

# Rebel church serves Cathol

By Bill Curry  
Los Angeles Times

KNOB LICK, Mo. — At 3:30 on a recent Sunday afternoon, Joann and Richard Friedman packed their daughters, Donna and Gina, into the family's 1974 Chevrolet and began their regular 80-mile drive north to St. Louis, just to go to church.

At the same time, Father Hector Bolduc, strapped into a an aisle seat on a Boeing 727, was rolling down the runway at Kansas City International Airport, the start of his regular half-hour flight to St. Louis.

Just moments before, in the low-ceilinged basement of a Grandview shopping center under Betty's Flower Shop, Father Bolduc, a 44-year-old Roman Catholic priest, had baptized a 4-month-old girl, celebrated Mass and distributed ashes, four days late, for Ash Wednesday.

Now he was flying to St. Louis to conduct services for the Friedmans and 140 other parishioners, all members of America's underground Catholic church.

These people form a small but growing and dedicated flock — conservative Catholics, perhaps 100,000 strong, committed to defying their church's hierarchy and the changes set in motion by the Vatican Council II, which was held from 1962 to 1965. In private homes, hotels, banks, shopping centers, meeting halls and even chapels, these Catholics meet whenever and wherever they can, led by a handful of circuit-riding, traditionalist priests like Father Bolduc.

Traveling not by horseback but by jetliner and car, these priests cover vast areas, often celebrating Mass in several cities a day and staying, like old-time circuit riders, with members of their parish. They eat home-cooked meals and sleep on a bunk bed here, a waterbed there.

They bring to their far-flung parishes what traditionalist Catholics see as the symbol of the "true church":



The Rev. Hector Bolduc

the centuries-old Tridentine Latin Mass.

It is a Mass outlawed in U.S. Roman Catholic churches as a result of Vatican II. The Catholic church in the United States now celebrates an English Mass, with some textural changes from the old Latin service, and bishops have the power to experiment with services.

From modest beginnings, the conservative Catholic movement has grown. Five years ago, Father Bolduc served the Southern and Western United States by himself while ministering to a 50-member parish in Houston, where the hardy band of traditionalists met so often in a freeway motel

that they jokingly called their church "St. Travelodge."

Today eight priests serve the region. There are active parishes from Los Angeles to Miami and from Washington state to Mexico. In one week last month, groups in Charlotte, N.C., and Omaha, Neb., had their first Masses celebrated by the traditionalist priests.

Father Bolduc estimated that as many as 100,000 of the nation's 49.1 million Catholics are following the old ways. More would, he said, if there were enough priests to fan out across the country to serve them.

The fervor of the traditionalists is as great as their numbers are small, a passion measured by their willingness to drive long distances, to attend services that are held irregularly and at odd times, and to practice their most sacred religious acts in the most mundane surroundings.

"I just wasn't prepared for it," said 56-year-old Tom Brier of Columbia Mo., referring to the changes in the church. He and his wife had just served Father Bolduc a dinner of pork chops and homemade applesauce.

Joan Brier, who is 54, recalled one priest's sermon at Good Friday services.

"We were told we were all guilty for Mexican laborers, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy — at every (prayer) station, it was (prayer) for one of those. And Cesar Chavez."

Traditionally, prayers remembering Christ's suffering were said at 14 "stations of the cross" marking his journey from conviction to Calvary.

Columbia was the last stop on the recent three-day circuit for Father Bolduc, who is now superior of the Southwest District of the Society of St. Pius X. There is also a smaller Northeastern District providing the Tridentine Mass.

100,000  
50,000,000  
1/500 = .5%



Robert W. Genzke, Pastor, St. Pius X



# lics who yearn for old ways

The society is led by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who was threatened by the late Pope Paul VI with excommunication for his insistence on saying the Tridentine Mass.

Father Bolduc is based at St. Mary's Church in St. Marys, Kan. The church is part of a sprawling Jesuit mission dating to 1848 that was a seminary until 10 years ago. A group of investors donated the compound to the Society of St. Pius X after Father Bolduc convinced them that it would be a lucrative tax deduction.

Now St. Mary's is a boarding school with 95 elementary school children whose parents want them to have a Catholic education centered on the traditional Mass. Entire families have moved to St. Marys, swelling its population to 1,200, to attend the Masses.

It is from St. Marys that Father Bolduc, a tall, angular man with a long, quick stride good for conquering airport concourses, begins his circuit-riding. Saturday may mean a trip to Omaha or Wichita, and perhaps Springfield, Mo. Then it's back to St. Marys for 8 a.m. Sunday Mass, and then a hurried drive to Topeka, where a single-engine plane flies him to Olathe.

Then, without delay, Father Bolduc is off to KCI for his flight to St. Louis. Again there is confession, Mass, distribution of ashes, then a sick call and communion for a hospitalized traditionalist. Finally, Father Bolduc has a late-night dinner of tomato soup, ham-and-cheese sandwiches, potato salad and coleslaw at the home of Peggy and Edwin Muehleman.

It was in the basement of the Muehleman home that the Tridentine Mass returned. Five years ago, Father Bolduc celebrated it for 25 Catholics brought together by Peggy Muehleman. Soon there were enough parishioners willing to meet on alternate Thursday nights to require a meeting

room in a local Howard Johnson's motel. Then came a larger meeting hall, and finally, last July, the group, calling themselves the Queen of the Holy Rosary Church, bought the old Grant Elementary School.

The gymnasium was converted into a chapel. Now the parishioners have Mass every Sunday evening, with peo-

ple like Joann and Richard Friedman driving miles to attend.

The first time 39-year-old Joann Friedman attended the Tridentine Mass, she cried. She also cried in the confessional. "It was like coming home again after being away for a very long time," she said.

## Lutheran task force approves cautious statement on abortion

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — An American Lutheran Church task force on abortion concludes that "life is a continuous process from conception through death," but that it's difficult to specify when "personhood exists."

The statement, approved in a 10-4 vote, goes before the denomination's governing convention for its action next October.

Calling abortion "always a serious matter," the statement says individuals have "the responsibility to make the best possible decision they are capable of making" about it "in light of the information available to them and their sense of accountability to God, neighbor and self."

A chief criticism of the statement was its "tendency . . . to accept the values that society ascribes to human beings rather than the intrinsic value given by God."

At conception, the union of sperm

and ovum begins a "new, unique individual life" and "life is valuable as a gift of God," the majority statement says.

## Group to present 'Stations' musical

"Stations," produced by The Risen Christ Theater Group, will be performed at 8 p.m. March 30 in the Music Hall. The musical is a story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Written by Robert Murphy with music and lyrics by Paul Novosel, "Stations" also will feature the work of dancer and choreographer Joe Stevenson and The Risen Christ Dance Group, who have appeared in several productions in the Kansas City area.

Tickets are available through the Central Ticket Office at 1100 Baltimore and at area stores.

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