

Blessed Karl's Feast Day 2021: Saint Mary's Parish in Washington Celebrates with Solemn High Mass

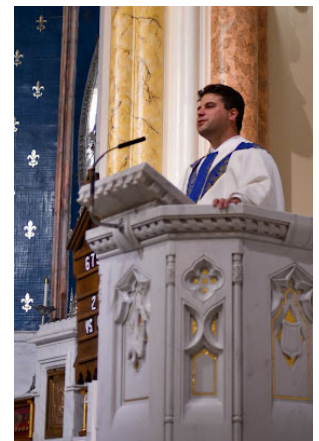
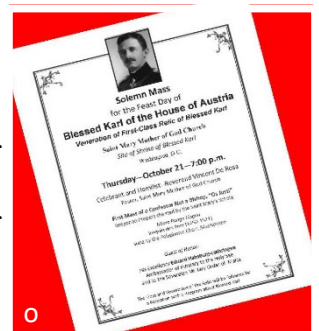
October 21, 2021. More than 300 faithful filled Saint Mary Mother of God Church in downtown Washington for the parish's 14th annual festive celebration of the Feast Day of Blessed Karl of the House of Austria. The 7:00 p.m. Mass was followed by veneration of a first-class relic of Blessed Karl in the church, and then by a reception in the church hall featuring remarks by Archduke Eduard Habsburg-Lothringen, Ambassador of Hungary to the Holy See.

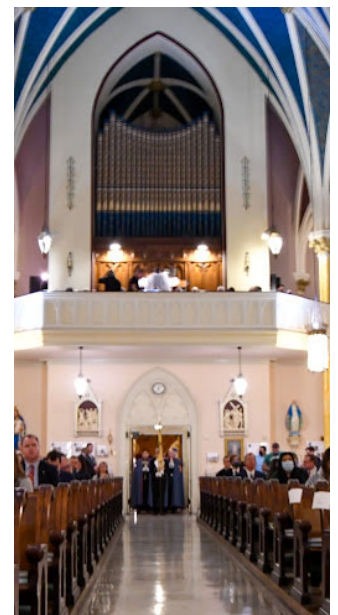
Just as in the days of Emperor Karl, the solemn ceremony, chanted in Latin, was enhanced by beautiful music from choir and schola, incense, bells, periods of silence, and torchbearers honoring the presence of Christ. Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Vincent De Rosa, pastor of Saint Mary's, assisted by a deacon and subdeacon. Patrick Lally served as MC.



Adding to the pageantry of the occasion, the procession was led by the Habsburg Imperial flag, borne by Paul Danello, followed by members of chivalric orders in full regalia—the Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory the Great; the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta; the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem; the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George; the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus; and the Order of Saint Michael of the Wing. DC Knights of Columbus served as ushers. Besides Ambassador Habsburg-Lothringen, a special guest was former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See Callista Gingrich. Julius Jackson served as director of protocol.

In his homily Father De Rosa described how Blessed Karl exemplified the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience—usually associated with the religious life—in his very different vocation as a husband, father, and national leader. The feast day also marked the One Hundredth Anniversary of Blessed Karl's 1921 secret flight to Hungary with Empress Zita from their exile in Switzerland, his second attempt to reclaim his Hungarian throne. Though joyously welcomed by the people, King Karl was betrayed and the effort failed, sending Karl and Zita to their final exile in Madeira, where he would die a holy death within the year.

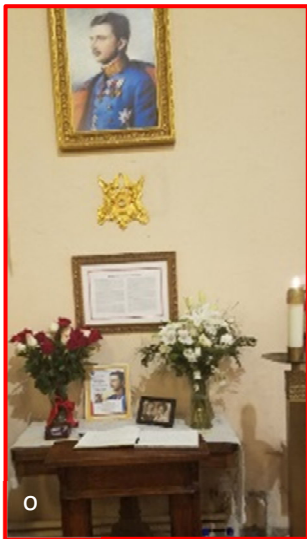




Washington Celebrates Blessed Karl . . .

Music played a major part in making the Feast Day a glorious and memorable one. For ten minutes before the start of Mass, the bells in the church steeple rang out in a joyous clamor. Then the church's magnificent George S. Hutchings organ—Opus 239, installed when the church was built in 1891 and recently fully restored—came alive, as the parish's organist and director of music David Swenson played Bach's *Fugue from Passacaglia und Thema Fugatum in C Minor* as a prelude to the Mass. During Mass the parish schola, directed by David Sullivan, chanted the propers of the Mass "Os Justi," and the Gregorian hymns *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* and *Sub Tuum Praesidium*.

The polyphonic music was selected to honor French composer Josquin des Prez in observance of the 500th anniversary of his death on August 27, 1521. The Ordinary—his *Missa Pange Lingua*—and his motets *Ave Maria* and *Ave Verum Corpus* were sung by the polyphonic choir Musikanten, directed by Kerry Krebill. The congregation's opening and closing hymns were also chosen to befit the royal Feast Day—*Praise my Soul the King of Heaven* for its kingly theme, and the concluding *Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens Adore Him* because it is set to the familiar tune of Haydn's *Austrian Hymn*. It was followed by an organ postlude, Georg Muffat's *Toccata Quinta*.

