

# ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT NEWSLETTER

## PASSIONTIDE 2019 No. 194

ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT BISHOP'S APOSTOLATE • 4900 RIALTO ROAD • WEST CHESTER, OHIO  
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### FROM BISHOP DOLAN

My dear Friends,

In the midst of a busy Lent we celebrated the feast of St. John Damascene on March 27. We usually sing the beautiful ancient Mass of the Feria, and commemorate the saint of the day. But after the daily school Mass, we sing the Vespers, the Saint's Vespers on feast days. For this service the clergy are joined by the older schoolboys. Undaunted by the Latin, they keep up beautifully with the priests, and the psalms, sacrificing part of their lunch and recreation period to do so. Therein lies a tale.

It is usual to add the Way of the Cross to the Lenten schedule in most churches. We offer Stations three times a week. But why weekday Vespers, the Church's time honored evening services? Any why at noon? In the old days, Sunday Vespers was mandatory in every parish, but now has almost universally disappeared. Well, we do our best to sing Vespers as often as possible all year round. What a treasure!

But in Lent, on fasting days, Vespers is meant to be recited at noon or before. The idea is to respect the fast, which once was observed daily until Mass in the late afternoon. As permission was given to take one's main meal earlier and earlier (human weakness!) still the fast was honored, at least symbolically, by completing almost all the Divine Office before eating. Thus, as well, the morning ceremonies of Holy Week.

That such an ancient custom should still be observed today, and by schoolboys, not just seminarians, is a marvel. Our young men make this Lenten sacrifice willingly, and thus demonstrate a good Catholic spirit. But more. With the judicious use of easily available side by side translations, the Divine Office is accessible to all, the prayer of the Church. The psalter was the prayerbook of Jesus and Mary. You can see how the early Vespers with our young men is a liturgical, as well as Lenten and pastoral highlight each year. What a beauty for our church.

The external beauty, and main decoration of St. Gertrude the Great has always been our statues. When the original church was first opened in 1980, the world was awash with beautiful images of the saints, which had been thrown out of the churches since the changes. This new iconoclasm revived the old image smashing of the time of St. John Damascene, who lived in the eighth century. This doctor of the church fearlessly and adeptly defended the use of images in worship, for God gave us *His* image in the Incarnation.

We, for our part resolved early on never to turn away a statue. Thus St. Gertrude became a kind of "statue orphanage." How wonderful it is to worship with our beloved saints. What color and warmth they add as well as what powerful protection. Of



(Above) The statues in St. Gertrude the Great Church are shrouded in purple as Passiontide begins. His Excellency reads the Last Gospel of the Mass on Passion Sunday.

course at Passiontide, it *is* quite a job to cover them all!

St. John Damascene, as St. Thérèse of Lisieux in more modern times, also dedicated himself to writing beautiful, devotional vernacular hymns. How beloved, how inspiring is this tradition, which adds so much to our Mass and devotions. It's a shame to let them die out, as it would be to let the statues be thrown out.

Finally, St. John Damascene was also a theologian, a doctor of the Church, who wrote to defend Catholic teaching in the great controversies of the day. In our own little way, we try to do the same. See Father Cekada's many writings—and videos—on the Internet.

The religion of the saints, never changes, not really. Thank you for your support of St. Gertrude the Great, as we strive to practice and promote Catholic beauty and truth, ever the nourishment of sanctity.

A blessed Easter!

— Most Rev. Daniel L. Dolan

Remember your mother and our Blessed Mother in a special high Mass, Procession, and May Crowning at St. Gertrude the Great Church this coming May 12th.

Please complete the enclosed envelope and return it to us.



Our Lent began with the blessing and distribution of ashes. (Above) Bishop Dolan receives his ashes from Father Lehtoranta. (Below) On Ember Wednesday in Lent our annual Children's Lenten Day of Reflection was held at St. Gertrude the Great. Bishop Dolan, along with Fathers Lehtoranta, McGuire, and McKenna, gave spiritual talks, heard confessions, offered Mass, and led the Rosary for the well-attended event. Following a complimentary hot lunch the older children had time for meditation while the younger children were treated to a story by His Excellency. The busy day concluded with the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



(Above) St. Patrick's Day was duly observed at St. Gertrude the Great Church with song and refreshments following the last of the morning Masses. (Below) In the wake of St. Patrick's feast came the Feast of St. Joseph and the traditional blessing of hot cross buns along with a little Lenten food drive to benefit the less fortunate.



(Above) Friday evenings in Lent are popular at St. Gertrude the Great Church. An early evening Mass is followed by a pot luck supper. Immediately after the meal Stations of the Cross are recited, a Lenten Sermon is preached, the Blessing of Sick given, and the Novena to the Sorrowful Mother is prayed. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament ends the evening along with the distribution of Holy Communion for those who were unable to assist at Mass.