

SAINT FRANCIS EXCHANGE

The Newsletter and Bulletin of the Oratory of Saint Francis of Assisi

FEBRUARY 2025 – EPIPHANYTIDE

LETTER FROM THE MONSIGNOR

WHEN the Wise Men saw the star, they said one to another: This is the sign of the Great King; let us go and search for Him, and offer Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh, alleluia! – Antiphon at the Magnificat of the First Vespers of the Epiphany

THE time after the feast of the Epiphany is filled with wonder, hope and joy: we commemorate His glorious birth and how it has given us, the faithful, the opportunity to save our souls and be restored to His grace and spiritual friendship.

It is my personal opinion and belief that this year will be for us all a tremendous opportunity for grace; this does not mean that we can expect *smooth sailing*, rather, that when things get rough we will make use of the grace of God so that we can properly navigate those rough waters towards the safety and surety that is the *Rock of Christ*, as the Kinsman of Our Lord teaches us, *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind* (S. James 1:6).

We here in Southern California, so devastated by wildfires, electrical outages and looting, must cling to our Faith, because God will not fail us, only man fails man! I also wish to disabuse those who

think this is a sign of the *end of times*, it most certainly is not. The Apocalypse will be universal, and what we are seeing is absolutely not universal. Only prayer and faith will give us comfort and solace, *The just cried, and the Lord heard them: and delivered them out of all their troubles* (Psalm 33:18). The promises of God is *not* that the faithful shall not suffer, but that He will give strength, endurance and consolation in the time of suffering: *God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able* (I Corinthians 10:13).



Wise Men Still Seek Him!

Yes, these are difficult times, and more challenging times are to come, however, let me encourage you all with the words of the Apostle: *For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18). Instead of worrying about what you have no control over I encourage the faithful to be grateful for many blessings that they do have, most especially regular access to the *authentic* Mass and Sacraments of the Catholic Church, founded and headed by Our Lord and King Jesus Christ: Who shall protect and safeguard His glorious Church even to the gates of hell

(cf. S. Matthew 16:18), praised be His most holy Name!

And while we keep our hope and confidence in the Lord, let us also begin to prepare for the great and holy pre-Lenten season of *Septuagesima*, the time before Great Lent. It begins very early this year, Sunday the 16th of February. While there is no fast or abstinence during this season (except for the usual Friday abstinence), we shall see the *burying of the Alleluia* after the office of Vespers of the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (anticipated on the 15th) and not heard it again in the holy liturgy until the Vigil Mass of Easter on Holy Saturday.

Lastly, I am making an appeal that we again spread the word of our little mission - let us build our regular Mass attendance to *at least fifty (50) families each week*. We can always add additional Masses on Sunday until we find a lasting and permanent home. We are a faith of miracle: *believe and it shall come to pass*, as Our Lord says: *Have the faith of God. Amen I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe, that whatsoever he saith shall be done; it shall be done unto him. Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you* (S. Mark 11:22 – 24).

As always, be assured of my paternal benediction and prayers, especially at Holy Mass.

I remain, in Christ the King,

Monsignor ✠ Thomas JF Sebastian

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Monsignor:
I follow the days of penance ever since my First Holy Communion. In our [home] country at a young age we were told to do things because of our religion not knowing the background. Then as I got older the Church moved away from the practice. When I got here in America, some emphasized it and some didn't. Now I'm in the TLM, may I ask Your Excellency the reason for the Friday penance? Something that I may use also in bringing back my children to salvation.

Your teachings are much greatly appreciated.
A.S., Van Nuys, CA

A: We Fast and Abstain in order to do penance to show God our true and sincere sorrow for our sins: as the Holy Prophet confirms, *Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness (Isaias 58:6)*. The laws for Fast and Abstinence on Fridays, Vigils and the Ember Days was NEVER changed, it is even in the "new" Canon Law of 1983 under JP II (Canons 1249 - 1251)!!! The "change" is completely made up by local "bishops" and "priests" – and, in fact, the last [V2] "Papal Legislation" on the matter came from Paul VI: *Penitemini* Chapter 3, no. II.2. (Apostolic Constitution of 17 February 1966, Paul VI) - 2. Apart from the faculties referred to in VI and VIII regarding the manner of fulfilling the precept of penitence on such days, *abstinence is to be observed on every Friday* which does not fall on a day of obligation, while *abstinence and fast* is to be observed on Ash Wednesday or,

according to the various practices of the rites, on the first day of "Grande Quaresima" (Great Lent) and on Good Friday.

