

COR AD COR

Opus Mariæ Mediatrix

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Dear Friend of Our Lady,

First of all, let me wish a happy and Holy Year of Jubilee to all our members, benefactors and friends. For us, the Holy Year began at Midnight Mass of Christmas, with the rendition by the choir of the magnificent Mass in D major by Antonin Dvořák. In keeping with the spirit of the Year of Jubilee, we have initiated another musical treat for all those who attend Mass at Our Lady's Chapel of Opus Mariæ: at seven of the Masses to be celebrated through out the whole year, we will be highlighting the works of composers who were the choir masters of the seven major pilgrimage churches of the Diocese of Rome. Thus, for the feast of the Holy Innocents, Solemn High Mass was celebrated to the accompaniment of a Mass by Claudio Casciolini, who was *maestro di cappella* until January 1760 at the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Damaso. On January 6, the Solemnity of the Epiphany a Mass by another Roman composer, Giovanni-Battista Casali, who was *maestro di cappella* of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, will be sung. In other musical news, it has been decided to start a children's choir named the *Schola Infantium*. The idea for the name of the children's choir came from the introit of the feast of the Holy Innocents, "Ex Ore Infantium..." (Out of the mouth of babes, [children]). The *Schola Infantium* will be under the capable direction of Timothy McDonnell and classes and rehearsals will take place during two semesters of the year, Michémas in the fall and Candlemas in the spring. This new choir will enhance the celebration of our Sunday Sung Mass and Vespers.

From the Vatican, you may have heard the good news of the beatification of Lúcia and Francesco, two of the seers of Fatima, at Fatima itself on May 13, 2000. Perhaps even more exciting for some, will be the bishops' Jubilee Year gathering at the Vatican on October 8, 2000. On that occasion in union with the bishops, the Holy Father will consecrate the Church and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Just a reminder: Please don't forget that you can gain the plenary indulgence for the Holy Year at the Cathedral of your local diocese. You might also inquire of your respective chancery offices, for a list of other designated jubilee churches. The Jubilee Year, itself, seems to have already sparked a lot of interest, with more than a million people passing through the Holy

few days of its opening. A little more than a week later, Vatican officials were surprised at the turnout for the Children's Jubilee. Five thousand, or maybe ten thousand children were expected, but to the astonishment of all, over one hundred thousand children met for the Jubilee Year celebration with the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square. He used the occasion to reaffirm the Church's teaching regarding the sacredness of human life.

To return to the local scene, we were pleased to receive just a few weeks ago, the architect's drawings for the restoration of the St. Jude's Shrine Chapel. We have already removed the termite infested interior walls, and having just recently received the requisite permit from the municipality, soon the entire roof will be removed to be replaced with a brand new one. Unfortunately, however, with the replacement of the roof our funds dry up. So we ask you to keep this project as well as our other renovation projects in mind.

The *Aula Sanctorum* of the St. Joseph conference center was the scene of a number of happy events previous to Christmas. On Gaudete Sunday, December 12, 1999 we had the first of what we hope will be a series of concerts of classical music. Works were presented by Brahms, Bach, Dvořák, Vivaldi and LeClair, among others. A wonderful time was had by all and it proved to be a very joyful way to celebrate Rose Sunday in Advent. Just before Christmas itself, the hall was transformed into a stage for the annual children's nativity play. The narration for the play was taken from the writings of the Saints. At least forty children took part in this production, with a particular abundance of angels. Everyone was touched by this presentation, which also had its moments of humor, when for example one of the littlest angels began to experience discomfort with her halo, promptly removing it and chewing on it. One of the fathers played the donkey, and did a very good job, indeed.

On a practical level, we are aware of the somewhat erratic schedule of our monthly newsletter, at least partially due to the priority which bulk mail receives; something which is beyond our control.

Just a brief note for those who recite the Divine Office each day; you will notice that in the *Benedictus* and *Magnificent* antiphons for the feast of the Epiphany, mention is made of three miracles commemorated on that day; the changing of wine into

Our Lord in the waters of the Jordan and the coming of the wise men to Bethlehem. Why are all three mentioned in the antiphons for this feast? Because it is piously believed that the miracle at Cana and the Baptism of Our Lord took place on the anniversary of the arrival of the three wise men. Speaking of the Epiphany, another custom which we keep here at Opus, is the blessing of Epiphany water on the vigil, January 5. This blessing of water is of Eastern inspiration, given that in the Church of the East, the Baptism of Our Lord is more emphasized on January 6, than in the west. The Roman Rite considers all three mysteries on the Epiphany, but with special emphasis being given to the epiphany itself on January 6, and with special emphasis on the Baptism of Our Lord on the Octave of the Epiphany, January 13, and special emphasis on the wedding feast at Cana on the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

As mentioned previously, the Vigil of the Epiphany saw the blessing of Epiphany Water. It is one of the most elaborate in the Roman Ritual consisting of 1) the chanting of the litany of the Saints, 2) psalms 28, 45 and 146, 3) an exorcism, 4) the *Benedictus*, or *Magnificat*, 5) the exorcism of salt, 6) the commingling of salt with the water and 7) finally the *Te Deum*. As you can see, it is quite a liturgical workout.

Well, I have just about run out of space. Let me once again wish you a Holy Year of Jubilee with a reminder that you are remembered in my monthly Masses for benefactors and friends.

In the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Fr. William F. Ashley



261 Cross Keys Rd. ✪ Berlin, New Jersey 08009

☎ 856-753-3408 voice; 856-753-2671 fax

Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.omm.org – E-mail: info@omm.org