



Immaculate of Heart of Mary Oratory

Institute of Christ the King Sovereign King

Living the Truth in Charity

*Prayer of Our Pilgrim Oratory:
From a baroque church to a parking lot and now to a former thrift store—
in a 1950s shopping plaza destined for demolition.
O Lord, provide us a suitable location where we can worship you.*

December 2021

I want to share with you all today some background about how Divine Providence has been guiding us ever since COVID obliged us out of our usual location for worshipping God and gathering as a community. We have been through many challenging changes since then.



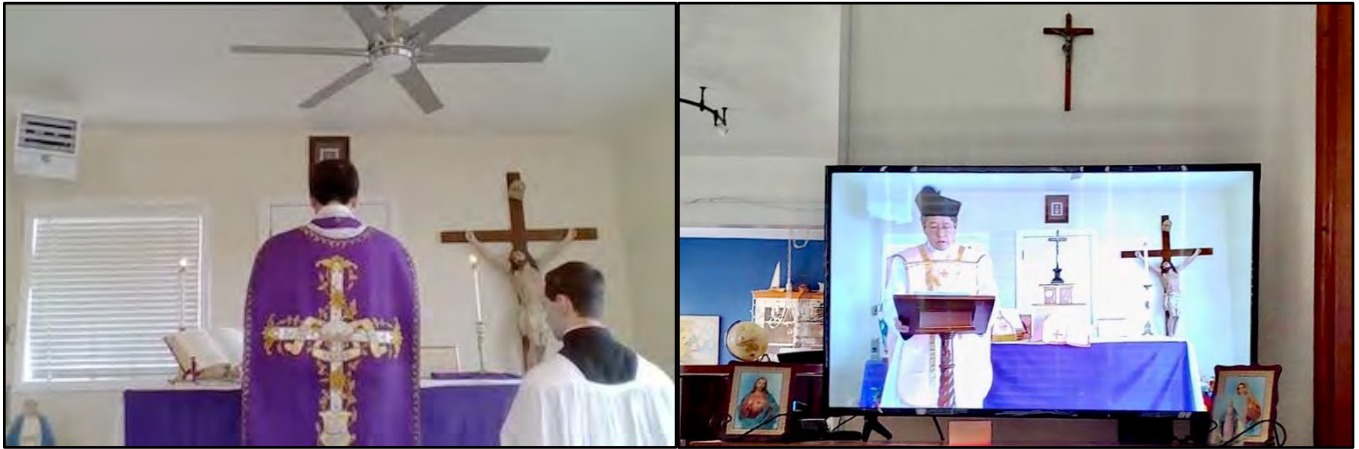
In 2013, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Oratory was erected in the Diocese of San José, California, USA—with Five Wounds Portuguese National Church as our host.

Even though our oratory was a paying guest and we had to work around the parish schedule, the classic architecture and the many statues in the beautiful church always lifted my soul and thoughts to Our Lord and his Saints while we were at Five Wounds.



We celebrated daily Masses at noon in the main church. On Sundays, we offered two Low morning Masses in the chapel, followed by a Sung High Mass at 12:30 in the main church.

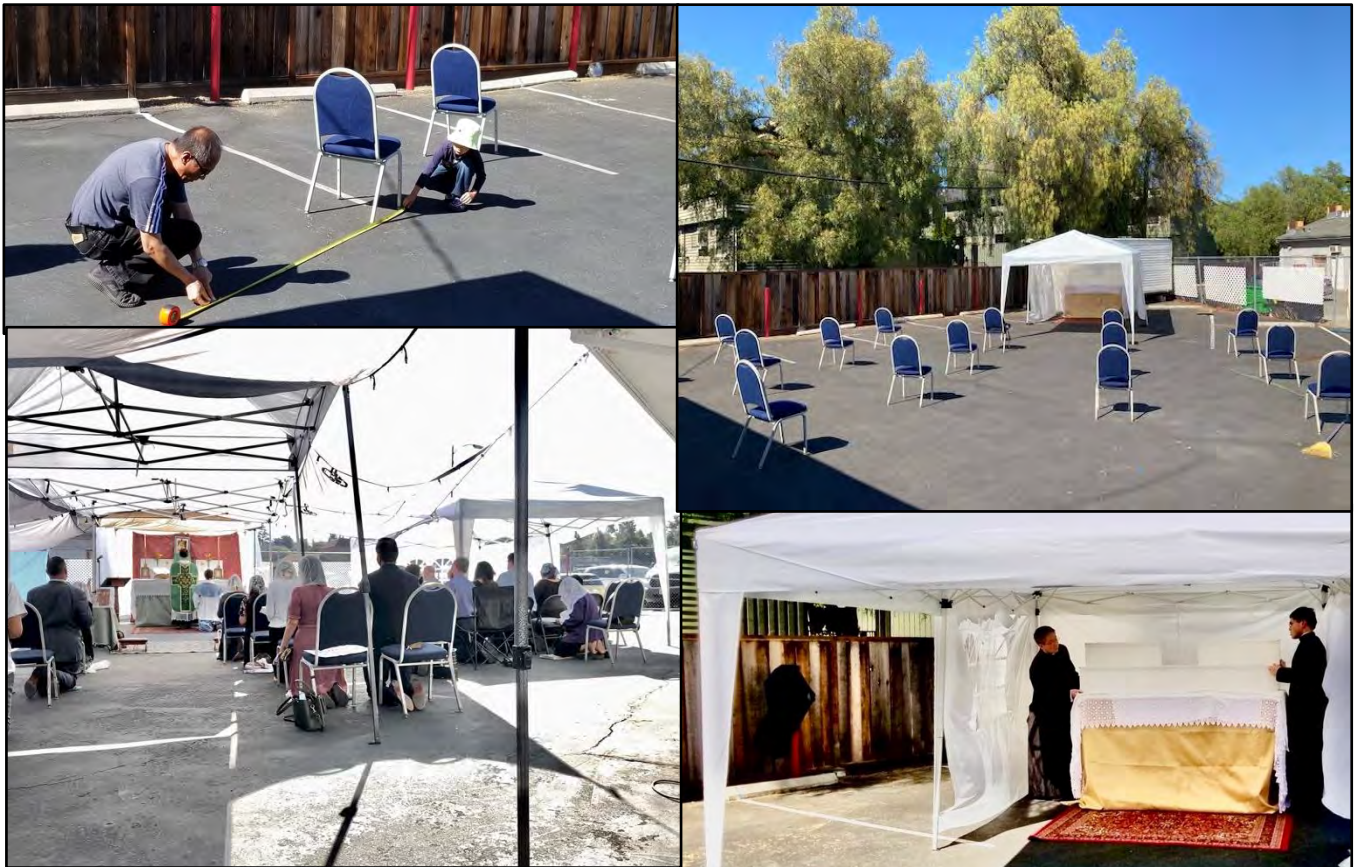
For several reasons, which changed during the pandemic, we were not been able to hold Masses at Five Wounds Church since the COVID shutdown began in March 2020. At first, during the months when all public Masses were prohibited last year, we offered live-streamed Masses from our Clergy Residence.



