

✠ ANNOUNCEMENTS

DECEMBER 16, 2007 - ADVENT III - GAUDETE

Today is the Third Sunday in Advent. **CHRISTMAS CONFESSIONS** will be heard *before and during* all Masses. **Children's Confessions** are at **10:30 AM**. Our special **Children's Christmas Collection** for: *Fr. Leslie's African Mission* will take place in church and in the Catechism classrooms. The **Blessing of Expectant Mothers** follows all Masses.

 **RAFFLE**

Today is our **ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT CRAFT, BAKE SALE, AND RAFFLE**—and your last chance to purchase raffle tickets before the drawings after the 11:30 AM Mass. Please visit Helfta Hall after Mass and enjoy the many delicious homemade baked goods, find “just the right” Christmas gift for that special someone and, maybe, win a prize at the raffle drawing. Support our parish and our school and have a wonderful time.

Advent Vespers are sung at **4:45 PM** with Benediction.

EMBER DAYS

Wednesday, Friday and Saturday (December 19, 21 and 22) of this week are the Church's winter Ember Days during which we offer special prayers and sacrifices for priests and clerics preparing for ordination. Unless legitimately excused, all Catholics between the ages of 21 and 59, inclusive, are bound by the Church's laws of fast, and all who have attained their 7th year must keep the abstinence (meat once at the principal meal on Wednesday and Saturday.)

CHURCH DECORATING

Tomorrow we start decorating the church for Christmas. The men will begin putting up the major decorations (roping, wreaths, trees, lights, etc.) on **Monday, the 17th** and **Tuesday the 18th**, in the late afternoon and/or evenings (6:00 PM). **Ladies**, we will do the “finishing” work from **Wednesday the 19th thru Saturday the 22nd**.

We hope this will allow more of you to pick a time convenient for your busy schedule to

come and help. If you *can* come, *please call* Katie 513-251-3895, Sister 513-703-1330 or the Church Office 513-645-4212. We *need to know*, and we *need your help!*



POINSETTIA MEMORIAL
We are welcoming contributions to defray the cost of the Christmas flowers. If you wish to make your donation in memory of a loved one, please fill out the special Poinsettia Offering envelope available in the vestibule and pews. *To have your loved one included in the special Christmas memorial program, please turn in your envelope by this Wednesday, December 19th.*

CHRISTMAS MASS NOVENA
Remember your loved ones in our Christmas Novena of Masses which begin Christmas Day — the perfect gift! Envelopes may be found in the vestibule and the Gift Shop. Fill them out and return them to the Church Office or the collection basket. Envelopes must be turned in by Wednesday, December 19th.



*Rejoice, O glorious Virgin,
Who surpasses all in beauty!*

*The Blessed Virgin
had eminently and more perfectly
than any other creature all the virtues.*

—ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL
DECEMBER 23, 2007

Wishers

7:30 AM John Wiesman, Kent Maki, Joe Andreotta, Tom Kamphaus
9:00 AM Jim Gebel, Richard Smith, Dale Wilker, Bernie Brueggemann
11:30 AM Bob Uhlenbrock, Kirby Bischel, Dennis Hille, Tim Carney
5:45 PM John Seyfried

DECEMBER 24, 2007
MIDNIGHT MASS

10:00 PM Dale Wilker, Jim Gebel, Bob Uhlenbrock, Dennis Hille

DECEMBER 25, 2007
CHRISTMAS DAY

9:00 AM John Wiesman, Tom Kamphaus, Kent Maki, Richard Smith
11:00 AM John Seyfried, Kirby Bischel

Servers

DECEMBER 17 - DECEMBER 23, 2007

•TUE 12/18 5:00 PM LOW: G. Keaveney
•WED 12/19 5:00 PM LOW: J. Bayer
•FRI 12/21 5:45 PM LOW & BENE: T. Simpson, Sr., Bayer, Ritze, Keaveney
•SAT 12/22 7:30 AM LOW: C. & T. Simpson, Jr.
8:00 AM HIGH: C. Ritze, J. Bayer
•SUN 12/23 7:30 AM LOW: D. & S. Brueggemann
9:00 AM HIGH: MC: Joseph Lotarski; AC: B. Lotarski, T. Kunkel; TH: R. Hill; TORCH: S. Arlinghaus, P. Duff, G. Wnek, S. Richesson
11:30 AM LOW: G. Miller, I. French
1:10 PM VESPERS & BENEDICTION: G. Miller
5:45 PM LOW: M. Dirksen

Collection Report

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2007 \$2460.16
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2007 \$6171.16

*Thank you for your generosity!
Remember St. Gertrude's in your will!*

✠ POETRY CORNER

MESSAGE TO JOHN

SELECTIVE POEMS BY ANNE TANSEY

Reed that cries from the wells of ancient
longing

Like a voice in the winds of desolate
spaces,

Crying aloft a message crystal with
promise,

Swift as a waterfall.

