

Meménto

THE PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF ST. PETER

North American Province



Christmas

JANUARY 2024

From the Provincial	3
<i>Very Rev. William Lawrence, FSSP</i>	
All Saints 2023.....	4
Love of Things Invisible	6
<i>Dr. David Arias</i>	
A Guide to Christmastide	7
<i>Fr. William Rock, FSSP</i>	
OLGS Incorporations & Tonsure.....	8
Fr. Lawrence Visits Hawaii	9
News	10
Apostolate Map	11

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Front Cover: The Presentation of Christ, window from St. Bernard Church in Burkettsville, OH. Photo by Nheyob at Wikimedia Commons.

Back cover: Seminarians chanting at Christmas Mass 2022.

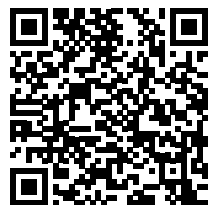


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Laudetur Jesus Christus!

A temptation that we all face in one way or another is to escape reality. Sometimes the temptation may be to escape the responsibilities that we have due to our state in life: responsibilities toward a spouse, children, family members, work, school, others that God has placed in our life, etc. Sometimes the temptation may be to escape responsibilities that we have with respect to ourselves whether it be with respect to our spiritual life, our intellectual life, emotional/psychological life, or our physical life. Fleeing the reality of these responsibilities is normally sinful since we are bound to be good stewards of what God has given us, starting with our body and soul. We are also bound to strive to fulfill the duties of our state in life whether that state be married, single, parent, priest, religious and so forth. The particular method of fleeing can also be sinful, especially if it involves substance abuse or sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments or risking the life of others or ourselves.

Sometimes, however, the temptation to escape reality doesn't present itself in such clear terms. It can simply be something along the lines of reacting to so much bad news—so many things happening in the world and in the Church are so horrible and depressing—that we are tempted to distract ourselves by pretending such things don't exist, by wasting large amounts of time on the internet, in front of the television, on social media, etc. This is certainly much less serious than the ways of escaping reality mentioned above. Nevertheless, God has placed us where we are in this time and place for a reason and that reason is not to escape, but to know, love, and serve Him with all of our being. How then should we combat such temptations?

One way is to consider the example that God has given us and strive to follow it. Christmas presents us with the beautiful example of God's love for us. When the human race sinned and we doomed ourselves to everlasting suffering, God could have simply left us to our own devices, all the while remaining infinitely happy in His Beatitude. He did the opposite, however, by taking on our human nature and entering into time and space through the Incarnation. He saw our need and came to save us. Furthermore, He didn't come to save us while remaining separate from our problems like a detached superhero of sorts, but became a tiny Baby to

dwell with us, and to experience firsthand so many difficulties of human life: poverty, hardship, persecution, labor, loss of those dear to Him, betrayal, denial, suffering, death. He did the opposite of escaping reality, but deliberately entered into it in order to make it better and bring hope.

We are not called to morbidly fixate ourselves on what is wrong in the world; we are not even called to fixate on the problems in our own lives. At the same time, however, we are not called to attempt to escape reality either. Just as God entered into His creation through the Incarnation and Birth of Our Lord in order to bring salvation and offer hope, we are each called to make things better in time and place in which we live. Some of us may be called to a life specially dedicated to service, even the priesthood or religious life. Others will be called to married life or service in other ways. Those who are able should exercise the corporal works of mercy. Everyone, however, can exercise the spiritual works of mercy through prayers, good example and offering up our daily crosses for the salvation of souls and the Greater Glory of God. As long as a human being has the use of reason, he or she can do these things. There even exist special apostolates of redemptive suffering such as the Knights at the Foot of the Cross of the Militia Immaculata for those with chronic physical or other suffering who want to use that suffering for good.

This Christmas, as we reflect on the birth of Our Savior, let us reflect on the love that caused Him not to abandon us, but to enter so deeply into the lives of His creatures. Let us consider too, the fact that we are not called to escape from the reality of the situation around us, but to make it better by bringing Christ to it—each according to our abilities and circumstances. God calls us to be part of the solution, not the problem—the solution that starts with Him. I wish you all a very Blessed Christmas! ✝

Fr. William Lawrence, FSSP

Fr. William Lawrence, FSSP
North American Provincial

*Christus natus est pro nobis—
venite adoremus!*

ALL SAINTS 2023

The Oratory of Saints Philomena and Cecilia in Brookville, Indiana, under the direction of Father Howard Remski, FSSP, had a wonderful All Saints' Day high Mass at noon, then a celebration afterwards in the schoolhouse, complete with feasting, games, and a chanted litany of the saints around the church. Mrs. Charlene Tennis writes: "We are so thankful to God for access to the timeless TLM and for such a wonderful parish community!"