If you have a question, please feel free to e-mail:

info@stfrancisoratory.org

PRAYER REQUESTS

YOUR continued prayers are requested for the sick, continued prayers are requested for the sick, especially Fr. Matthew Howard, Mrs. Norma Hernandez, Mr. Charles Edward McClusky, Mr. Paul Howard, Mr. John Owen and Mr. Jeff Michaels. Please also remember in your prayers the souls of those who have died, especially Mrs. Mary DeFillips†. *If you know of someone unable to attend Holy Mass due to sickness, please be sure to let the Monsignor know so he can arrange for a sick call.*



Real Men Kneel at Holy Mass!

HOW TO DONATE AND SEND MASS STIPENDS

DONATIONS and Mass Stipends can be sent on-line via **PayPal** and **Zelle** (be sure to select *donation* and not payment) or you can always send it to our Post Office Box:

St. Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis Exchange
PO Box 8469
Van Nuys, CA 91409-8469

The normal stipend for a Mass Intention is \$20.00. Please be sure to include the person's name (w/Mr., Mrs. or Miss) and if they are living or deceased. Also, be sure to indicate if you wish a **Mass Card** to be sent to that person or their family.

Your continued support is appreciated and quite needed to continue our mission of offer the true and traditional Latin Mass of the Holy Catholic Church. The True Mass and Faith are ours to protect, defend and support!

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION FOR 2025

29 May 2025 (Thursday)
Feast of the Ascension of the Lord
15 August 2025 (Friday)
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
1 November 2025 (Saturday)
Feast of All Saints
8 December 2025 (Monday)
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
25 December 2025 (Thursday)
Feast of the Nativity of the Lord

SUNDAYS OF FEBRUARY: THE CATHOLIC HAND MISSAL

In order to assist the faithful following Holy Mass with their hand missals here are the Sunday Masses for February:

2 February 2025:

Purification of the BVM:

Commemoration of the *Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany* at the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion.

9 February 2025:

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany:

Commemoration of *S. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop & Confessor* and *S. Apollonia, Virgin Martyr* at the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion.

16 February 2025:

Septuagesima Sunday:

Commemoration of the *Suffrage of the Saints* and *Against the Persecutors of the Church* at the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion.

23 February 2025:

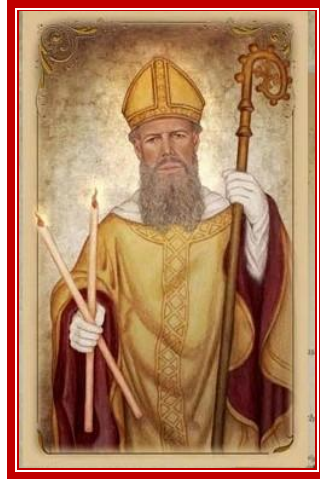
Sexagesima Sunday:

Commemoration of *S. Peter Damian, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor of the Church* at the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion.

To participate *correctly* at Holy Mass one *silently* unites his prayers with those of the Church through pious and attentive meditation of the prayers and reading of Holy Mass.

If you are unsure how to correctly set your hand missal arrive early for Holy Mass and ask the Monsignor to assist you. It is also important to become familiar with the *Ordinary of the Mass*, those parts that never change, i.e.: Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, Benedictus, and the Agnus Dei. And of course the Canon of the Mass, and the *Propers of the Mass*, those which vary according to the feasts of the day, i.e., Introit, Collect(s)(after the Gloria or Dominus Vobiscum), Epistle, Gradual, Alleluia, Tract or Sequence, Gospel, Secret, Communion Verse and Post Communion. On many feasts or days there are *Commemorations* (additional prayers) at the Collect, Secret and Postcommunion. The careful attention to these prayers and readings will help one enter into

a deeper spiritual relationship with the Holy Liturgy, the Saints and Mysteries of God.



