

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

I write this Advent newsletter on the feast of one of the greatest missionaries of all time, St. Francis Xavier, known as the “conquistador of souls.” Our Lady Immaculate is, of course, the greatest. Our country is dedicated to her Immaculate Conception and from Santa Fe, New Mexico, she has reigned almost without interruption for well nigh four hundred years ago over the land she conquered. Truly, Mary Immaculate is the Conquistadora, “She who conquers.”

But Santa Fe (whose full name is the “Royal town of the holy faith of St. Francis,”) is dedicated to the patron saint of many saints themselves, and really, of every Catholic, the stigmatic of Assisi. In Santa Fe they used to say “somos todos Franciscanos,” “we’re all Franciscans.” Well, for good and for bad, we *are* all of us today followers of Francis of Assisi, “Franciscans.”

There is a legend that St. Francis was born in a stable, but it is no mere story that he originated the Christmas crèche or stable, at Greccio in 1223. It was a kind of a “living nativity scene,” so enamored was he of the sacred Incarnation and Humanity of Christ, of the touching poverty in which Our Lord was born, lived, and died.

Let us all then be Franciscans! How St. Francis, the saint of the stable, loved the Church and her doctrine, the Blessed Sacrament, and the papacy and the holy poverty. But what comfort may we not find in these last days when Our Lord would have His Church to be small, and poor, and divided. For divisions are part of the patrimony of the poor man of Assisi. Who, after all could live up to such a Christ-like ideal, who could even agree in what it consists? Even with the authority of the papacy firmly in place, there were constant controversies, over the centuries from the beginning, battles and bitter divisions. “¡Somos todos Franciscanos!”

Still, if centuries of scandals and splits are a part of the legacy of the very man of peace, the Poverello of Assisi, so are saints, so severely edifying, countless as the stars of heaven, each one a worthy child of the Seraphic Father. So, let us be content to be humble and little and poor, and yes, divided. But that is not all. Let us creep quietly to the crib



The weekend of November 19-21 was given over to the Forty Hours' Devotion at St. Gertrude the Great Church. (Above) Bishop Dolan, assisted by Fathers Ercoli and McGuire, carries the incense enveloped monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament through the aisles of our church. This annual triduum of prayer and petition marked our thirtieth year “under roof” in Cincinnati. We thank God and St. Gertrude the Great!

this Christmas, and warm our cold and battle torn hearts at the hearth of divine love, the Word made Flesh lying there in the stable's feeding trough, Food still for a hungry world, Food enough in the Tabernacle to make us grow up to be saints.

How wonderful that there are still true Franciscans in our midst! I think especially of the justly celebrated, and always faithful Father Martin, who last month kept his 95th birthday, and is still full of charitable zeal to help heal some of the schisms of our day. But don't be distraught by them. Remember, “we're all Franciscans” now, and delight in your very poverty, so that the Holy Child may enrich us, each one in his own little stable.

A blessed Christmas!!

—The Most Reverend Daniel L. Dolan



Be it in a magnificent basilica or in a humble home-chapel, the same Sacrifice of the Cross is offered for the salvation of souls.



January twenty-first, marks the second anniversary of the death of Africa's "martyr of charity," Father Eldred Leslie. This year, as last, Father Carlos Ercoli ventured to Africa to help fill the great void that was left when Father Leslie was brutally murdered by some poor soul he had helped many times.



(Above) Father Ercoli poses with our friends in Lagos, Nigeria, which is the second most populated city on the African continent.

(Upper left and left center) Father Ercoli visited several cities in Nigeria where he rekindled old friendships, forged new, and administered the sacraments (including a First Holy Communion for a young girl) to fellow Catholics – who must do without a priest for nearly a year at a time because of their tenacity in adhering to the unchanged Catholic faith.

(Above and bottom left) Father also visited South Africa and another group of uncompromising Catholics who live not far from where Father Leslie lived and died. Father again offered Mass, administered the sacraments, catechized the youth and enrolled them in the Scapular.

It is through your generosity, dear Catholics, that these missionary visits are made possible. And by your charity you too become missionaries and help fulfill Christ's command to go forth and bring the Gospel to all men.

Christ's Mass this Christmas

DO USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO SEND US THE NAMES OF LOVED ONES, AND YOUR OWN INTENTIONS TOO, TO REST ON THE ALTAR DURING OUR **Christmas Novena of Masses**.

REMEMBER THE POWER OF THE MASS, GOD'S BEST GIFT TO US! ARE YOU HAVING A LONG WAIT OR WORSE FOR YOUR MASSES? SEND US YOUR INTENTIONS AND ONE OF OUR POOR MISSIONARY PRIESTS WILL OFFER YOUR MASS WITHIN THE MONTH!

