

Bishop, With Papal Sanction, Celebrates in Ancient Rite in Slavonic and English

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of New York, a prelate of the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, celebrated mass yesterday in the ancient Byzantine Rite of St. Elias Byzantine Rite Church, 147 Kent Street, Brooklyn.

The service, lasting two and a quarter hours, was attended by a congregation of 750 and broadcast to an overflow on the street. The occasion was the quarterly corporate communion of Fidelity Council, Knights of Columbus.

Bishop Sheen read the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in English and turned to ancient Slavonic, the original language of the liturgy, only when he pronounced the words of consecration over the wine and unleavened wafers. The Byzantine is one of the several Eastern Rites in communion with Rome.

Vested like an Eastern prelate, the Bishop wore a pale blue silk cope, ornamented on the back with a representation of the Blessed Virgin framed in lilies, and a cupola-shaped mitre. The cloth-of-gold mitre was heavily jeweled. An enamel inset at the front depicted the Crucifixion and a similar one at the back showed an angel holding a chalice.

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When blessing the congregation, Bishop Sheen used an enameled hand cross. A church spokesman said the cross had once been in the possession of the Czars of Russia and was presented to Bishop Sheen by a friend.

A chancel choir composed of eighteen bearded, brown-robed Latin Rite Capuchin monks from Mary Immaculate Monastery, Garrison, N. Y., sang the responses of the mass in ancient Slavonic. A mixed choir in the organ loft sang in English.

Speaking at a communion breakfast in the church annex, Bishop Sheen traced the history of the Eastern and Western Church from the time of the Apostles. He said he had special Papal permission to offer mass in the Byzantine as well as the Latin Rite.

Later he explained that English was used yesterday, also by permission, because it "is the language of the people" as Slavonic was the tongue of early members of the rite.

"I hope the day will come when Africans will have mass in their own language," he told the audience.

He asked prayers for the religious unity of East and West under the authority of the Pope.

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Priests can allow congregations to view ancient manuscripts: CCWATERSHED.ORG/CAMPION