*S. Blaise
Bishop & Martyr
3 February:
Pray for us!*

The Hiding Mass in Van Nuys

Sunday Mass Time:

10:00 am

(818) 786-2540

e-mail: info@stfrancisoratory.org

Be sure to visit our web site at:

www.stfrancisoratory.org

N.B.: Our Mailing Address is:

Post Office Box 8469

Van Nuys, CA 91409-8469

*S. Timothy, Bishop & Martyr
25 January:
Pray for us!*

*S. John Bosco, Confessor
31 January:
Pray for us!*



☛Saint Francis Chapel is staffed by the Priestly Society

Saint Francis Exchange of Christ the King (SSCR); properly trained and ordained Roman Catholic Priests who are faithful to the teachings and disciplines of the Roman Catholic Church. Saint Francis is not affiliated with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Our Holy Fathers, the Popes, most especially Saint Pope Pius V in His infallible decree *Quo Primum*, have given their permission in perpetuity to offer the Traditional Latin Mass (*Missal of S. Pope Pius V* and rubrics of *S. Pope Pius X*).

MASS GUILD

HOLY MASS is offered on the First Saturday of every month for all Friends and benefactors of SAINT FRANCIS ORATORY CHAPEL. Your generous donation (one time or monthly) enables you to be remembered upon the Altars of the Society, where *only* the traditional Latin Mass is offered, as codified and canonized by His Holiness, Saint Pope Pius V, *perpetually* approved of.

We would like to remind those who send Mass requests to PLEASE include the name of the person and/or intention with your stipend. Mass Cards will be sent to concerned parties upon request. Thank you and God bless you!

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:

www.traditio.com

www.traditioninaction.com

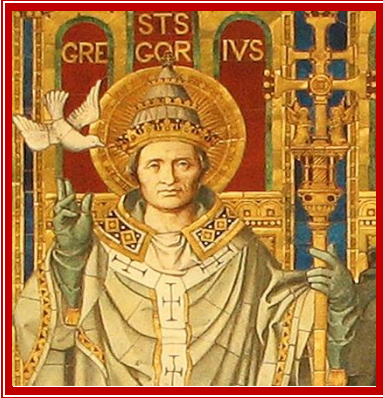
www.traditionalmass.org

www.novusordowatch.com

N.B.: Recommendation of a website is for information and does not

constitute association with or full agreement of opinions or positions.

PETER SPEAKS:



WE have heard from the Gospel how, when the King of heaven was born, an earthly king was troubled. For earthly greatness is brought to confusion when the might of heaven is made manifest. But let us ask a question: When the Redeemer was born, why was it that, to the shepherds of Judaea, an Angel was sent to bring tidings thereof, whereas it was a star that led the Wise Men of the East to worship Him? It would seem that the Jews, who had been hitherto under the governance of reason, received a revelation from a reasonable being, that is, an Angel; but that the Gentiles, who knew not the right use of reason, were brought to the Lord, not by a voice, but by a sign, that is, by a star. Hence Paul hath it:

Prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. So the prophesying was given to them that believed and the sign to them that believed not (I Corinthians 14:22).

(Pope S. Gregory the Great d. 604)



Come to his assistance, all ye saints of God; meet him, all ye angels of the Lord, receiving his soul, presenting it in the sight of the Most High. – prayer for the dying

S. SCHOLASTICA



Below is a special guest article by Dom Anselm Marie, OSB, a Benedictine monk under the protection of the Monsignor Sebastian, about the holy sister of S. Benedict, S. Scholastica, the foundress of the Benedictine family of monastic Religious Sisters.