Hush, for the moment that hangs like a
star forever,

Angel wings have swirled from the sky-
wide places.

Light is placing a crown of eternal glory
On head of a Maiden.

Breath to breath, the winds of earth and
Heaven,

Have caught in wings of Paraclete your
longing.

Reed in the wilderness cease your lonely
calling—

Fire has met with Flower.



FOR THE BAPTIST

BY WILLIAM DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN

The last and greatest herald of Heaven's
King,

Girt with rough skins, hies to the deserts
wild,

Among that savage brood the woods forth
bring,

Which he than man more harmless found
and mild:

His food was blossoms, and what: young
doth spring,

With honey that from virgin hives
distilled;

Parched body, hollow eyes, some uncouth
thing

Made him appear, long since from Earth
exiled.

There burst he forth; All ye, whose hopes
rely

On God, with me amidst these deserts
mourn,

Repent, repent, and from old errors turn.
Who listened to his voice, obeyed his cry?

Only the echoes which he made
relent,

Rung from their marble caves, repent,
repent.

✠ THE CALENDAR

MON	12/17/07	FERIAL DAY - ST LAZARUS, BPC (NB: Special Time) 8:30 AM Requiem High Mass <i>Purgatorial Society</i> 6:00 PM Church Decorating - Men
TUES	12/18/07	FERIAL DAY - EXPECTATION OF O L 11:25 AM High Mass <i>Victor Ritze (Theresa Hill & Family)</i> (NB: Special Time) 5:00 PM Low Mass <i>Clara Wirthman</i> 6:00 PM Church Decorating - Men
WED	12/19/07	EMBER WEDNESDAY 11:25 AM High Mass <i>The Wilkers - We Love You! (Kathy, Sam & Seth)</i> 1:00 PM Church Decorating - Women 5:00 PM Low Mass <i>Special Intention - Deceased (Bp. Dolan)</i> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal
THUR	12/20/07	VIGIL OF ST THOMAS (NB: Special Time) 8:30 AM High Mass <i>Poor Souls In Purgatory (Dale & Debbie Wilker)</i> 10:00 AM Church Decorating - Women 7:00 PM Compline
FRI	12/21/07	ST THOMAS, AP - EMBER FRIDAY 10:00 AM Church Decorating - Women 5:15 PM Confessions & Rosary 5:45 PM High Mass, Benediction, Sacred Heart Novena, Confessions † <i>Thomas G. Simpson, Sr. - Birthday Remembrance (Tom & Stella Simpson)</i>
SAT	12/22/07	ST FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI, V - EMBER SATURDAY 7:15 AM Confessions 7:30 AM Low Mass <i>Special Intention (Michael DiSalvo) - Confessions</i> 8:00 AM High Mass <i>Special Intentions - Rita Brueggemann (Addie, Madison & Emma Wilker) - Confessions</i> 10:00 AM FINAL Church Decorating - Men & Women
SUN	12/23/07	ADVENT IV 7:30 AM Low Mass <i>Mom's Spec. Christmas Int. (Charlene A. Bloemker)</i> 9:00 AM High Mass <i>Rob, Rose, Noab, Rafael (Sharon)</i> 11:30 AM Low Mass <i>For the People of St. Gertrude the Great</i> 1:10 PM Early Vespers & Benediction 5:45 PM Low Mass † <i>Thomas Nicholas Morris - Birthday Remembrance (Carol M. Niehaus)</i>

