

## Welcome to The Old Catholic Church of B.C.

Churches have declared themselves to be Old Catholic in various times and places. The first group of Churches to proclaim themselves Old Catholic, appeared in the Netherlands in the 18th Century when the Dutch Catholics extended sympathy and hospitality to French Catholics who were denied religious liberty in France. Their defence of religious liberty brought them condemnation from Rome, and since 1739, the Archbishopric of Utrecht has remained independent of Rome.

Old Catholic have always held that under Christ, one finds perfect freedom. Rather than disavow their historic principles, they have maintained separate existence from Rome since the 18th Century. Other Churches joined them in 1870 when the first Vatican Council proclaimed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Since only Christ is infallible, many Churches in Austria, Germany, Bavaria, and Switzerland, realizing their position was closer to Utrecht than to Rome, proclaimed themselves Old Catholic.

Old Catholic Church of British Columbia, with its **Church of Saint Raphael's**, established in 1921, is an independent communion which derives its Apostolic Succession from the Old Catholic Church in Holland, thus assuring the Catholic validity of its rites, sacraments and clerical orders.

We do not receive any grants or funds from municipal, provincial or federal governments. We are duly registered in BC and Ottawa. In the past 30 years we have provided room and board for over 250 people in need, and helping them to find work, and putting them back on their feet to be self sufficient emotionally and financially.

**Our clergy are not paid.** We hold secular jobs for a livelihood. Celibacy is optional.

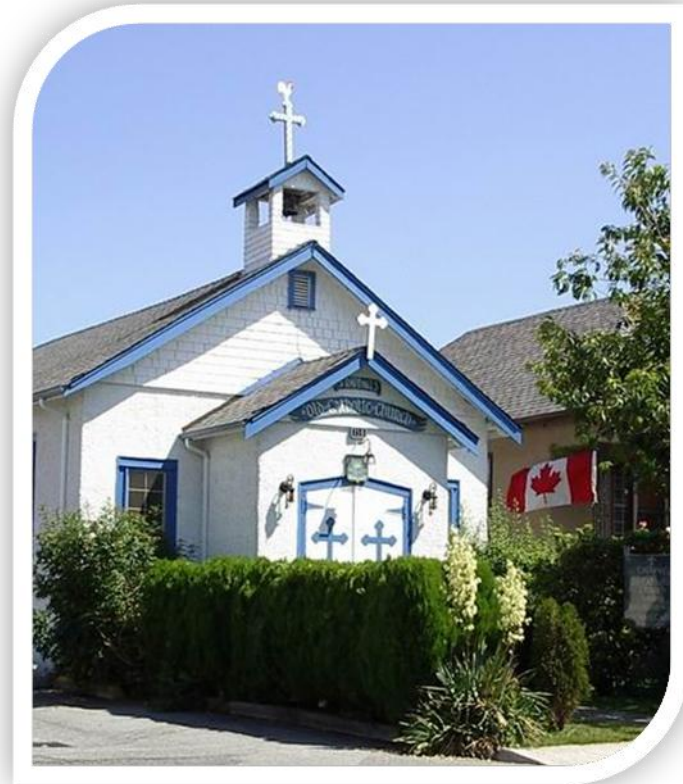
The majority of our people attending the church are very different ethnically, socially, religiously. All are welcome. We do many funerals, where there is only the Priest and the departed. We feel that any human being should be treated equally in death and with respect. We also visit patients in our city hospital who for whatever reason have lost or abandoned their faith or have none. During all the year, people come at the door to secure food, and we provide them with sandwiches, soup, etc.

Members of the Old Catholic Church are joyful Christians happily sharing their glorious Faith with the despairing souls of those, who have never known the joy of Christ; a love for Christ, and a warm commitment and devotion to Jesus Christ is the criterion for membership in the Old Catholic Church.



Mr. Samuel Thomas with Bishop Gérard LaPlante  
inside St. Raphael's Old Catholic Church

## The Little Church



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# The Little Church

by Samuel Thomas

A solitary bell swings  
in a tower on a church roof.  
The white rooster's red eye  
watches the people pass through.

The tiny blue and white steeple  
like a Greek villa transplanted  
from Mediterranean shores  
or colors lifted from a Quebec flag  
holds her weight this Sunday morning.

Saint Raphael,  
patron saint of happy meetings  
guards the little church  
under his folded white wings  
and one of the priest's dogs,  
Raphie, moves gingerly  
at the back of the church  
appeasing ecclesiastic hearts.

A lady with a long overcoat  
and un-kept hair shyly  
shuffles past the front altar  
to slip a coin in a box  
lighting a candle for 'Our Lady.'

The already small space  
that is the church's hall of prayer  
becomes smaller still  
when during Communion,

a soulful songstress enchants  
through hallowed notes.

St. Raphael's heart beats strong.  
Its doors welcome the weary and wandering  
Pride spreads its smile on the diversity  
of its people.

The 'Our Father' is recited  
by a small village of voices—  
Dutch, Swahili, Cree, French, German  
Spanish, English and more.

As the people sit and kneel, the pews let out a creak,  
the pictures of Jesus on the wall seem ready to speak,  
whispering words of perseverance.

Pages from a liturgy book that once lay unbound  
from time and use are carefully taped together again.

St. Raphael's Church moves to its own beat,  
providing sustenance to the poor  
offering sanctuary to the fearful  
and sharing spirit with the forlorn.

A little church that  
has withstood storm after storm.  
A humble home under the gaze of an angel  
where song and prayer lingers  
long after the organ has stopped playing.

*Mr. Samuel Thomas - the author—was baptized and  
confirmed at St. Raphael's Old Catholic Church on Easter  
2005 by Bishop Gérard LaPlante.*