

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

The other Saturday, we forgot to turn the lights on for the people at Mass. But we often keep our church dim at Christmastime, and pray in the beautiful soft light of the trees and crib. Nobody seems to mind, but I thought to myself that the Rorate Masses were past, and turned some lights on for the Sisters and the Simpson choir who composed our congregation that morning in the Epiphany octave.

But no one could accuse us of keeping *you* in the dark concerning our church, the Church, and our news. Thus the work of this newsletter which we've been publishing now for over twenty-five years. I thought I would write some thoughts about light and the liturgy as we come to the end of the Octave of Epiphany, sometimes called the Feast of Lights.

This Epiphany we were pleased to have some shining silver among our golden array as we celebrated a solemn high Mass in thanksgiving for the Silver Sacerdotal Anniversary of Father Roberto Mardones, who was with us for the occasion from Ciudad Juarez Mexico and El Paso, Texas; his two chapels. Fr. Mardones was ordained at the church of the Divine Providence in Acapulco, Mexico by Bishop Carmona on December 20, 1990. We were honored by the visit of this edifying and faithful priest and happy to rejoice and give thanks with him. His is a difficult, and at times very dangerous posting. Keep him in your prayers.

From the darkness of December Advent until the Candle Mass of February 2nd, the Christmas season is bracketed in the Light which conquers darkness. So too, for that matter, is Lent which this year follows Candlemas by only a week, and draws to a close with the glorious Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday morning, lit by candles kindled slowly from the newly blessed fire: Lumen Christi! Deo grátias.

Our Advent sanctuary is severely bare, save for the glorious Advent wreath, whose candles serve as countdown for the coming of Christ at Christmas. This year



His Excellency Bishop Dolan listened attentively as the announcement of Easter was chanted by Father Cekada following the Gospel at the solemn high Mass of Epiphany.

we marked each Advent Saturday with a Rorate Mass. These predawn Masses honor the Incarnation and are traditionally sung by candlelight. The Rorate Mass, and all of Advent, usher in that “Light which shineth in the darkness,” symbolized by December’s long night.

The last of these Rorate Masses was particularly striking. The December 19th Mass was perfectly set and timed for its symbolism, as it concluded with a cloudless clear dawn whose light gently filled the dark church. As we sang the “Alma” (the seasonal Marian antiphon for Christmas) to her who is the dawn of grace, Mary Immaculate, the rising sun turned our icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help into gold. Meanwhile, Father Cekada was at the Baptistry chapel altar in black vestments, at the same time, offering the Holy Sacrifice by the light of two unbleached candles, as the daylight slowly illuminated his altar as well. Father was praying for perpetual light for Bishop McKenna, who was being buried that day in Michigan. May he rest in peace. Amen.

Our cloister's fountain has been transformed into a Christmas Tree (which symbolizes the Tree of Paradise, did you know?), its blue lights shining in the white snow now as a homage to Our Lady who is the "sealed fountain," as Sacred Scripture says. The peripatetic outdoor Christmas lights this year have a mind of their own, but when they are on glisten beautifully. Perhaps they stand for us, who should be "the light of the world" but who, also, are often darkness. Still, when we manage to plug into God's grace, it can be a beautiful sight as we shine quietly against the dark.

Shine on, dear soul! A blessed rest of Christmastide to you.

– Most Rev. Daniel L. Dolan



To the delight of our children at St. Gertrude the Great Church, St. Nicholas made his yearly visit on his feast day. This year it coincided nicely with the Second Sunday of Advent.



On the Feast of the Epiphany, our esteemed friend, Father Roberto Mardones, observed his Silver Jubilee of Priestly Ordination (which was actually just two weeks before on December 20th) with us at St. Gertrude the Great Church. Father was the celebrant of the solemn high Mass for this happy occasion. Also each year on this day we honor our many dear church workers with a special Epiphany party to thank them for all they do to make St. Gertrude the Great Church – great! This year all who give so much over the course of a year were quite happy to generously share their evening with our special guest of honor Father Mardones.



The Sunday within the Octave of Christmas also marked the Feast of St. John the Evangelist. For this day the Church has a special blessing for wine in honor of the Beloved Apostle. (Above) Bishop Dolan blesses wine at the conclusion of the high Mass at the special shrine that was erected just for that purpose. A parish toast to the Love of St. John was held in Helfia Hall immediately following the ceremonies.



This picture of some of our other deer parishioners, who had congregated on the lawn in front of the rectory perhaps to enjoy a little post-Christmas day rest and relaxation, was taken following Mass on the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.