The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers few. We pray Thee, therefore, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou wilt send Labourers into Thy harvest: innocent and truly penitent labourers: labourers whom Thou Thyself dost call: who go in by the door: who meditate on Thy law day and night, who believe what they read, teach what they believe, imitate what they teach, and keep the gift of their ministry pure and immaculate: who are full of pure knowledge and of the Holy Ghost. Give us shepherds who love Thee as Peter and John loved Thee: who love Thy flock even as Thou, the Good Shepherd, lovest it. Send us shepherds who will put the wolves to flight, defend their sheep, root up the cockle and confirm right doctrine. Make them unblamable, prudent, modest, just, holy, continent, embracing the faithful word, speaking what befits sound doctrine. Rule them in the place of pasture in which Thou settest them, that they may lead us also unto eternal pastures. Grant that they may labour in Thy vineyard; that they may live for us even as they live for Thee: that they may watch over us that we be not separated from Thee: that they may exhort, arouse, beseech, prove, and labour in all patience and doctrine. Make them pastors after Thine own heart, zealous, firm and constant: not lording it, but humble and meek: being compassionate to them that are ignorant and that err, seeing that they themselves also are surrounded with infirmities. Give us priests who will feed us with doctrine: who will shine before us by their good example: who by their own love of Thee will enkindle in us a like love: who will bear themselves towards us with charity, chastise us in wisdom, confirm us in patience, bless us with prayer, and strive in all things to make themselves conformed to Thine image, Who art the head of the Church and the bishop of our souls. We beseech Thee also, O Lord, to pour out Thy blessing upon the fields, that Thou wilt give and preserve to us the fruits of the earth, and vouchsafe that we may bear the fruits of justice. Amen.

✠ BISHOP'S CORNER

Thanks be to God and His Immaculate Mother for the beautiful and devotional weekend of the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception and Advent II. I thank you all for your fidelity and sacrifices, as well as for your understanding of the great reverence which Holy Mass deserves. We *all* must fight fallen human nature, which is always looking for a break, as well as modern life, which asks very little in the way of self-discipline, yet expects very much in the way of satisfaction.

Today we are looking forward to the fun of the raffle drawing for so many interesting items donated, as well as the several quite beautiful pieces made by our own faithful. Thank you for your support for this Advent fundraiser, and your help—on both ends—with the bake sale as well.

We are counting on you this week as, a little at a time, we decorate our church for Christmas. If you can give an hour or two, please don't hesitate. See the schedule elsewhere in the bulletin.

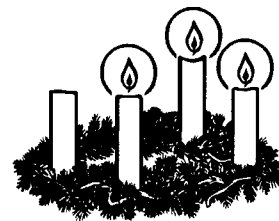
So far our weather has actually been pretty good. Let us pray that it, and good health, hold during these busy days before the great feast of Christ's Birth.

I know many of you are taking advantage of Fr. McGuire's visit to make a good confession today. Tomorrow, the Church begins her Advent Novena. Let us abstain from sin these last days of Advent, and long for the coming of our Redemption.

I send a blessing home with you all.

—Bishop Dolan

Rejoice



✠ A PRAYER FOR THE EMBER DAYS



2008 COLLECTION ENVELOPES

The 2008 Collection envelopes are available in the vestibule. Please pick up your envelopes today.



2008 ROMAN CATHOLIC CALENDAR

This year's calendar is available for purchase in the Book Store. The price is \$6.00. Every Catholic home should have a traditional calendar.

NEXT SUNDAY

Next Sunday is the Fourth Sunday of the Month. A **Special Second Collection**, for adults, will be take up for: *Fr. Leslie's African Mission*.

Vespers and Benediction are at 1:10 PM.

Set your missal: December 23rd. **Fourth Sunday in Advent**, with the collect of the BVM in Advent, and Against the Persecutors. **PREF:** Trinity.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 23rd: SPECIAL CHRISTMAS COLLECTION FOR A POOR AFRICAN MISSIONARY

Next Sunday we are collecting a Special Christmas Alms during all Masses for Fr. Eldred Leslie, an elderly, poor missionary priest in South Africa. He is faithful to the true Church and Mass, and lives in very difficult conditions. A truly worthy priest and Confessor of the Faith, Fr. Leslie knew our own dear Fr. Randolph and is like him, a convert to the Faith. His only request is for money which can be used to give alms to the poor unclothed, shoeless children who besiege him whenever he steps out of his house. Please be generous. *"And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts..."*

December 17th - 22nd: Christmas Church Decorating

January 4th: Opening of 40 Hours Devotion

IN YOUR CHARITY...

