

# NickiGorny

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August, 2021 | Beyond translation: Beloved Latin Mass to linger on at Toledo's St. Joseph

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More than a half-century after Pope Paul VI turned his priests around in 1970, the Rev. David Kidd is still facing the altar at St. Joseph Parish in Toledo's Vistula neighborhood. He's still wearing a maniple draped over his left arm, and a biretta on top of his head; his servers are still swinging censers, and his parishioners are translating his chants in their missals.

The Latin Mass lingers on at St. Joseph.

The mystery and the reverence that parishioners describe as part and parcel of the ancient liturgical rite attract a vibrant community of tradition-minded Catholics. Father Kidd counts more than 200 families on the membership rolls, many of whom are too young to personally recall the days when all Catholics universally worshipped in the Latin Mass.

They boast one of the highest attendance rates in the Diocese of Toledo.

They were relieved last month to learn that their preferred rite will continue in the local diocese, a welcome answer to a question that was only raised on July 16 when Pope Francis issued an apostolic letter restricting its use in the Catholic Church. While unity had always been the intention of church leaders in permitting the continued celebration of the Latin Mass, the pontiff reasoned in his instruction to worldwide bishops that it had instead become divisive.

Toledo Bishop Daniel Thomas wasted little time in granting Father Kidd the faculty to continue celebrating the Latin Mass at St. Joseph, his authority to do so within his own diocese detailed in the same edict that rolled back its celebration. Bishop Thomas wrote in a statement that "we have gratefully not suffered discord and division due to the celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite" in the Diocese of Toledo.

At St. Joseph, what parishioners described as initial reactions of pain, sadness, or confusion gave way to relief, gratitude, and joy.

Their prayers had been answered; they would return to the Latin Mass on Sunday.

"We're very grateful to Bishop Thomas," parishioner Greg Otto said.

## A centuries-old tradition

The Latin Mass presents a debate that goes beyond language or translation.

The Latin Mass, also known as the Tridentine Mass, in this context refers to the entirety of the liturgical rite that was used for centuries in the Catholic Church, explained Peter Feldmeier, Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo. It dates back to the 1500s, when the Council of Trent established it as the universal liturgy for a global church. And its use carried on, albeit with some relatively minor adjustments, straight through the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.

The Second Vatican Council broadly addressed the relationship between the ancient church and the modern world, and ushered in wide-sweeping updates to the Catholic Church, including to its liturgy: In effort to encourage "robust participation by the community," Mr. Feldmeier said, the Vatican developed an updated liturgical rite that, among other notable adjustments, traded the dead but universal language of the church for the vernacular beginning in 1970.

Catholics could now understand and participate more fully in the services.

The Latin-English missals effectively disappeared from parishes in the United States following the Second Vatican Council, as did the communion rails, chapel veils, and other hallmarks of the older rite. But it wasn't a full stop for the Latin Mass.

Pope John Paul II allowed for its limited use beginning in the 1980s, as an olive branch of sorts to a schismatic society of Catholics led by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, traditionalists who had never accepted the Mass of 1970. And Pope Benedict XVI expanded opportunities to celebrate the Tridentine Mass in an edict of his own in 2007.

Today the Latin Mass Directory, an online resource described as a lay initiative based in London, lists 660 venues that celebrate the Latin Mass in the United States. France hosts 199, Great Britain 157.

Pope Francis in last month's announcement referenced a questionnaire sent to bishops regarding use of the Latin Mass. While he did not reveal specifics of the responses, he wrote that they "reveal a situation that preoccupies and saddens me, and persuades me of the need to intervene."

In his apostolic letter, *Traditionis Custodes*, he shifts course from his predecessors, suggesting that their magnanimity "was exploited to widen the gaps, reinforce the divergences, and encourage disagreements that injure the Church, block her path, and expose her to the peril of division"; whereas the older rite had been permitted in the spirit of unity, he writes instead that it has come to facilitate a divide in the church between those who accept or reject the liturgical reforms instituted under the Second Vatican Council.

While Traditionis Custodes limits the continued use of the Latin Mass in the Catholic Church, it does not ban it. Pope Francis offers instructions and considerations to bishops, who have the authority to still permit it within their diocese. St. Joseph will be among them.

## **An enduring appeal**

Toledo's St. Joseph has been celebrating the older liturgy for more than 25 years – longer, really, if you consider its roots as a mission parish established in 1854, as Father Kidd points out. Today there are Low Masses at 6 p.m. Wednesday and 7 a.m. Sunday, High Masses at 9 a.m. Sunday, and an ad orientem Mass in English at 4 p.m. Saturday.

St. Joseph is at 628 Locust St.

The Latin Mass' continuation there is a relief for parishioners who are eager to enumerate its many attractions, some relating to the service itself, and some relating to the full-throated Catholic community that gravitates toward it in the parishioners of St. Joseph.

When Colin and Katie Boerst, of Toledo, began looking into the Latin Mass last year, Mr. Boerst recalled that they “quickly saw the fruits of what this liturgy does to families and to the parishes.”

“Right off the bat, we were struck by the amount of young families at these parishes that we're visiting. There are babies everywhere; you see something about a baptism what seems like every week,” he said. They noticed that the sacrament of penance, too, was offered regularly.

“We felt just this overwhelming sense of faithfulness to the church, like a fidelity to the church that we really had never experienced before,” Mr. Boerst, 24, continued.

And the liturgy itself, with its smells and its bells and its aura of mystery and tradition?

“The beauty, the reverence to the Eucharist, to reverence to the sacrifice of Christ – you see that so clearly in the Latin Mass,” Mr. Boerst said. “The mystery of that just pulled us in.”

Maumee's Dina Peterson, 19, was and is struck by the “the reverence, just the all-around respect for what we were doing,” she said. She's been a regular in the pews for about three years, and a parishioner for about two years; she came across St. Joseph and the Latin Mass as she was reconnecting with her faith, and was searching for a parish to call home.

“There were a lot of little things that added up,” she recalled of her initial response to the Latin Mass, pointing to differences ranging from the behavior of parishioners before the opening procession to the way they receive Holy Communion on the tongue. “I noticed with the Latin Mass that it was all very focused on God: This is the time of worship, and it was very different in that way for me. It was kind of the way that everyone was expected to act in the congregation.”

Rebecca Otto, 46, of Leipsic, speaks similarly. Ms. Otto has had family ties to the parish since childhood, and today she and her husband, Greg, 50, are intentional in raising their 10 children so that they know both the ordinary and this extraordinary form of the liturgy. They regularly drive an hour to St. Joseph on Sundays.

“The beauty of the reverence really comes to mind, the fact that everything is so focused on Jesus,” Ms. Otto said. “It’s a lot quieter in some ways, so you’re following along more in the prayer book. It’s more like this internal dialogue with Jesus, that [element] I do find very attractive. I feel that it allows for you to be more prayerful.”

Parishioners acknowledge that their scope of experience is perhaps a narrow one at St. Joseph, but they said they haven’t picked up on any sense division in relation to the Latin Mass. That’s in part why they were taken aback by last month’s edict from the Vatican.

Their preference for the older rite might be firm, but they said they aren’t rejecting the Mass of 1970. In many cases they’re regularly in the pews for this liturgy, too, on weekdays or when their schedules require it on weekends.

“The English Mass is also valid, and there can be reverence and beauty in that as well,” said Ms. Peterson, who worships during the week at Rosary Cathedral. “I think it’s a mutual respect that needs to be there.”