

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

Our newsletter is dated Septuagesima, not Candlemas, but it is the recent and glorious Sunday feast of Our Lady's Purification I'm thinking about, specifically *the trees*. The candles were duly blessed. Blessed with mild weather we processed in the cloister. The music for these liturgical processions is always a challenge, singing complicated Gregorian pieces while holding a book and a candle. But at long last we have a very singable setting of the responsory, composed by our own organist, and alternated with chant. It resounded triumphantly under the cloister vaults, echoing over the wind which got some of the candles, and almost toppled my mitre.

Quite a scene, but it was the evergreens in the distance which caught my eye. They looked as though they were *trembling*, at the coming of their Lord into the Temple. Arbor Vitae they are called, Tree of Life. The Holy Cross, and Christ Himself is the tree of life. Christ comes this day for the Offertory of the Mass which is His life, offered at the hands of the priest, but first by His Mother. Well might the trees tremble at the thought that they were chosen as the instrument of the Redemption of man, and in a sense of all the world, bought back by "The Tree" from Satan who first conquered *by* the tree: Adam and the Forbidden Fruit. But these *are* Septuagesima thoughts. They lead us to Lent. The Purification's purple and folded chasubles, its darkness and light, prefigure Holy Saturday, and peek at Easter.

But I'll remember this year's Candlemas for the trees. In Psalm 95:12 we find the apposite verse: "Then shall the trees of the woods rejoice." Believe me, the trees aren't worried about deforestation or carbon emissions. They're still *trembling* with delight at their Lord who came to die upon one of their number, making it to be more than verdant, a true Arbor Vitae, Tree of Life.

Pardon my liturgical thoughts this month, but this is the season to live with your missal. What a shame that so many fill head and heart each day with only the passing things, the ephemera of this world, if not far worse. Consider the filth of football's grand finale, "Super Bowl," which this year claimed the same day as the Purification of Mary Immaculate. The candles were once blessed and carried in reparation for the pagan excesses of Roman society of old. As it was in the beginning, so it is now.



Bishop Dolan, servers, choir, and congregation re-enter the magnificently sunlit St. Gertrude the Great Church on the Feast of the Purification at the conclusion the Candlemas procession.

Purification falls halfway between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox, on the thirty-third day of the year, the number of Our Lord's Sacred Humanity. But we moderns have a different concept of numbers, and time. We're generally too busy for processions and psalm pondering, for the Word or the worship of God.

Lent calls us to reset the clock to God's time. This was one of the themes of the January retreat I gave at Most Holy Trinity Seminary on the Divine Office. The priest prays seven times a day, for you and in your name. But when the Eighth Day comes, look lively and come to adore. Lent is coming. Some have the means to begin or end their workday with the perfect prayer, the Mass. Do you? But everyone has a missal, surely...

Candlemas dawned "bright and fair" here, as did Christmas and Christmas Eve, which passed beautifully. The illness of our own Fr. Cekada was a dark spot on our horizon these forty days, but he is recovering, and should soon be his old self. Thank you for your concern and prayers, and for the regular alms and Masses which sustain so many priests in the mission fields for food and medicine.

Yours in Our Lady of the Light,

– Most Rev. Daniel L. Dolan



(From top left down) After placing the image of the Infant Jesus in the manger, Bishop Dolan blesses the Nativity scene. The Gospel is sung at the Christmas Midnight Mass. Epiphany home blessing packets of gold, frankincense, and myrrh are blessed prior to the Epiphany pontifical Mass. (From top right down) The Proclamation of Easter is chanted by Father Cekada following the Gospel on the Feast of the Epiphany. Father Lehtoranta blesses our school with the blessed chalk during Epiphany's Octave. The annual devotion of the Twelve Sundays of Our Mother of Good Counsel closed with a procession of her image.