

- On July 7, 2007 – over 18 years ago – Pope Benedict XVI promulgated *Summorum Pontificam*, an encyclical that granted freedom to every priest to offer the Traditional Latin Mass without an indult or the permission of his bishop.
- Though many found Pope Benedict's decision earth-shaking in its boldness, in reality it was just a common-sense move, rooted in solid liturgical theology, that responded to the spiritual longings of so many of us worn out by the post-Vatican II liturgical wars.
- Within 2 days of *Summorum Pontificam*'s promulgation, I was asked by a few members of this parish if I would be willing to offer the Latin Mass at St. Ann's.
- As it became clear to me that we had a stable number of parishioners who were interested in the Latin Mass, I agreed to the request and began to look for a way to get training.
- Fortunately, as so many of us priests in the diocese were interested in learning the Latin Mass, Bishop Jugis arranged to bring in a priest from the FSSP to train us, which took place in Advent 2007 at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, NC.
- After going through that training, I began to study the Latin Mass on my own, memorizing the rubrics, studying tutorial videos, and practicing it when I could find the time.
- While I did my own personal preparation, we formed a group of parishioners here who were already familiar with the Latin Mass to provide talks on the Latin Mass to build interest and to prepare our parish for it.
- Our first public Latin Mass since the 2nd Vatican Council was offered in our still-yet-to-be-renovated church on May 31, 2008: The Feast of the Visitation. It was 8am on a Saturday morning, and more than 200 people attended.
- *The Charlotte Observer* also showed up, running a several-page article about our parish and our bringing back of the Latin Mass. In fact, we got lots of media coverage as we were the first parish to offer the Latin Mass regularly.
- After a few months we moved the Latin Mass to our Wednesday 6pm timeslot to better accommodate those who wished to attend. And we offered our first high Mass – a *Missa Cantata* – on Ascension Thursday, 2009.
- At that time our church was undergoing its renovation, and so that Mass was offered in the Cafeteria. It was a Mass that changed my life, for that Mass really unlocked for me the vital power and beauty of the Latin Mass.
- After that, we began offering *Missa Cantatas* regularly on important feast days, most especially on the Feast of Christ the King. Our first solemn high Mass was offered on the Feast of St. Ann: July 26, 2010 – with Bishop Jugis in attendance.
- Since then, we've offered countless solemn high Masses for all sorts of occasions. Eventually we began offering the Latin Mass on first Saturdays at 6:30pm to begin providing a way for folks to make their Sunday obligation with the Latin Mass.
- Naturally, this led to a desire for a weekly Sunday Latin Mass. When I was asked about doing so in 2012, I rejected the request. Our smallest Sunday Mass at that time was our bi-lingual Mass offered at 12:30, and so that was the Mass that made the most sense to be Latin.
- Yet, I didn't want to displace our loyal Hispanic parishioners who were so integrally involved in parish life. I also didn't want to decide rashly for something that I personally wanted so much. I only wanted to take on a weekly Sunday Latin Mass if it were God's will.
- When parishioners asked if they could go above me and make the request to Bishop Jugis, I agreed. And when Bishop Jugis rejected their request on the same grounds as I had, I then agreed to allow our parishioners to ask the Holy See directly for a Sunday Latin Mass.

- Allowing the request to go all the way to the Holy See seemed to me the surest way of giving the Holy Spirit room to bring about His will in this matter, and not to impose my own will.
- Sure enough, in January 2013, Bishop Jugis told me that he was being obligated by the Holy See to provide a weekly Sunday Mass in Charlotte, and he asked St. Ann's to host it.
- So, on the first Sunday in March 2013, St. Ann's became the first parish in our diocese to offer a weekly Sunday Latin Mass since the liturgical changes of Vatican II. We've had the Latin Mass on Sunday ever since, thanks to be to God.
- I tell you this history to give you a fuller understanding of what the Latin Mass has meant to St. Ann's. In many ways St. Ann's became the embodiment of the successful integration of the Latin Mass within a Novus Ordo parish that Pope Benedict hoped for.
- While at times there have been squabbles and misunderstandings in our parish with and about the Latin Mass, overall we've enjoyed a peaceful and beautiful coexistence of the 2 forms of the Roman Rite here at St. Ann's. I'm both proud of that, and very grateful.
- I'm both proud of and grateful to our parish staff, our music ministry, our altar boys, and all who have made the Latin Mass possible here at St. Ann's. Thank you so very much.
- I'm grateful to our faithful patroness, St. Ann, for her steadfast care, protection, and solicitude.
- And I am especially grateful to our Lord for this gift we've enjoyed for over 17 years. There's been so much beauty and so much grace visited upon St. Ann's because of the Latin Mass. And this is what I want you to remember most.
- While many tears have been shed over the loss of the Latin Mass in our parish, I want all of us to focus now on the great gift that our Lord has given us since 2008. While we cannot always change our circumstances in life, we can control our outlook and our attitude.
- What I want for all of us going forward is to choose gratitude, not rancor and rage, not sadness and sorrow. We've had an awesome gift that most parishes never got. We've had the opportunity to be formed weekly by the Mass that has been "the most beautiful thing this side of Heaven."
- And we are a better parish because of it.
- As we go forward, I also want us to focus on the virtue of charity and the sister virtue of patience.
- In the new calendar of the Church, today is the Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, who famously wrote that her vocation was to be "Love in the heart of the Church." Yet is this not something every Christian should strive to do?
- As Christians we are "other Christs" out in the world, and Christ's paramount attribute is His love and mercy, by which He saves us – despite our unworthiness. This charity we must imitate.
- Yet our practice of charity will only be perfected by exercising patience. As the great St. Cyprian puts it: "If you take patience away from charity, it languishes in desolation and cannot endure."
- St. Augustine teaches us that "patience is the enduring of evils with an equable mind, lest through an evil disposition we should give up that good which brings us to our greatest good."
- In other words, it is patience that enables us to endure the trials and tribulations of life, and to do so in a manner that strengthens us in virtue and holiness. With this in mind, true patience is by its nature imbued with humility.
- Through humility we can come to see that, when it comes to matters of the spiritual life, it is so often much better and more efficacious for our souls to be obedient rather than to be right.
- So be of good cheer, my friends, and be grateful for what we've enjoyed in this parish. God has not withdrawn His love and mercy, but is simply giving us a trial to bear. He's giving us a chance to grow in virtue and holiness, most especially through our patience.
- So with holy Job may we be patient in our time of trial and say with faith, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."
- Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us....