Please pray for Henry Sieverding, recovering from a stroke, Eileen Bartels,

who is very seriously ill, and being kept alive with many tubes and machines, at great pain. Pray for her to have a peaceful death. Also for Gloria Madaffari, home bound afaer a bad fall, and for all of our sick and shut-in.

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Monday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Schedule - Morning

- 8:00 AM: The Office of Prime
- 9:00 AM: High Mass
- 1:15 PM: 1st Vespers of Christmas

Christmas Eve Schedule - Evening

- 8:30 PM: The Office of Matins
- 10:30 PM: Carols
- 10:45 PM: Entrance of the Bishop, Blessing of the Crib & Vesting
- 11:15 PM: Midnight Mass followed by The Office of Lauds

A **Potluck Supper** follows Midnight Mass. If you are planning on coming, please bring a dish to share.

Tuesday, December 25th - Christmas Day

- 9:00 AM: Low Mass & Benediction, with String Quartet
- 11:00 AM: Low Mass with Carols
- 3:30 PM: Vespers of Christmas Day

NEW YEAR'S SCHEDULE

Tuesday, January 1, 2008 - Feast of the Circumcision - New Year's Day

- 9:00 AM: High Mass
- 11:00 AM: Low Mass & Benediction

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

Please remember the following departed in your prayers, whose anniversaries we keep this month: Jerome Gerrard, Charles Higdon, Alice Corbin, Frank Alban, Jr., George Greene, Eleanor Cekada, Rosemary Breitenstein, Regina Budde, Floyd Rimer, Jr., Larry Oancea, Henry Golembeski, James P. Looney, James Dour, Mary Irene Osborn, Palmera Soria, Albert D. Kinnett, Mary Genevieve Bell.



OUR NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

There remains the question, how you and I are to avail ourselves of this gift of pardon, freely offered. As we know, we have to be sorry for our sins. Not necessarily in the sense of feeling sorry, because our feelings are not sufficiently within our own control. Sorrow for our sins is a matter of the will, not of the affections, and what is required of us is that we should unite our wills, although it be by an act which seems to awake no echo in the sensitive part of us, with the will of God. Nor is it expected of us, that we should feel certain we shall not fall into the same sins again. We know the weakness of our natures, and often the best we can do is to throw ourselves on God's mercy with the prayer that His grace will enable us to avoid sin thenceforward. We are also bound to go to confession, if we have reason to suspect that we are in mortal sin...

One of the most perfectly constructed lines in English poetry is, *"To err is human, to forgive, divine."* How perfect is the balance of those words, how rich the sense of them! They enshrine two of the greatest mysteries which, as Christians, we are bound to accept. The doctrine, I mean, that man, being what he is, can rebel against God; and the doctrine that God, being what He is, can forgive man.

—MONSIGNOR RONALD A. KNOX



AN ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I detest these and all other sins which I have committed against Thy divine Majesty. I am extremely sorry that I have offended Thee, because Thou art infinitely good, and sin displeaseth Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart; and firmly purpose, by the help of Thy grace, never more to offend Thee. I resolve to avoid the occasions of sin; I will confess my sins, and will endeavor to make satisfaction for them. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy, and pardon me, a wretched sinner. In the name of Thy beloved Son Jesus, I humbly beg of Thee so to wash me with His Precious Blood, that my sins may be entirely remitted. Amen.

NOVENA PRAYER FOR ADVENT

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment, in which the Son of God was born of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, at midnight in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. At that hour, vouchsafe O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother. Amen.

(Traditionally said 15 times a day from St. Andrew's Day until Christmas.)

"MY DESIRE IS TO SHOW MYSELF A MOTHER TO YOU AND TO YOUR PEOPLE."

* *

Obregon was followed by General Calles, and Calles it was who decided upon a universal and rigid enforcement of the 1917 constitution. To take care of offenders a new penal code was enacted. The Church would be brought into Masonic line, or else! The date set for the beginning of the new offensive was July 31, 1926—dramatically enough, the feast day of Saint Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order which had so long labored in Spanish America, and which had still one great glory to give to the Mexican Church.

* *

One week before the July decrees were to take effect, the bishops of Mexico issued a joint Pastoral Letter, their answer to Calles: "Since the conditions imposed render impossible the continuation of the sacred ministry, we have decided, after consulting our Most Holy Father, Pius XI, that from July 31 of the present year until we determine otherwise, all public worship requiring the participation of priests will be suspended in all the Churches of the Republic."

