

VIEW FROM THE PEW

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Last month Frank Scinta wrote *A View from the Loft*. I call my little reflection *A View from Across*, across the street, that is. In 1985 the Diocese of Buffalo moved its offices to the vacated Courier Express Newspaper building. I was moved into a scenic fifth floor corner office, the south window facing the Sidway building, the west window facing St. Louis Church. For several years I enjoyed looking at the neatly manicured grounds and hearing the dulcet tones of the church bells. The bells rang every half hour so I had no need to wear a watch. I saw the life cycle of human progression as weddings exited the church on Friday afternoon and funerals entered the church in the mornings. The facade of the church provided me a peace-filled atmosphere outside my office.

Several years later I received a new assignment which took me out of the Catholic Center. Several years after that I was placed in a brand new ministry - Vicar for Priests - in which there was no parish church. In 1991 my 25th anniversary of ordination to priesthood occurred. I had no place to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving for the anniversary. Having viewed the facade of St. Louis Church for so many years it occurred to me to ask the pastor and people at St. Louis to celebrate my anniversary Mass here. The cordiality of the pastor and people of St. Louis was overwhelming. At the time I didn't realize that I would come to enjoy all that St. Louis has to offer on a more permanent basis.

Shortly after the death of our beloved Msgr. Robert A. Mack I was asked to consider helping with weekend Masses. It was a ministry I gladly accepted. It opened a whole new world of love and beauty. There are no people like those at St. Louis. The welcome, care and concern I have received since beginning my weekends here has been rewarding and so life-giving. Never does a weekend go by that someone doesn't say something of affirmation to me. People here actually listen to the sermons. They ask questions and offer me further insights into whatever the sermon topic may have been. Sometimes after the Saturday afternoon Mass a group meets to glean further insights into the gospel. It is always an hour or two well spent. I drive home from those gatherings with a real spirit of joy, always having learned more. Being a downtown parish, St. Louis attracts people from all over the diocese and all over the country. Since it is what is called an *intentional* parish (people come here because they want to, not because it is within their territorial confines) the people here celebrate the Liturgy with enthusiasm and make hospitality a chief concern. People staying at downtown hotels often attend Mass here. They are always impressed with the beauty of the church and with the hospitality offered. No visitor can ever say they were neglected. It is a joy to meet people from far and near. St. Louis is a very *social* parish. There are few occasions which go uncelebrated. Even Ocktoberfest is celebrated with blessed beverages in a spirit akin to an important feast day.

Mass in St. Louis Church is always an event. The beauty of the church coupled with the gorgeous music easily elevates one's mind and heart to God. As the music from the organ and the voices of the

choir echo throughout the cavernous building one feels like he or she has entered heaven. There are even several cute little angels (altars servers) as well. The dedication of the magnificent choir is an inspiration both because of their dedication (they sing for God) and the talent in presenting such uplifting music. The reverence of the congregation manifests the fact that worship isn't just another daily event. It is something important because it is for God.

Having a sometimes debilitating arthritis I am reminded that I won't be at St. Louis forever, which makes every visit here a notable celebration. I feel like a prince as I prepare for Mass being assisted by so many capable sacristans. I'm spoiled. I'm not sure I'd know how to set up for Mass if I had to do it on my own. In this season following Thanksgiving I am grateful to the people of St. Louis parish and to its pastor for inviting me to celebrate Mass here.