Saint Scholastica:

Model of Christian Devotion
“Devotion, properly speaking, is a deep affection for the things of God. The greater our love

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and intimacy with God so too our greater devotion.”¹ This the Monsignor Sebastian taught you just a few weeks ago (I will be quoting from his sermons in this article). A few years ago, when her feast fell on a Sunday, he proposed S. Scholastica as an example of “zeal for piety and holy learning.”² Both instances build upon the catechetical exposition about one of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost: “What is piety? It is a gift of God, which makes us devout and zealous in His service.”³ Drawing once more from the thirty-third chapter of the Dialogues of S. Gregory the Great, I would like to recount for you this Sunday an exemplary event in the life of S. Scholastica:

Abbess of a monastery at Piumarola in the valley of the Liris, S. Scholastica would visit her brother S. Benedict once a year at a place near his abbey, and they would spend the day worshipping together and discussing sacred texts and other holy things. One year after they had had supper and continued their conversation, S. Benedict indicated it was time for him to leave, but S. Scholastica asked him to stay so they could continue their discourse. Not wishing to break his own Rule, S. Benedict refused, insisting that he needed to return to his cell. At that point, S. Scholastica bowed her head in tears, clasping her hands in prayer, and after a moment, a fierce storm started outside. S.

¹ Sermon for the Most Holy Name of Jesus, 5 January 2025.

² Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, 10 February 2019.

³ The Douay Catechism of 1649, Rev. Henry Tuberville D.D., Question 795.

Benedict asked, “What have you done?” To which she replied, “I asked you and you would not listen; so I asked God and He did listen. So now go off, if you can, leave me and return to your monastery.” Unable to do so, S. Benedict spent the night speaking with S. Scholastica of holy things.

Let us consider, then, some of the holy things of God for which S. Scholastica had such great devotion: “The family is a precious gift from God, ... this society, the family, becomes supernatural, as grace perfects nature. This is why the family must be preserved, nurtured and supported by the faithful by holy prayers and holy example.”¹ S. Scholastica’s fraternal love for her brother is an example to us of devotion to her natural family created by God, and her maternal love for the nuns of her monastery, of devotion to the supernatural family to which she had been called by God.

“The best way to increase devotion is by prayer and meditation... and the sanctification of our soul is the Holy Mass.”² As a Benedictine nun, every day of S. Scholastica’s life, including that day with her brother, was punctuated by liturgical prayer: Holy Mass and the Divine Office, the Psalms of which “are directed by the Holy Ghost, and do contain in a most moving manner, all the affections of piety and

devotion.”³ Daily meditation, too, in the form Benedictines call *Lectio Divina*, complemented and nourished S. Scholastica’s personal prayer. So too can the Holy Rosary, ‘Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary’, foster devotion by meditation upon sacred mysteries celebrated throughout the liturgical year.

Besides one’s own, prayers of and for others can also increase devotion, again one’s own, and devotion in others. Indeed, such mutual prayer is an essential element of liturgy, as exemplified, for example, in the Post-Communion for the Proper Mass of S. Scholastica: “Look mercifully down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, through the merits of Thy blessed virgin Scholastica, upon Thy family which is fed with heavenly food; that even as Thou didst cause, at her prayers, rain to fall from heaven, in order to fulfill her desire, so through her prayers, Thou wouldst be pleased to nourish the dryness of our heart with the dew of heavenly grace.”

Meditation can be practiced in common as well, as exemplified in turn by what is so elegantly described in the Sequence for the Proper Mass of S. Scholastica: *O grata colloquia, cum celorum gaudia Benedictus explicat*. O sweet dialogues whereby Benedict explains the joys of Heaven.

Indeed, prayer and meditation, liturgical and personal, in the depths of one’s heart and in

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common, can and should be a joy. But such joy is much more than a mere nice feeling. It is an elevation of the mind enlightened, and of the will fortified, by grace. “We must put aside sentimentality and replace it with authentic piety, which is loving God with your whole heart and soul: God is ... found in the hearts of those who love Him above all else.”⁴ Or as S. Benedict put it in his Holy Rule, and S. Scholastica put so well into practice: *Nihil amori Christi præponere!* Put nothing whatsoever before the love of Christ!⁵

This requires discipline. For S. Scholastica, this meant observance of the Holy Rule developed by her brother S. Benedict. For those who live outside of monasteries, this means observance of God’s Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, liturgical seasons and customs, and obedience to the just directives of one’s superiors, especially one’s bishop. But again, such duty is much more than servile “following orders”. Once again, it is an elevation of the mind enlightened, and of the will fortified, by grace. It is motivated by the longing instilled in our very nature that S. Augustine describes in his *Confessions*, that S. Benedict requires for admittance to the monastic life, and that I preached to you just a few weeks ago: “There can be no greater thrill than to seek and find Christ... The Lord awaits

¹ Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Family, 12 January 2025.

