

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

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FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

July 1 – Summer is certainly travel time, and for me it was no exception. The feast and the first day of the month of the Precious Blood took me to our dear old chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary in Opelousas, Louisiana for a final Mass after so many years. This represents a victory, not defeat, for faithful Catholics in the Lafayette area, are now united and served by Fr. Francis Miller, OFM, at Christ the King, and assisted each month by our St. Gertrude clergy.

That afternoon I flew to Dallas, to visit and confirm at St. Anthony of Padua chapel. This little, but very well appointed chapel is discreetly hidden, but found by dedicated faithful, probably with St. Anthony's help. The people seemed quite enthusiastic, and many of them follow our webcast. It was a pleasure visiting. We got lost looking for the hotel, but I think I forgot to ask St. Anthony!

July 13 – I regret missing our Fatima Rosary Procession, but I'm on the road again, this time to Mexico. Everybody I met on the way down seemed extraordinarily friendly and interested. Father Roberto Mardones met me at the Mexico City airport, along with Father Martin Gomez. We caught up on our news and got lost a little in the heavy rain, driving through the immense metropolis. Some supper at VIPS (a pretty good restaurant chain), and Father settles us in our guest rooms in his spacious rectory for some well deserved rest.

July 14 – A nice cold shower, and a hot cup of coffee and I'm ready to go for the day. Fr. Mardones offers Mass very early, before 6 AM as a rule. Later we go to another chapel for St. Bonaventure's Mass and sermon. I speak about the ever relevant exhortation of St. Paul in the epistle against those who preach only to please men and make money. Afterwards, we have a most pleasant breakfast visit with our host family, whose generosity also sustains Father Mardones.

Saturday evening Father Siordia, whom I have not seen for years, arrives for a visit. We discuss lawsuits and the legal status of his church rather than exorcisms. After piles of papers, innumerable meetings, hearings, lawyers and judges, it seems that Father's congregation is now legally recognized as in possession of the church. The Novus Ordo diocese lost



Bishop Dolan did "double duty" recently as he baptized twins on an early Sunday morning in July at St. Gertrude the Great Church. Today's Catholic bishops, who are in reality missionaries too, continue to honor the legacy of those missionary bishops to North America of centuries past who exercised their priestly ministry in the vast wilderness.

the case. But still he offers Mass in a tent since the earthquake, as the church undergoes an only superficial repair at the hands of government "experts." Father Siordia's support, however, even among secular officials, is strong, as he contemplates building a new church. His congregation is growing since all of these trials, but some people remain permanently traumatized by the earthquake. The church bells are no more, but the statues and the miraculous "Lord of the Expiration" are honored in improvised and—carefully guarded—oratories.

July 15 – After Mass we drive to Tepeaca in Pueblo state, where I am amazed at the crowds lined up to visit the Little Doctor Jesus. How this traditional devotion, such a comfort to so many souls, has spread since first I visited here years ago with Father Siordia. The church was full today. After praying, I stocked up on statues, and we had lunch at our traditional spot, before completing our journey past the volcano and into Dos Rios, Veracruz.

July 16 – This is the big day, feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. My driver can't find the house where I'm supposed to change into my pontifical robes, and we're late for the

Procession. But they don't start without me! It's okay, Father says later, since he and the people were late last time.

Some changes. Flower petals have replaced confetti—far more practical. With floral lei in place around my neck, we slowly march into town under the canopy. Father Arnoldo Villegas is the third priest, who has been hearing confessions for days. Very impressive numbers of communicants. Forty First Communion children, and forty confirmations. On the way into church the Mariachi band plays Mexican tunes and hymns. I love their version of Dear Lady of Fatima.

The big news is that the church has fifty new pews, built from scratch by the faithful from felled local trees. Everybody contributed in some way to the project by giving pesos, hours of labor, or collecting plastic for more pesos. It is all most impressive, as is the fervor of the faithful, such generous people.

They call them “Carlitas” in town, as this congregation goes back to a venerable old priest, Padre Carlos Hernandez. There are a few “Lefebvristas” in town with their own church. The clergy are friendly among themselves, but the faithful not so much, especially the modernists.

The “Modernistas” try to imitate us, and even got their bishop to come dressed in purple for a procession, but it was sloppy seconds I hear. Still, imitation is the highest form of flattery.

After the ceremonies we retired into town for a relaxing clergy lunch. Later in the evening I'm carefully packing my statues. They make it home in pretty good shape. At 4:30 Tuesday morning, July 17, my precious cargo and I are in the hotel lobby for our ride to the new Veracruz airport: The end of a short and successful trip to the land of Our Lady.

– Most Rev. Daniel L. Dolan



Above) Bishop Dolan was greeted with the traditional Recibimiento and escorted into Dos Rios, Veracruz. (Top right) Some of the parishioners of Father Gomez pose proudly with a banner, the national flag of Mexico, and their church's beautiful statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our annual summer camps for the girls and boys were held in late June and in late July respectively. (Middle) The sisters from Brooksville, Florida kindly joined again for our girls camp. (Above) In addition to all the fun camp activities that Fathers McGuire and McKenna led, plenty of time was left to honor Our Lady with a little “rosary procession”