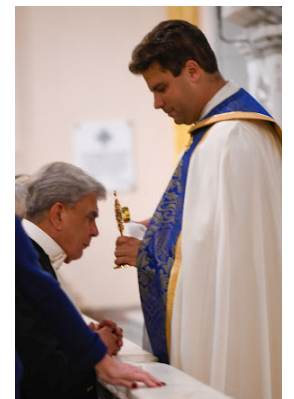


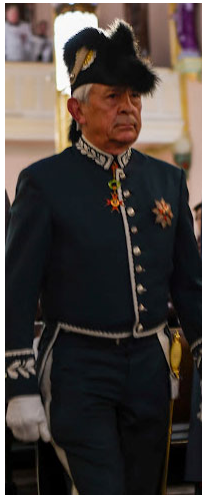
Saint Mary's is blessed to have a permanent shrine to Blessed Karl, dedicated in 2012, where a first-class relic is honored throughout the year. For the occasion of the Feast Day, it was placed in another reliquary on the main altar, and after Mass the faithful were invited to come forward to venerate it individually. During the veneration, the schola chanted the hymn *Crux Fidelis*. Both shrine and sanctuary were bedecked in a spectacular array of flowers, arranged and provided by Elizabeth Wick.

Saint Mary's in Washington has become the flagship of devotion to Blessed Karl in the United States. It is a fitting location. Founded in 1845 as a parish for German-speaking residents of the nation's capital, its Stations of the Cross and several of its stained-glass windows are from Austria. Every year from 2008 onward, Blessed Karl's feast day Mass has been celebrated with notable solemnity, three times by a bishop. Two of Blessed Karl's grandchildren and several great-grandchildren have participated. Great-grandson Archduke Imre and his wife Kathleen met and married at Saint Mary's. Perhaps more impressive is what happens between the festive events, where on Sundays and even weekdays throughout the year, people can be seen praying at the shrine and leaving their heart-felt petitions for Blessed Karl. A solid core of faithful devotees has grown, including many young couples and families. The Mass is celebrated under the auspices of the Emperor Karl League of Prayer for Peace Among the Nations, and is coordinated by Suzanne Pearson, Delegate of the League for the United States and Canada. Today many other volunteers at Saint Mary's help to make the Mass, and the reception after it, a success. Meanwhile, the number of official shrines to Blessed Karl across America is twenty and growing, twelve of them dedicated since 2015. Many celebrate their own Feast Day Masses, as do also a number of parishes that do not yet have shrines.



Knights of Saint George (and Prayer League members) Jeff Bedia, Paul van Wie, and Stephen Higgins. Dr. van Wie is founding head of the Kaiser Karl Archive-North America. Jeff and Stephen are active devotees of Blessed Karl at Saint Mary's parish.





At left, Knight of Saint Gregory Craig Duehring. Above, Knights and Dames of chivalric orders gather around Ambassador Habsburg-Lothringen, Ambassador Gingrich, and standard-bearer Paul Danello, with Julius Jackson at right. Later that week, Dame of Malta Mary Petrino, who has been attending since 2012, wrote to Father De Rosa, "This year's Mass was the most exquisite that I can recall."

After the Mass, the Observance Continues . . . Marking 100 Years Since Karl and Zita's Daring Final Attempt to Regain Hungary



At the standing-room-only reception, Mass-goers gathered to share fellowship and refreshments, and especially to hear from Ambassador Habsburg-Lothringen—part of the family's Hungarian branch and a relative of Blessed Karl—who described riveting details of King Karl and Queen Zita's final trip to Hungary. The crowd then engaged the Archduke for more than an hour in a lively question-and-answer session, ranging from his devotion to Blessed Karl to what being a Habsburg has meant to him as a public official today. As she has for several years, parishioner Kat Talalis served as moderator.



A special guest was Trevor Alford of Tridentine Brewing Co., of Herscher, Illinois, a long-time devotee of Blessed Karl, who described his family company's Austrian roots and its recently launched line of "Hopsburg" (pun intended) beer, a Vienna Lager, featuring Blessed Karl on the label. At this point the home-brewing company does not sell commercially but considers its craft a hobby and a kind of apostolate, since they hope the company and beer names will invite questions from non-Catholic friends. Trevor and his father Jeff and brother Cameron came with samples for all, and these were enjoyed along with the variety of other refreshments. The Prayer League's book table also did a lively business, with reception guests particularly asking for the new standing statue of Emperor Karl and the booklet "Death of an Emperor," by Dr. Hans Karl Zessner-Spitzenberg, which Ambassador Habsburg-Lothringen had particularly recommended, saying he had urged all his family members to read it.



Photo credit: Krister Holladay (all photos except those marked with "o" in the lower left corner). Souvenir Mass programs available on request. Check the Blessed Karl website for more event coverage, items for sale, and historical details about the life of Blessed Karl. BlessedKarl.org