² Sermon for the Most Holy Name of Jesus, 5 January 2025.

³ Douay, Question 1060.

⁴ Sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, 22 December 2024.

⁵ Chapters 3 and 72: Of the good zeal that Monks ought to have.

us with perfect love, and there nothing greater than His love! It must be our joyful duty to share that love with others, with everyone we meet.”¹

This! This is the key to devotion! This is the key to family, to prayer, to discipline, to joy, to finding Christ. This is what we can admire in and learn from S. Scholastica, as even her saintly brother did. This is what generations of Benedictine monks and nuns have chanted to begin the celebration of her feast:

O potens virtus amoris! | O decus victoriae! | Dum fluentes lacrimarum | Cogis imbres currere, | Ore Nursini parentis | Verba caeli suscipis.

Oh, the might of love unbounded! | Victory of all most meet! | At thy tears the heavens opened, | Poured their floods about thy feet, | While his soul to thine made answer | All night long in converse sweet.² It is because S. Scholastica’s love was unbounded that I propose her again to you this year as exemplar of devotion: “The greater our love and intimacy with God so too our greater devotion.”³

But more... There is a special quality to S. Scholastica’s devotion that renders it greater still, something that resolves what appears to be a disagreement with her brother, similar to what to some might imagine to be conflicts between Our Lord

and His Blessed Mother in some Gospel accounts.

There is good. There is very good. And there is even better. Our poor modern world, deceived by the likes of Voltaire and even Churchill, supposes the better to be enemy of the good, perfection to be enemy of progress. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Generations of Benedictine nuns and monks continue the celebration of S. Scholastica by chanting S. Gregory the Great’s conclusion: *ab eo plus potuit quia plus amavit...* she obtained greater power from Him, because she loved more.⁴

It was by greater love that S. Scholastica overcame her brother’s objection because he realized that her greater love made her prayer – and her tears – more pleasing to God at that moment than even virtuous obedience and observance of the Holy Rule. *O quanta virtus lacrimarum* how great the power of her tears!⁵ The devotion they shared, so evident in their common prayer and meditation that day, and throughout their lives, quickly resolved a momentary difference of opinion. Resolved how? Not by argument, not by jealousy or envy, not by being proud or downcast, but by God Himself in miraculous response to... *Quantis cum gemitibus cordis et ardoribus haec Dilectum quaesit.* With how many sighs of heart and ardour she desires the Beloved... *Ardent desideria,*

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mentis et suspiria Virgo Sponsus excitat. How ardent are her desires and the sight of her virginal heart towards her Spouse.⁶ Let the lesson Our Lord taught S. Benedict at S. Scholastica’s behest be for us lesson as well. Appeal to God when differences arise between those who are good, between those who love Him with true devotion, and who love each other. Whenever something good gives way to what is better, embrace it, rejoice, and learn, humbly and without complaint.

The phrase from the following chapter in the Dialogues of S. Gregory the Great also chanted on this feast shows us the ultimate purpose and effect of devotion: “While S. Benedict was in his cell on the third day after this meeting, raising his eyes towards heaven he saw the soul of his sister leaving the body and entering the secret places of heaven.”⁷ A lifetime of ever increasing devotion is the best preparation for Heaven. Something to which S. Benedict no doubt applied himself that Lent, for on Holy Thursday, after receiving Holy Communion, he himself died, joining his beloved sister in Heaven, in the presence of God Who they both i

¹ Sermon for the Sunday within the Octave of The Nativity of Our Lord, 29 December 2024.

² Hymn at First Vespers.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ First Vespers *Magnificat* Antiphon.

⁵ Second Vespers *Magnificat* Antiphon

⁶ Sequence, Proper Mass of Saint Scholastica.

⁷ Last proper Antiphon of the Hours for the feast of Saint Scholastica.