

# The Pilot

Friday, November 23, 2012 • Vol. 183, No. 45 • \$1.00 • www.thebostonpilot.com • America's Oldest Catholic Newspaper

## Growing the Church through the reverential celebration of Mass

Our team from The Good Catholic Life and Pilot New Media visited Mary Immaculate of Lourdes parish in Newton last week as part of our ongoing series on growing parishes that are embracing the New Evangelization. We seek to learn what specifically these parishes are doing to invite inactive Catholics home and to welcome those who choose to enter the Catholic Church.



**Scot Landry**

Mary Immaculate of Lourdes parish is the mother church of Newton and Needham, established in 1870 as St. Mary's Parish. In 1909 the cornerstone was laid for the present church, which was built on a hill and was meant to be seen from far and wide. It has the style of an Italian hill town church with a soaring 135-foot bell tower that can easily be seen by all that commute on Route 128/95. When it was dedicated on Thanksgiving Day in 1910, the new Archbishop of Boston William O'Connell, decided that St. Mary's was too plain a name for this beautiful church so he chose to rename it Mary Immaculate of Lourdes.

In 2004, due mainly to a decrease in the number of Mass attendees, Mary Immaculate of Lourdes (MIOL) was placed on the list of parishes to be closed. An end-of-life parish party was held. Then, just 5 days before the official closure, Cardinal Seán decided to merge MIOL with the Traditional Latin Mass apostolate which had been worshipping at Holy Trinity German Parish in Boston and to appoint a full-time pastor, Father Charles J. Higgins. This began what the pastor calls "a second life" for MIOL and its longstanding and new parishioners.

Today, parishioners describe the parish as a successful blending of three communities into one parish: (a) the territorial community of long-attending parishioners; (b) those who travel from throughout the archdiocese to worship according to the extraordinary form of the Mass (Traditional Latin Mass); (c) those attracted to MIOL from throughout the region by the reverential celebration of the Mass and sacred music in the ordinary form of the Mass (Novus Ordo). The third group is growing very quickly, parishioners say, because MIOL's beautiful liturgies attract Catholics who seek to be formed around the celebration of the Eucharist, in awe of the majesty of God's presence in a beautiful and traditional setting, with music that lifts worshippers' minds toward Heaven.

Parishioner Jeannette Pappin pointed to the historical principle in the Church "lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi," which means, "as we pray, so we believe and so we live," as what has helped make MIOL parishioners active at the work of outreach and evangelization. Another parishioner, John DeMatteo, said the example of seeing a group of people that take a project seriously is inspiring in any situation, but when it involves fully dedicating yourself to praying the Mass well, it encourages others to want to join in and do the same. Tina McCormick, an attendee of the Novus Ordo Mass, recalled the reaction of her guests to the Triduum liturgies, which they called "amazing, reverential celebrations of the Eucharist" which is the source, summit and center of our Catholic faith. David Allen and his wife were attracted to MIOL for the way it integrates sacred music into the Mass, which helps the congregation experience more deeply the mystery and transcendence of the liturgy.

Father Higgins added that many newcomers point to the interior beauty of the church as one reason they return and become parishioners. MIOL is one of the last of what is called decorated churches and the church's whole interior was the artist's palette. The church and its stained glass windows are a catechism. Ron Goguen and his son Manny mentioned that MIOL has a much younger average age than many other parishes and that makes it very welcoming for families with young children.

Father Higgins noted that the parish has great community gatherings after Mass during the summer on the grounds of the parish, which helps to unite the parish. He pointed to the revitalization of the Holy Name Society and Ladies' Sodality as ways to extend the experience of worship into a deeper fellowship, where parishioners become friends and pray more specifically for and with each other, and together experience ongoing faith formation. It strengthens every participant in their promise made at confirmation to be public witnesses for Christ. Father Higgins concluded the broadcast by welcoming everyone to visit MIOL if they are in the Newton/Needham area.

Our team looks forward to future visits to parishes across the Archdiocese of Boston who are succeeding in the New Evangelization. The full set of interviews for our visit to Mary Immaculate of Lourdes can be found at [www.TheGoodCatholicLife.com/MIOL](http://www.TheGoodCatholicLife.com/MIOL). Our show for our visit to St. Albert the Great parish in Weymouth can be found at [www.TheGoodCatholicLife.com/SATG](http://www.TheGoodCatholicLife.com/SATG).

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