The announcement hit like lightning, both for the people of Mexico and for its rulers. The Masons' policy had been a gradual one of subjecting the Church to the state, depriving the people of Mass and the Sacraments, keeping the children from Catholic instruction, and thus, little by little, causing the Faith to wither and die. By the bold, desperate stroke of halting public worship, the Mexican bishops were hoping to alert all Christendom to this Masonic intent. Calles and his crew might be able to withstand the Catholics of Mexico, but not the united opposition of the whole Catholic world.

* *

When Calles saw that the Church in Mexico was going to resist his plans for destroying it by degrees, he determined to finish it off with a single enraged assault. Here are some fragments from the long martyrology of Mexican Catholics who died for their Faith between 1926 and 1929—a handful out of the hundreds who may some day be invoked at the altars they gave their lives to protect.

Anacleto Flores: age 23 years, lawyer, leader of the Catholic youth movement. He was hung by his thumbs, flogged, and slashed with bayonets for refusing to disclose the hiding-place of the Archbishop of

Guadalajara. At last, in the presence of his young wife, he was put before a wall with two of his companions and shot.

Father Pablo Garcia de Jesus Maria: priest of Aguascalientes, seized by the police for giving absolution to a dying man. He was pummeled with rifles, his hands were smashed, his tongue cut out; finally he was ordered into exile and put on a train where he died.

Seventeen priests of Mexico City: shot by a firing squad. Though many of them were not killed by the volley, their bodies were all thrown into a long trench and buried.

Jose Farfan: an aged shopkeeper. He was told to remove from his window a placard reading, "Christ lives! Christ reigns! Christ commands!" He refused, and was shot down in his store.

A twelve-year-old boy of Guadalajara: arrested for distributing Catholic leaflets. He was tortured to tell the name of his director; but urged on by his mother ("Say nothing, my son. Our Lord will give you heaven for your constancy."), the boy kept silence. The soldiers twisted both his arms till they broke, and he died.



Father Sabas Reyes: parish priest of Tlatlan. He was hung by his wrists from the portico of his church and left for three days, without food or drink, exposed to the scorching sun. Then his feet were doused with gasoline and set afire. Finally he was marched to the cemetery and shot.

Forty old men and women of Jalisco: discovered going to Mass in a private house, taken to the cemetery in the middle of the night and shot.

Father Miguel Augustin Pro: Jesuit priest, most celebrated of the Mexican martyrs. This almost-legendary popular hero was arrested on a confected charge and put before the firing squad, without trial, on November 23, 1927. As a supreme bit of Masonic bravado, photographs were taken of the execution. The next day newspapers around the world were supplied with pictures of the priest, standing erect against the stockade, his arms outstretched to form a cross. The picture was taken at the

moment the command to fire was given and Father Pro spoke his last words, "Viva Cristo Rey!"—"Long live Christ the King!"

* *

After three years of soaking the soil of Mexico with Catholic blood, Masonry was ready to call the persecution off. It had proven one thing: that the Mexican people were determined, at any cost, to hear Mass and receive the Sacraments. The Faith had been dealt a death blow and was more vigorous than ever. Exhausted the government announced there would be no further attempts to dominate the Church; and the bishops announced the public worship would be resumed.

But the government lied. As soon as the Masons had caught their breath, they renewed their efforts to crush the Church. Even today, though there are glimmerings of a dawn in sight, many of the anti-Catholic laws are still enforced. For the victory which the Catholics of Mexico bought with their blood in 1929 did not put an end to their sufferings. The Masonic hold on the country had not been broken. That general uprising of Christendom which the Mexican bishops had confidently looked for when they closed the churches in 1926, had never come. Most poignantly, the sufferings of the Mexican Catholics had been hardly noticed by their numerous, prosperous, next-door brothers: the Catholics of the United States.

Some Americans had tried to help—certain bishops, certain priests, certain groups of laymen. But these had never been able to convince the bulk of American Catholics that the persecutions in Mexico were worth getting excited about, being angry about, losing their composure about, making nuisances of themselves about. Nor did the Masons of the United States fail to notice this lack of indignation, and to be emboldened by it. One example: Two days after Father Pro's murder, the American Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow, went aboard Calles' private train for a tour of the country; the recognized purpose of this gesture was "to demonstrate to Mexican Catholics that they could look for no help from Washington."