Above: Masses live-streamed from our Clergy Residence

Beginning in June last year, outdoor Masses were at first allowed by the county with limits on the number of attendees, plus social distancing, sanitizing, and masking requirements. The Five Wounds Parish then offered the option for us to celebrate our Masses outdoors in their parking lot. But, because of the need to set up and put away and find someplace to store the altar, altar furnishings, chairs, and tent shelters every day, celebrating outdoor Masses at Five Wounds was not feasible. So I started to look for someplace else in the area.

With the permission of the bishop of the diocese of San José, and the gracious agreement of the Knights of Columbus, we were able to use the parking lot at their Santa Maria Hall in Campbell for outdoor Masses for several summer months, and we were able to store everything inside the hall when we were done each day.



Above: Photos from our K of C Santa Maria Hall sojourn

When Santa Clara County first permitted us to move Masses indoors last October, we needed to move again. One of the oratory members suggested we ask a realtor about renting at the Cambrian Park Plaza shopping center. The center is still nicely maintained and landscaped, even though it was built in the 1950s. The owners plan to demolish the complex next year, so we were able to lease a large space that was formerly occupied by a thrift store for a very

reasonable price. Our bishop gave his permission, and so we set about turning the space into a suitable place of worship.

After a temporary upsurge in COVID cases, the county forbade public indoor Masses again for a while. During the winter months, the faithful either watched over live-stream, or sat outside and either watched through a window or on a screen located at an overflow seating area.

Right: Shopping plaza location

Below: Mass celebrated indoors with the faithful viewing outdoors



Now, indoor Masses are allowed inside again. Things are going very well in our latest temporary home.



Above: Procession at the shopping plaza and indoor Masses

Meanwhile, it became less possible for us to move back to Five Wounds parish. An Arabic Catholic community began using the chapel on Sundays. Our not being able to offer Sunday morning Masses at the chapel would make it difficult for us to maintain our community. I tried to negotiate with Five Wounds Parish to use their church occasionally, for example, only on Sundays, as we have a one-year lease at the current location. But they will only accept that we resume the same schedule we previously had and pay them the same amount as before. This is not possible; we can't afford rent for both places at once.

We have been working with the diocese and also with the Provincial Superior and CFO of the Institute of Christ the King to find the best option for the oratory. We will be able to use our current locations for a couple of months. I trust in Divine Providence that we will be able to find a suitable home, whether it will be renting a hall, or buying a building or a church.

At first the contrast between the beauty of Five Wounds Church and the poverty of the Knights of Columbus parking lot and the mundane nature of our later locations was quite disconcerting. But, with the passage of time, this ongoing situation has made me feel closer to the people of Israel in the desert—who had to pack up their tents every day; it also made me feel closer to Our Lord at His birth in a humble stable with no place of His own to lay His head. Honestly, it is amazing to realize that Our Lord, Creator of the universe, makes Himself present every time we celebrate Mass, even when the altar had to be set up and taken down every day in a suburban parking lot and even now when we have been offering the Divine Liturgy at a shopping plaza.

“For with God nothing will be impossible.” Luke 1:37. Let us join together to trust in God’s Providence and move forward united in hope.

Sincerely yours in Christo Rege,

Canon Raphael Ueda
 Priest of the Institute of Christ the King
 Rector of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Oratory
 San José, California, USA