

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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sgg.org traditionalmass.org

FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

The Christmas Octaves have come to an end, and the calendar returns to the sanctoral cycle with the Confessor of the Faith St. Hilary, declared Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX. St. Hilary's feast heads the saints with whom we will now keep Christmas until Candlemas rings its close on the fortieth day. How fitting it is to have St. Hilary first as a guide! He reminds us that Christmas is not first of all a feast of feelings and feasting, of warm celebrations and happy children and many presents. It is nothing if it does not celebrate the great dogma of the Incarnation: God made man and born for us.

Christmas is indeed the birthday of God made Man. The little Child of the crib is not a creature, but the Divine Son incarnate. For this great truth of Christ's Divinity St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers in mid fourth century France, suffered persecution and exile at the schemings of the Arians, but eventually triumphed. This blessed Christmas season should remind us of the Christmas confessors, the heroes of the faith who underwent every difficulty and cross rather than compromise Catholic doctrine. Some of this history is not especially "Christmassy" for it is essentially Christian, and Christians take up their cross to follow Our Lord.

In the *Golden Legend* the medieval Dominican hagiographer James de Voragine tells a fascinating tale or legend in his notice for St. Hilary. He says that a heretical pope called a council of bishops. Sound familiar? Annoyed at the arrival of the orthodox Hilary, the false pope of the story, Leo, declares he is "supreme bishop and judge, seated upon the throne of the apostles." St. Hilary answers "Judge thou mayest be, but certain it is that thou judgest not upon the Throne of God." Leo is indignant at this, and leaves the assembly for a moment, breathing threats against St. Hilary.

The heretic never returns, but dies a sudden and shameful death. St. Hilary, humbly seated on the ground (no one would rise to make place for him) is miraculously elevated as the ground rises beneath him. When



Christmas at St. Gertrude the Great Church was observed with the singing of the First Vespers of Christmas, Matins, carols, the blessing of the creche, a beautifully sung Mass celebrated by Bishop Dolan, and the recitation of Matins. (Above) His Excellency delivers his Christmas sermon to parishioners and visitors who filled the pews in the newly painted and beautifully decorated church.

word comes of the pope's wretched end, the saint restores all of the bishops to the Catholic faith, and sends them home to their dioceses. Talk about a happy ending! Perhaps this story is meant to encourage us today. Let us pray for: 1) for the Church in her current trials, and 2) for each other for perseverance.

This snowy winter is a busy season for us, both at home and abroad. Thank you for your interests, your support, and your prayers.

Yours in Our Incarnate Lord,

–The Most Reverend Daniel L. Dolan





December twenty-eighth, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, was celebrated with a Mass sung by our young people and the blessing of the children by Bishop Dolan. A Christmas party that included a light lunch, Christmas goodies, and stories read by the good bishop himself followed.



Father Cekada, assisted by Father Larrabee and seminarian Villi Lehtoranta, offered a solemn high Mass and blessed gold, frankincense, and myrrh on the Feast of the Epiphany. The blessed sacramentals were then made available to the families for the traditional home blessing.



Newly ordained Father German Fliess imparts his priestly blessing following Mass at St. Gertrude the Great Church. Father Fliess celebrated a solemn high Mass on January seventh (and also offered the Sunday high Mass and delivered a timely sermon on the Feast of the Holy Family). Following the solemn high Mass, (and despite a burst of snow activity) Bishop Dolan hosted his well attended annual Appreciation Dinner for church workers and parishioners of St. Gertrude the Great. (Right middle) Father Fliess cuts a congratulatory cake marking his first visit to St. Gertrude the Great as a priest. (Bottom right) Father Larrabee enjoys a light moment at the Appreciation Dinner with one of St. Gertrude's younger parishioners!

