

St. Cecilia Schola Cantorum
St. Michaels Catholic Church
302 East Magnolia Ave.
Auburn, Alabama 36830

St. Cecilia Schola Receives Blessing

July 20, 2004 -- The St. Cecilia Schola of St. Michaels Catholic Church in Auburn, Alabama, was honored to receive Archbishop Oscar Hugh Lipscomb's blessing at the main Sunday morning Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Mobile, Alabama, July 11, 2004, 10:30am.

The St. Cecilia Schola was founded in 2001 with the purpose of restoring traditional chant and its stylistic descendants to contemporary Catholic liturgical life. Archbishop Lipscomb is the chair of the US Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy.



+ Oscar H. Lipscomb
Archbishop of Mobile

The Schola assisted at the liturgy with Gregorian chant, a Mass setting by William Byrd, and motets by T. de la Victoria, G. Croce, and G. Palestrina. The Mass propers, procession, and recessional were in English, while the motets and ordinary in Latin, with translations provided. The offertory was the "Ave Verum Corpus," also by Byrd, an Elizabethan-era composer whose Masses were sung only in secret, because the Mass was banned in England. The final blessing for the Mass was offered in Latin.

The Schola also sang a similar program the at the Vigil Mass at the Church of the Little Flower in Mobile, at the invitation of Rev. Fr. David Carucci, pastor of the parish. At both Masses, the schola sang without the aid of accompaniment or amplification. The Schola is grateful for the invitation as well as the support provided by the Archdiocese of Mobile to make this wonderful trip possible, and wishes to extend a special thank you to Paul Hanebuth, director of music at the Cathedral, for his hospitality.

The celebrant of the Mass was Monsignor R. Emmet Fagan of Long Island, New York, who was recently granted papal honors by John Paul II. His sermon addressed the issue of language and liturgy. He pointed to the long controversy concerning Latin and the common criticism that it suggests exclusivity because people do not understand the text.



It should be recalled, Msgr. Fagan said, that Latin itself came into common use in the faith as an effort to bring comprehensibility to scriptural texts. St. Jerome's Vulgate was so-called because it was rendered into the "common" language of the people.

And yet, he continued, that focus on comprehension can be misplaced when it tempts us to believe that we can finally understand God through the purely cognitive process. God must also be approached through the arts, music, nature, emotions, and spirit. An unfamiliar language can be a language suited especially for liturgy and worship because it reveals other aspects to God, even as its use can underscore the reality that God is finally a mystery. For this reason, he said, the work of the St. Cecilia Schola is a sacred work of evangelization, so that we might all better hear the voice of God and, in turn, to God with utmost reverence.

The Schola also received greetings from Fr. Michael Farmer, chancellor of the Archdiocese, and Fr. James Kee. The Cathedral, which is located on Spanish burial grounds in the heart of Mobile's Old Town, features German art glass windows, a bronze canopy over altar, and hand-carved statues. It recently underwent extensive restorations to make it one of the most beautiful and expansive worship spaces in the region.