Photo credits: Jennifer VanHeusen. ✝



St. Mary's on Broadway in Providence, RI held its All Hallows' Eve party after Mass on the Feast of Christ the King. Games, friends, and candy...what's not to love?



Nne Enyemaka in Nigeria also celebrated All Saints Day in colorful style, honoring bishops, martyrs, and even Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi (1903-1964), a fellow Igbo and Nigerian who was beatified in 1998.



In Guadalajara, Mexico, families processed with their children on the streets, honoring local favorites like Our Lady of Guadalupe, Juan Diego, and other beloved saints.



God has made us human persons and the material universe such that, from the visible things in creation, we can reason to a certain knowledge of the existence and nature of the invisible God Who is the Creator and Lord of all things. St. Paul declares this great truth in these words:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles” (Romans 1:18-23).

Explaining how visible creation enables us to ascend intellectually to a knowledge of its invisible Creator, the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, writes:

“the creatures of this sensible world signify the invisible things of God partly because God is the origin, exemplar, and end of every creature; and every effect is a sign of its cause, and an example of its exemplar, and a way to the end to which it leads.... For every creature is by its nature a sort of effigy and likeness of God’s eternal wisdom.”

By reasoning from creatures to God, in the way described by Saints Paul and Bonaventure, we can know many things about Him with certainty. For example, we can know that He is infinitely perfect, unchangeable, eternal, one, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, the sovereign Creator and Lord of every creature, and many other things besides these. At the same time, our natural way of knowing God from His effects has its limitations as well. For example, our reasonings about God at best terminate at His essential attributes, such as the ones just mentioned. Because of this, none of our reasonings about God can penetrate to, and make known to us, His hidden inner life.

Yet, God wants us to know Him more perfectly and more intimately than our reasonings from creatures will allow. Thus, Scripture teaches:

“God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world; who, being the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, has effected man’s purgation from sin and taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much superior to the angels as he has inherited a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The Incarnate Son of the eternal Father is King (He has “taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high”), Priest (He “has effected man’s purgation from sin”), and Prophet (God the Father “has spoken to us by his Son”). As Prophet or Teacher, our Lord makes known to us many divine mysteries, but first and foremost He makes known to us the Mystery of mysteries, namely, that in the one divine nature there subsist three eternal divine Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, the Incarnate Son’s teaching about the Blessed Trinity is so great and profound that Pope Leo XIII can truthfully say: “This dogma is called by the doctors of the Church ‘the substance of the New Testament,’ that is to say, the greatest of all mysteries, since it is the fountain and origin of them all. In order to know and contemplate this mystery, the angels were created in heaven and men upon earth.”

As Priest, the Incarnate Son’s death on the cross has reconciled us to Himself as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit. And through the Sacraments which He has instituted, the God-man gives us sanctifying grace whereby He makes us to be “partakers in the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), adopted sons of God, and temples in which He, God the Son, dwells together with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, as King, the Incarnate Son, together with His eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, sovereignly reigns over us and all of creation. Yet, the reign of the three divine Persons over those sanctified by their grace is not a reign of a master over

his slave, but a reign over adopted sons and “members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Indeed, in Their reign over us, the three divine Persons have given Themselves to us. As Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene marvelously puts it:

“The Father gave Himself to us by bringing us into existence and by sacrificing His only-begotten Son for our salvation; the Son gave Himself to us by becoming Incarnate, by dying for us on the Cross and by making Himself our Food; the Holy Spirit gave Himself to us by coming to dwell in our souls, by infusing grace and charity in us. If the three divine Persons have offered Themselves to us to this degree, it is to elevate us to the status of sons and to bring us, as sons, into Their divine family.”



As we contemplate God’s visible creation, our minds and hearts should ascend to the invisible God, the Creator and Lord of all things. This Christmastide, as we contemplate our divine Savior, God the Son Who descended from heaven and became man, our minds and hearts should ascend to the Blessed Trinity, the Mystery of mysteries, which He came to reveal to us. And may we make our own, the words of the Preface of the Nativity: “through the Mystery of the Word made flesh, the new light of Thy glory hath shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that while we acknowledge God in visible form, we may through Him be drawn to the love of things invisible.” Amen. ✙

Christmas and its 12 Days

*From ‘Thoughts for an Extraordinary Christmastide’
by Fr. William Rock, FSSP*

Date and Day of Christmas:

Christmas is celebrated on 25 December, which is determined by counting nine months from 25 March on which day tradition states that Our Lord was incarnated in the womb of Mary and on which Our Lord also died. It is a Jewish tradition that prophets always die on the day of their conception or birth and the early Christians held that Christ’s conception and death were on the same day, thus placing His birth in December. The celebration of Christmas is not fixed to one day of the week but traverses the days of the week from year to year. As such, each day of the week is sanctified by the celebration of Christmas.



