

Bishop Rifan's Vancouver Visit

Bishop Fernando Arêas Rifan Administração Apostólica União Sacerdotal São João Maria Vianney

By David Reid

Vancouver Traditional Mass Society Perspective

There is an old Chinese proverb which goes something like this 'The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step' and not to denigrate in any way the critical and important steps which have been taken in the journey of Traditionalists we believe that the establishment of the Apostolic Administration in Campos is one such journey and one such step.

The visit of His Excellency Bishop Fernando Arêas Rifan, to Vancouver, from March 27th to April 2nd was an unmitigated success. The Bishop had an opportunity not only to put the Traditional Mass on public display but also to meet and dine informally with Archbishop Adam Exner, with numerous Priests of the Archdiocese and with the Divine Mercy Quasi Parish parishioners.

Before going any further the Vancouver Traditional Mass Society wishes to take this opportunity to publicly thank His Grace Archbishop Adam Exner for permitting the visit of Bishop Rifan, for allowing such public exposure of the Traditional Mass and traditional community of Vancouver and for permitting the Holy Rosary Cathedral to be used for Bishop Rifan's Tridentine Pontifical High Mass. We also wish to thank His Grace for the many kindnesses he has shown throughout the years to our community. He has in the words of Christ 'fed His lambs and fed His sheep'. We rank this Bishop with one of the bravest in the Church today.

In the history of the Traditional Mass in Vancouver there are a number of critical points of demarcation and we believe that the visit of Bishop Rifan will take its place among them. The next crucial step for the Divine Mercy Quasi Parish will be its transformation to a Personal Parish under the Archbishop and we sincerely hope that Bishop Rifan's visit will expedite this process.

There were four important public functions presided over by Bishop Rifan when he was in Vancouver:

- on Saturday 29th March Bishop Rifan said a Pontifical High Mass at 14:00 hours at Holy Rosary Cathedral in the heart of Vancouver;
- this was followed by a dinner at 17:00 hours at St. Mary's Ukrainian Church Hall;
- On Sunday 30th March His Excellency presided over the Sunday Traditional Mass at 12:30 hours held at Our Lady of Fatima Church;
- On Monday 31st March at 19:00 hours His Excellency conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on 4 confirmands at Our Lady of Fatima Church.

Pontifical Tridentine High Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral

Mass of the Bishop at the Faldstool

On 29th March at 14:00 hours Bishop Fernando Arêas Rifan said a Pontifical Tridentine High Mass at the Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver British Columbia Canada. The significance of this event may escape many however we wish to point out that this is probably the first time in over 35 years where the historic Cathedral bells have rung out for such an event. It is presumed that few if any Catholics in Vancouver will have had, in their lifetime, the opportunity to attend a Pontifical High Mass at the Cathedral prior to Vatican II. It is certain that over 95 percent of those present on this occasion have never seen a Traditional Pontifical High Mass. The only ones present who would have had the opportunity would be the FSSP priests and any of us who attended Cardinal Stickler's Pontifical High Mass in Rome or who remember the Mass prior to the 60s.

The Cathedral was packed for the Mass with an estimated 450 people present. The VTMS produced over 300 Mass booklets specifically for this Mass with Bishop Rifan's picture and curriculum vitae included and all were given out and kept as souvenirs. The Catholic population of Vancouver had an opportunity to witness firsthand the beauty, splendour and majesty of the historic Mass of the One Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. In 1998

I wept at Cardinal Stickler's Pontifical High Mass, on the occasion of the Ecclesia Dei celebrations in Rome, for the very beauty and sacredness tangibly present and for that which we had lost but I rejoiced at Bishop Rifan's Mass for that which we had regained. The Mass was a moving ceremony and there are really no adequate words to describe it.

The Bishop was assisted by Fr. Paul Carr, the North American Superior of the F.S.S.P., Fr. Charles Ryan F.S.S.P. Pastor of Divine Mercy Quasi Parish, Fr. William Ashley of the Diocese of Vancouver and founder of Opus Maria Mediatrices, and Fr. Hubert Bizard F.S.S.P. of St. Clement's Parish in Ottawa. Msgr. Donald Neumann Cathedral rector and Fr. Bradley S.J. were also in attendance. The Latin schola and polyphonic choir from Divine Mercy, led by Mark Donnelly sang Palestrina's Missa Ave Regina Coelorum. The eight voice Latin schola and sixteen voice polyphonic choir accompanied by the Cathedral's historic organ accompanied also by the hosts of angels in attendance must have been a special gift for Our Blessed Mother for it was her Mass 'Salva Sancta Parens' which was celebrated.

See photos by the VTMS below this article. (These photos are available by the courtesy of David Reid and Kurt Raeder)

Dinner at St. Mary's Ukrainian Church Hall

The dinner was a resounding success and a wonderful time was had by all. The head table featured in the pictures shows His Grace Archbishop Adam Exner and His Excellency Bishop Rifan together with the Priests who attended. Bishop Rifan's was the guest speaker and his talk gave a history and background from the days of Bishop de Castro Mayer to the present situation in Campos. The Bishop pulled no punches and his talk is available in audio at Fr. Ashley's site. The atmosphere was joyous and those in attendance had ample opportunity to talk to the Bishop.

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Sunday's Sung High Mass with Bishop Rifan

Mass in the Presence of a Bishop

The venue for the Sunday's Mass was moved from Holy Spirit to Fr. Tepoorten's Church 'Our Lady of Fatima' to accommodate the larger number of attendees. Since this was a sung High Mass Fr. Carr was the celebrant in the presence of a Bishop. Our pictures are included in the following section.

Bishop Rifan Confers the Sacrament of Confirmation

Bishop Rifan conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on 4 confirmands on Monday at Our Lady of Fatima. Again history was made in a number of ways:

- this is the first time since the mid-sixties that the Sacrament of Confirmation has been conferred by a Bishop in the Traditional Rite in Vancouver. Although Divine Mercy Quasi Parish has had Confirmations in the Traditional Rite this is the first occasion where it has been conferred by a Bishop;
- it is also a first at Our Lady of Fatima and
- the first time that Bishop Rifan has administered the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Bishop's Confirmation admonitions to the newly confirmed took me back to the mid 50's it is not since those boyhood days have I heard the terms 'Soldiers of Christ' and 'dying for one's Faith' used with such easy familiarity. I am sure the Holy Ghost Fathers of my boyhood years were cheering the Bishop on.

Coffee and cake were served in the hall following this Mass and we all had an opportunity to talk with Bishop Rifan and thank him for the wonderful gift of his presence among us. We have certainly not seen the last of Bishop Rifan and it is to be hoped that the success of his Apostolic Administration will move Rome establish this model as the norm for traditional communities worldwide.

See photos by VTMS (These photos are available by the courtesy of David Reid and Kurt Raeder)

John Lambert's Article for Una Voce Canada's Newsletter

Mr. John Lambert kindly agreed and wrote an article on Bishop Rifan's visit which is included in the April's edition of the Newsletter produced by the VTMS/UVC.