If American Catholics are wondering this year why it is their Christmas is losing its intimacy and significance and becoming an empty, commercialized holiday, the children of Our Lady of Guadalupe might be able to tell them.

MY SUNDAY AFTERNOON CATECHISM FOR ADVENT III

The nearer the coming of the Lord the more earnestly the Church calls upon us to rejoice; and today, therefore, at the Introit of the Mass she sings in the words of St. Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer let your petitions be made known to God." (Phil. iv. 4-6.) "Lord, Thou hast blessed Thy land; Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob." Glory be to the Father, etc.

PLEASE READ SUNDAY'S EPISTLE: Phil. IV 4-7

What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?

It means to be glad in remembering the grace by which God called us to the true faith, and gave us the hope of eternal salvation, and to rejoice even in all our tribulations and adversities for the Lord's sake, as St. Paul did (II Cor. vii. 4). It also admonishes us to give a good example by modesty and an edifying life, and to fix our desires on God, Who will never fail us if we make our wants known to Him by prayer and supplication, and give Him thanks for benefits received.

In what does the peace of God consist?

It consists in a good conscience, such as St. Paul enjoyed. It is this peace, this tranquillity of the soul, which sustained the holy martyrs in their agonies, and consoled others under persecution for Christ's sake (St. Matt. v. 11, 12).

THE BEST REMEDY IN THE HOUR OF SORROW.

In need, sorrow, and dejection the best means to relieve our distressed hearts is humble and confiding prayer, in which we can pour out our hearts before God, and give ourselves up to His love and mercy, as did Anna, the sorrowful mother of Samuel the prophet, Josaphat in painful uncertainty, Susanna falsely accused and condemned to death, and innumerable other servants of God. These all prayed to God and were delivered from their afflictions, receiving help and consolation. St. James therefore admonishes us, "Is any one of you sad? let him pray" (James v. 13); and St. Paul, in the epistle for this Sunday, encourages us not to be solicitous about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be known to God. Are you, then, sad and discouraged? Lift up your soul to God, and say with David, "Give joy to the soul of Thy servant, for to Thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul" (Ps. lxxxv. 4).

PLEASE READ SUNDAY'S GOSPEL: John I. 19-28

Why did the Jews send messengers to John to ask him who he was?

The Jews believed that either Elias or another of the prophets would return

to earth to prepare the way for the coming of Christ; and from St. John's denying that he was the Christ they concluded that he was either Elias or that prophet.

Why did St. John say that he was not that prophet, but only the voice of one crying in the wilderness?

He said so out of humility; but he uttered no untruth, since he was not the prophet predicted by Moses (Deut. xviii. 15), but only "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord," as the prophet Isaias said (Is. lx. 3).

How do we make straight the way of the Lord?

By sincere penance, which consists not merely in going to confession, and making hollow resolutions, but in bringing forth fruits worthy of penance (Matt. iii. 8; Luke iii. 8).

How do we bring forth fruits worthy of penance?

If we wish to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, we must endeavor to make amends for what is past, and use all possible means to avoid in future those sins to which we have been most given; we must love and serve God as much as and more than we before loved and served the world.

What was the baptism of John, and what was the effect of it?

It was a baptism of penance, for the forgiveness of sins; thus it was a preparation for the Baptism of Christ, through which sins are actually forgiven, and the Holy Ghost received (Mark i. 4, 5).

What are we further taught by this gospel?

We are taught to always speak the truth, like St. John; not to desire to appear more, or better, than we are; and, in particular, to make a good and sincere confession. We should, therefore, before confession often ask ourselves, "Who am I? How do I live? How do I stand before God? How do I deal with my neighbor?"

We learn also from St. John to confess our sins without reserve, neither concealing nor excusing them; above all, we learn to be humble, for although he might have passed for the Messiah had he chosen to, he refused that honor, and held himself unworthy to loose the latchet of Christ's shoe.

Prayer.

O Lord, banish from my heart envy, self-love, and pride; give me grace so to know Thee and myself that, in contemplation of Thy majesty, omnipotence, love and wisdom, and other perfections, I may love Thee above all things, and in regarding my own nothingness, misery, and sins may always humble myself before Thee, and be little in my own eyes. Grant also that I may judge my neighbor with justness and tenderness, and love him as myself.