Matins: During the evening of 24 December, Christmas Matins is traditionally chanted. Matins is the First Hour in the Divine Office. Christmas Matins contains nine Psalms and three sets of three readings. The last three readings are commentaries on the Three Gospels of the Day.

Three Masses: Three Masses are said on Christmas Day. Each Mass has its own chants, prayers, and readings. The practice of having three Christmas Masses originated in Jerusalem.

- **The Midnight Mass.** The theme is the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. It is held that Christ was born in Bethlehem at midnight.
- **The Dawn Mass or the Mass of the Aurora.** The theme is the birth of Christ in the soul by grace which is expressed by the visit of the shepherds in the Gospel. This Mass is also called “the Shepherds’ Mass” on this account. In this second Mass there is a commemoration of St. Anastasia who is a Martyr-Widow. By this commemoration, the Church joins the Virginity of Mary with the Martyr-Widowhood of Anastasia to show that married life is not to be excluded from the blessings brought by the coming of Christ.
- **The Day Mass.** Its focus is on the eternal generation (birth) of the Son, true God from true God, from the Father.

The Octave Day of Christmas (1 January): Formerly in Rome, two Masses were said on this day. One Mass, the Octave of the Lord, commemorated both His Circumcision and His Presentation in the Temple. The second Mass was a protest against the pagan celebrations associated with the New Year. After the February 2nd Feast of the Presentation was established at Rome, the first Mass became more focused on the Circumcision. The second Mass gradually fell into disuse. As time went on, this day, due to influence from France, received some Marian characteristics.

The remaining four days (to make a total of twelve) continue the celebration of Christmas. ✙

OLGS INCORPORATIONS & TONSURE

October saw the yearly ceremonies of incorporations and tonsure held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary. The ceremony of incorporation was held after Vespers on October 18th, 2023, the 35th anniversary of the Fraternity. Fr. Lawrence presided as the second-year seminarians became official members of the Fraternity.



Three days later, on Saturday October 21st, the men were tonsured by Bishop Robert Finn, exchanging their secular clothes for the cassock and surplice and receiving five cuts of hair in the shape of a cross. ✝



FR. LAWRENCE VISITS HAWAII

Provincial Fr. William Lawrence, FSSP visited Hawaii's island of Oahu in October, saying Mass for the Latin Mass Community at Blessed Sacrament Church in Honolulu, as well as hearing confessions, performing two Baptisms, and offering a blessing for expectant mothers. Fr. Lawrence was impressed by the fervor and hospitality of the Latin Mass Community there, with many of the faithful going out of their way to welcome him. A number of the young adults in the community are also greatly involved in ongoing recovery efforts on Maui through Epic Ministry.

Located in beautiful Pauoa Valley on the island of Oahu, Blessed Sacrament Church was built in 1938, in the style of the California Missions. In the mid-1940s, it went from being a mission to a parish of the Diocese of Honolulu. FSSP priests have been visiting Hawaii for over 30 years now, beginning with a visit to Oahu and the big island in 1993. ✝



NEWS NOTES

Thank You for the Gift of Rest!

In the Assumption issue we mentioned the pressing need at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary for mattresses and vehicles.



Thanks to your response, we were able to purchase 113 mattresses for about \$46,000 and a 2017 Toyota Sienna for \$26,000. The seminarians are delighted with the new mattresses!

When we saw the old ones being dragged out, we were surprised at the poor condition of many of them. We chose a used rather than new mini-van, as the latter are absurdly expensive and even unattainable.

Thank you for giving our seminarians the gift of rest and reliable transportation. Continue to keep them in your prayers as they work to complete their studies and progress toward ordination. ✝



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Visit www.fraternitypublications.com to order our 2024 Liturgical Ordo or our FSSP 2024 calendar "Our Lady Through the Ages" in English or Spanish. Or call the Sophia Institute at 1-800-888-9344. ✝



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As a Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right established by Pope St. John Paul II, our mission is to use the ancient liturgy as a wellspring to form our priests in the traditions of the Church to serve at the altar and in the parish to bring the fullness of Christ into the emptiness of the world.

Over the past 35 years, The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP) has ordained over 350 priests to bring the traditional Latin Mass and Sacraments to people around the world. In more than 50 cities across North America, we preach, teach, and sanctify faithful Catholics. And at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, we form over eighty seminarians to become the priests of tomorrow.

