

Dear Parishioners,

I am now midway through the “*Sacra Liturgia*” Summer Institute at the monastery where I am staying in Provence, and I am greatly enjoying every moment.

Well, perhaps not every moment: a killer heat wave that has been ignominiously dubbed “Lucifer” has struck Europe. The thermometer soared to 113 in some parts! It’s so dry there are forest fires breaking out even a short distance away, so you can’t take a walk in the woods to get some shade (but even in good times that’s risky because there are herds wild boars snorting around for truffles and terrifying English tourists). To make it even more delightful, there is no AC!

So if you think I’m just eating cheese and drinking wine for three months (although I am doing a fair amount of that too, believe me), consider the image of your pastor sweating to death waiting for the church bell to summon him to prayer nine times a day or to peel potatoes in his cassock! The Abbot says I can keep my room “cool” if I shutter up the windows and draw the curtains.



Our Lady & Saints, Cathedral of Fréjus



Doorway in sunny Poquerolles

Quite consoling,

thank you. If I return bronzed it’s not because I was laying on the beach at St. Tropez, but rather because I was baked like a loaf of bread in a monastic cell.

But I digress. The students and scholars here are a diverse and interesting group of people: The Abbot is an Australian who has written extensively on the liturgy and whose texts I have used at our own parish. He is a patient mentor and somehow has managed to train this disparate group to carry out the most magnificent of liturgies. He’s a bit like Merlin in that regard.

Amongst the others, there is a Gregorian chant instructor beckoning from Lithuania. There is a young and intelligent French Airbus engineer-in-training, newly converted to the Faith and full of zeal. There is a holy priest with a black sash wrapped around his ecclesiastical presence who grew up in Ciudad Juarez (and survived). Then there is the transitional deacon from El Salvador who says he started learning English by watching American cartoons. He hopes to introduce the traditional Mass to his country (although Foghorn Leghorn will not be invited). There is the Princeton Latinist from Chile. And there is even an “Anglo-Catholic” from London (whose Anglican parish prays for the souls in Purgatory, goes to the priest for confession and has Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament).

Last but not least – somehow, providentially - there arrived several chanting Texans who have arranged to grill steaks on an imported American grill (and not little morsels with foppish sauces, but real beef from the Lone Star State!). And I probably shouldn’t put this in writing, but I actually learned how to make quiche this week (which skill I will promptly cancel out when we grill the Texan meat).

On another note, the Church in France, despite all the negative indicators, has very many intense pockets of Faith left. It really seems as if something momentous is percolating. It is, after all, the “Eldest Daughter of the Church.” And there are indeed some renascent large families about. You will be glad to know that they also have huge vans, which are casually known in French as “*catho-mobiles!*” (don’t worry, I’m sure yours are bigger and better and are less regulated by the government).

I did manage to break away to visit the little Mediterranean Island of *Poquorelles* for a spell. It was either that or die of heat exhaustion. The priest there let me stay in his church, literally, in a little room behind the sanctuary! The town was delightful and a perfect place for families. The square in front of St. Anne’s church was full all evening with children playing, walking about, riding bikes and playing bocce ball. It was a very happy place. Folks there even say, “*Bonjour, mon Père,*” which is a greeting almost extinct in modern France.



The harbor at Poquerolles

More as life unfolds...Know that you are very much in my thoughts and prayers!

--Père de Rosa