Nashotah Sketch: ***Fr. Frederick Joaquin and How I Learned to Celebrate the Mass***

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When I arrived at Nashotah House, we still wore cassocks on campus, we said the grace in Latin, and the dean and faculty dined together at the “High Table” in the Refectory where all of us seminarians took turns wearing our white jackets as we served one another. In addition, as we all took our turns as sacristan, we daily “took down” and “put up” all that was necessary for the oratory Masses — most of which were celebrated in the Oratories in the administration building. We enjoyed our corporate recitation of Matins (as we called it then) at 6:30 or 6:45 a.m. in the Chapel of St. Mary the Virgin, and then each faculty member would proceed to his oratory, followed by the seminarian charged with serving Mass that day.

**The Rev. Frederick Joaquin**

In the 1970-71 academic year, remarkable changes took place related to all of the above. Mass at the High Altar became a normative concelebration, with each faculty member celebrating at the High Altar, which suddenly included a separate “free-standing altar” that was set below the pace near the carved chairs while the High Altar remained, with canonical precision, not against the wall but the canonically prescribed “inches away” from the reredos.

However, not surprisingly, several priests preferred practicing their own daily oratory Mass according to the American Missal, which was the “unofficial” Nashotah House usage until the Prayer Book revision, beginning in 1967, while the 1928 BCP continued to be used for the Daily Offices. Dean Donald J. Parsons, in particular, celebrated every Saturday morning at the “Dean’s Oratory,” aka the “St. Francis Oratory.” Soon the various oratories in the administration building became oratory “labs” for seminarians in their second semester of their senior year to be taught by the faculty member whom they requested for instruction, rather than “places of worship.” This usually meant learning how to celebrate what today one might call a “Missal Mass.”

Enter **Father Frederick Joaquin**. The easiest way to describe him is “Old School Nashotah House,” pre-Prayer Book revision, 1967 Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper, 1970 Services for Trial Use (aka the Green Book), 1973 Authorized Services (aka the Zebra Book), and “Son of Zebra” — even before the Draft Proposed Book, the Proposed Book, and the 1979 Prayer Book. Suddenly this “Nashotah House normal” priest was seen as a bit outdated.

Fr. Joaquin was the librarian, and he and his wife, Edna, lived in the College Building (the Fort), where all of those enrolled in the six-year plan (attendance at Carroll College followed by seminary) lived for their first three years. This amazing building, as many know, contains perhaps the loveliest Chapel on campus, and for most of us then, the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul was our “home chapel” rather regularly as we served oratory Masses there for Fr. Joaquin.

As the revisions became more evident, fewer seminarians wished to serve Fr. Joaquin. After all, most of the time he was exercising his role in the Guild of All Souls, so that meant serving a Requiem Mass a great deal of the time. The chapel was well equipped with the appropriate type of candlesticks, altar cross, unbleached candles, and appropriate black vestments, and we all knew that Psalm 43 was omitted from the Preparation at the Foot of the Altar, that water was not blessed and there was no final blessing, among other elements that are contained in a Requiem Mass.

Fr. Joaquin never preached at these Masses, “eucharistic silence” was exercised before Mass, and there was no conversation after Mass — all of which was normative in Anglo-Catholic settings in those days. The Chapel of St. Mary the Virgin simply did not entertain “chit chat.” But that does not mean that Fr. Joaquin was a man who did not like people — including the living ones, I might add! After Mass, we tip-toed from the chapel past an apartment or two and entered his apartment where Edna Joaquin served us a breakfast that always included freshly squeezed orange juice. It was there that we who were still privileged to serve Oratory Masses would learn what it was like to be a chaplain to General MacArthur, what it was like for Fr. Joaquin to be a priest of the Diocese of Quincy, and how difficult it was to adjust to all the Vatican II liturgical changes that were affecting Nashotah House.

I was Fr. Joaquin’s last seminarian to learn from him “the Tradition.” He taught me how to celebrate Mass. He made it clear to me that it was not his version but rather what could be found in “The Missal” and in “Ritual Notes” and had been taught to him when he was a seminarian at Nashotah House. Sadly, he was “ousted” from his chapel after several staff members complained that the Daily Mass was disruptive for them as residents of the building, and he was moved to an oratory in Lewis Hall. It was there that he taught me how to celebrate Mass, and it was there that he informed me, one day, that I was not only his last seminarian to train, but that this was his last Mass because he was retiring as Librarian.

Then he asked me to close my eyes and extend my arms and he placed items there that I could not identify until he directed me to open my eyes, when I saw there his six sets of “Fiddlebacks”: chasubles, maniples, and stoles. Although he was a shy man, he looked me directly in the eyes and said, “You are the last seminarian I will ever teach to celebrate Mass. These vestments include vestments willed to me which I am now giving to you. Several were willed to me by Dean Nutter, and several were worn by Dean White. I am handing over to you not just vestments but a tradition. I am handing over to you vestments worn by men who had the Catholic Tradition handed over to them, and then handed them to me, and I am handing over to you that Tradition, which you must now hand on to others.” And with that, we semi-embraced (he was not a hugger), shed a few tears, and he silently left Nashotah House.

For a while, after he left, there would be times when seminarians would ride their bikes while wearing a cassock, just like Fr. Joaquin did, to see how slowly they could go without falling off their bike or getting their cassock caught in the gears, on the trek from the College Building (the Fort) to the Library. To this day, when I get on my bike, when I go to the Altar, and when I put on his vestments, I remember Fr. Joaquin.

That is why I spend time in the cemetery praying at the markers for Fr. Frederick Joaquin and his beloved, patient wife, Edna. Please take time to visit that site; it is very close to where my own plot and my wife’s are reserved.