of a superb choir of laymen led by organist Mark Dahlgren, a former wannabe rock star and convicted tree-hugger who, at great personal expense, arranged for the upgrading of the church’s organ.

... una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro Ioanne Paulo, et Antistite nostro Thoma, et omnibus orthodoxis, atque catholicæ et apostolicæ fidei cultoribus...

St. Mary’s, the Latin Mass Community, and, perhaps, the Institute of Christ the King itself have had no greater supporter than Bishop Thomas Doran. While another bishop might have cut costs by closing St. Mary’s, Bishop Doran put his faith in the dedication of the Latin Mass Community and the Institute. On several occasions, he has celebrated Mass at St. Mary’s and, most recently, he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in perfect Latin at a stunningly beautiful liturgy this past May. He has consistently pledged his support for the Institute’s apostolate and has participated in the ordination of new priests at the Institute’s seminary in Gricigliano, near Florence, Italy. And the members of the Latin Mass Community have returned his devotion, showering Bishop Doran with letters of appreciation and supporting him when he was recently attacked by the local newspaper.

Bishop Doran’s announcement, on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary (August 15), of his elevation of the status of St. Mary’s from that of a shrine to that of oratory “makes [all of] the sacraments available to those who assemble there as a Latin Rite Faith Community,” as the diocesan newspaper, the *Observer*, reported on August 16. With its new status, St. Mary’s has become even more integrated into the life of the Rockford diocese, which should aid the Latin Mass Community as it continues its labor of love to make St. Mary’s a shining gem of traditional Catholicism and to restore the church to the grandeur that it enjoyed when it first opened almost 120 years ago.

Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis: et vidimus gloriam ejus, gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre, plenum gratiæ et veritatis.

R. Deo gratias.

Letter From Italy

by Alberto Carosa

Tax Breaks for Terror?

On June 23, the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* reported that Italian police had smashed a Milan-based Islamic terrorist cell that was planning an attack on the Basilica of San Petronio. This church, the most important in Bologna, is dedicated to its patron saint, and it contains a fresco showing Muhammad being tortured by demons in hell. *Corriere della Sera* said police uncovered the plot after intercepting the phone conversations of a group of Moroccans and Tunisians, some of whom are believed to be members of Algeria's extremist Salafist Group of Preaching and Combat, led by Hassan Hattab. The cell was reportedly in contact with a Libyan terrorist known as Amsa, allegedly a leading member of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terror network and active in Afghanistan, Iran, and Europe. Amsa was arrested this summer in London. The paper reported that Amsa's job had been to "make contact with various terror cells in Europe in order to organize terror attacks." The group in Milan had links to similar cells in Bologna, Rome, Naples, and Vercelli, and Italian investigators had uncovered its plans to coordinate an attack on the church in Bologna in February.

The fresco, painted in 1415 by Giovanni da Modena, has long been criticized by Muslims in Italy. There have been campaigns for its removal or destruction, including letters to Pope John Paul II and Giacomo Cardinal Biffi, archbishop of Bologna, calling the painting "barbarous." Yet Islamic leaders were skeptical about the terrorist plot. The Union of Italian Muslims said the press report was "not very convincing" and "could be an attempt to discredit Muslims who live in this country, to convince public opinion that they are violent people and terrorists." They added that "obviously, we consider the work an insult to our religion and people, but that doesn't mean we would contemplate or plan an

act of vandalism or, worse, terrorism." The Union argued that the fresco should be removed, but it stressed that Muslims would also be satisfied with a decision to cover up the name of Muhammad, written beneath the figure in hell.

Prosecutors and antiterrorist police in Bologna, probably in a bid to soothe fears, said that they knew nothing about this alleged plan by Al Qaeda-linked terrorists. The then-interior minister Claudio Scajola also sought to allay public alarm: "There is too much talk about these arguments, perhaps stemming from the hunt for news," he said. But dismay ran high again the following day, June 25, when Italian Defense Minister Antonio Martino said that a major attack by Islamic terrorists is certain to take place somewhere in the West—perhaps in Italy itself. "We do not know where this attack will take place nor how it will take place, and thus it is very difficult to say that we can guarantee the security of our citizens," he stated. The opposition branded the minister's words "irresponsible," "alarmist," and "shocking," and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, speaking from Canada where he was participating in the G8 summit, played down Martino's statement as "over-emphasized."

Against this background, it is no wonder that the Northern League, led by Umberto Bossi, started calling for the government, of which it is a part, to withdraw its own bill on religious freedom, because it would place Islam on the same footing as any other religion in Italy. The government's bill, currently before the House Constitutional Affairs Committee, was tabled in mid-June and drew almost immediate criticism from the League, especially after the opposition center-left lent its support to the measure. Those supporting the bill, League MP Federico Bricolo argued,

appear to ignore the fact that mosques and Islamic centers are not just places of worship but also forums for fundamentalist propaganda and the recruitment of terrorists, as took place at the Milan and Turin mosques. The ministers of the Islamic faith referred to in this bill have often been responsible for this recruitment.

According to Michele Saponara, the head committee member from Prime Minister Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, "The problem is verifying whether the religions which will be recognized by the new law will truly abide by our laws and the fundamental rights of man." For instance, he argued, "Muslim laws governing the family are in clear contrast with Italian ones. On points like these we must have absolute guarantees."

Furthermore, as an inescapable consequence of the bill, Muslim civil and religious rights would be codified regarding education, hospitals, barracks, and other institutions, and Muslim taxpayers in Italy would be allowed to assign a percentage of their income before taxes to their religion, just as Catholics and other recognized religious groups can. This is money that will, at the very least, fund mosques in Italy. Though the bill was signed by Prime Minister Berlusconi, one of his most influential advisors, priest-turned-politician Gianni Baget Bozzo, is firmly against it:

What's the sense of recognizing, in the name of religious freedom, full constitutional rights to a creed which does not recognize those values in its dispensation? Under several grounds Islam is incompatible with Italy's constitutions.

Taxpayer money, Bozzo argues, "would end up funding those factions which are closest to terrorism."

During the National Symposium on Narco-Terrorism at DEA headquarters in Virginia last December, Larry C. Johnson, a specialist in money-laundering investigations, contrasted traditional money-laundering operations with a less-conventional system he termed the "money-dirtying process." Speaking particularly of the bin Laden network, he pointed out that

We've also seen . . . the money does not start out . . . as dirty money. It doesn't start out as money generated from illegal activities. In fact, in some of the cases, it's money generated by charitable contributions that flows into bank accounts, flows through the system, and it's only when it comes out at