

# ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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### FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

We usually battle out the great questions of the Church in our day in learned articles, sometimes in sermons, and increasingly in entertaining as well as instructive videos. And don't forget heated battles at the dinner table!

But imagine if the false pope you rightly oppose were to send an army to your door, pillage your home, slay your servants, and take family members hostage! Through it all, imagine further, you would continue caring for your household, and take in the homeless and wounded of the war, making a kind of clinic in the ruins of your house. Keeping your head, and keeping up your prayers all the while. Well, this is the story of one of the great saints of the Church. You will find her in your *All Saints Calendar* on March 9, St. Frances of Rome.

This wife, mother, widow and religious foundress not only exemplified extraordinary sanctity in every possible state of life, but anticipated by over two centuries the spirit and teaching of the gentle bishop of Geneva, St. Francis de Sales. Are you familiar with his spiritual classic, *Introduction to the Devout Life*? You should be. It is classic spiritual reading for Lent, or anytime. The spirit described in this book is exactly that of St. Frances. In turbulent Rome, with an antipope invading, she demonstrated that sanctity is possible for all, including besieged and very busy mothers, even victims of war and hostage taking.

When peace returned, she founded a convent accessible for widows and devout women of the world. The Benedictine Oblates prayed the Divine Office at home, and went abroad for the works of mercy. But even as a young wife and matron, she



*On Ash Wednesday ashes were solemnly blessed at St. Gertrude the Great Church. (Above) His Excellency, Bishop Dolan imposes ashes, now a sacramental, on the clergy and altar servers.*

always managed a large household to the eventual praise of all, ever putting duty first, even when it called her from her devotions.

Still, St. Frances was not exempt from complaints and even bitter criticism, which she bore with great patience. In all of this and more, it seems that this Benedictine Oblate anticipated the teaching which the great Doctor of the Church would give so many years later. Maybe, I'm thinking, she was indeed his inspiration, and he her namesake!

St. Frances of Rome is great saint. Sometime again we will have to talk about how she could see her Guardian Angel, and in his light navigate the dark streets of Rome. Thus Pope Pius XI declared her patroness of night vision and motorists.

A blessed continuation to your Lent!

– **Most Rev. Daniel L. Dolan**

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*(Above) Ashes are distributed to the laity by Father Lehtoranta on Ash Wednesday at St. Gertrude the Great Church. (Below) The annual Children's Day of Reflection was held on March 15 and attended by approximately 43 students. Bishop Dolan led the Rosary meditations and was ably assisted by Fathers McGuire, Lehtoranta, and McKenna who gave conferences, heard confessions, offered Mass, and officiated at the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.*



*(Above) St. Patrick's Day is always observed in a grand way liturgically at St. Gertrude the Great. This year was no exception, with a solemn high Mass sung by Father McKenna that was followed by solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Also pictured are some of our grammar school students enjoying themselves during their lunch period. (Below and bottom left) Our customary blessing of hot cross buns took place in Helfia Hall following the Mass on St. Joseph's Day. Food was also collected for the poor as a little Lenten offering in honor of great St. Joseph. Everyone enjoyed a pizza lunch and socializing afterward.*

