



A newsletter from
ST. MARY'S ABBEY

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December 2017

3. I Advent (Abbot Richard)

7. St. Ambrose, *memorial*

8. Immaculate Conception of BVM, *solemnity*

- ⊕ Mass with school, 10:00 a.m.
- ⊕ Second Friday, 3-5 p.m.
- ⊕ Solemn Vespers, 5:15 p.m.

10. II Advent (Abbot Richard)

- ⊕ Oblate meeting, Vincent House
- ⊕ Freshmen Retreat Mass

12. Our Lady of Guadalupe, *feast*

13. St. Lucy, *memorial*

14. St. John of the Cross, *memorial*

17. III Advent (Abbot Elias)

- ⊕ Christmas Concert in the FAC, 7:00 p.m.

24. IV Advent (Fr. Michael)

24. Midnight Mass, *solemnity* (Abbot Richard)

- ⊕ 11:00 p.m.; reception follows in Estabrook Dining Hall

25. Nativity of the Lord, *solemnity* (Abbot Richard)

- ⊕ Mass 11:00 a.m.

26. St. Stephen, *feast*

27. St. John the Apostle, *feast*

28. Holy Innocence, *feast*

31. Holy Family, *feast* (Fr. Hilary)

This calendar follows the **Order of Worship** as approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship on 22 June 1972 in Rome for the American Cassinese Congregation of

prayerful reading is to pray the Scriptures during the week as a preparation for the Sunday Eucharist. The following is the schema of readings for this month:

- ⊕ **Dec. 3:** Is. 63:16b-17, 19b, 64:2-7; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37.
- ⊕ **Dec. 10:** Is. 40:1-5; 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8.
- ⊕ **Dec. 17:** Is. 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.
- ⊕ **Dec. 24:** 2 Sam. 7:1-5, 8b-12; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.
- ⊕ **Dec. 24: (Midnight):** Is. 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-14.
- ⊕ **Dec. 25: (Day)** Is. 52:7-10; Heb. 1:1-6; John 1:1-18.
- ⊕ **Dec. 31:** Sir. 3:2-6; Col. 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, the titular patroness of the Abbey and the USA, is a holy day of obligation. The monastic community will mark the feast with the school community at Mass on Friday, 8 December 2017 at 9:45 a.m. Bishop Serratelli will be the celebrant. Solemn Vespers (*without Mass*) will be sung at 5:15 p.m.

SECOND FRIDAY: Friday, 8 December 2017, there will be Adoration & Reconciliation in the Abbey Church from 3–5 p.m.

OBLATES: The Oblates of Saint Benedict will meet this month on Sunday, 10 December 2017 in Vincent House. New members are always welcome. For more information, call Father Hilary at 973.538.3231 [ext. 2019] or e-mail oblates@delbarton.org.

DECEMBER SAINT: One saint is usually obscured by the Christmas and New Year's celebrations, but is well worth a closer look. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes Sylvester as a Roman and the son of Rufinus. Yet little is known of this future pope's origins, though legends about him abound. One

LECTIO DIVINA: This is the art of prayerful reading of the Bible and is as ancient as the monastic tradition itself. This is the daily routine of the monks. One way to share this ancient art of

legend suggests Sylvester was swept into the persecutions under the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305). St. Sylvester's pontificate, sadly, is often swallowed up by the more well-known reign of the Emperor Constantine. The latter's victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge that made him the sole Roman emperor seems to get more coverage in history than the man who was elected bishop of Rome in 314, the year following Constantine's Edict of Milan, whereby Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire.

The same year, 314, Constantine convoked in Arles the first church council, appointing Chrestus, the bishop of Syracuse, as the leader of this ecclesiastical event, not Sylvester, the new bishop of Rome. St. Sylvester, nonetheless, sent two priests and two deacons as his agents. Rather than assume Sylvester was out of favor with the emperor, it's more likely that church affairs in Rome were more pressing on the new pope. Happily, the council upheld the primacy of the See of Peter, which it communicated to St. Sylvester and requested he spread this decree to all church.

Pope St Sylvester was also absent from the subsequent and more famous council at Nicæa in 325. The council bishops formally affirmed the Father and the Son are "consubstantial," that is of the same substance, striking a serious blow to the charges of the errant bishop, Arius. He held the Son to be merely a creature inferior to the Father. The pope's age and ill health prevented his physical presence, but he was nonetheless kept informed of the proceedings. The two priests sent from Rome as the pope's emissaries were invited to affix their signatures to the final doctrinal statement.

While St. Sylvester may not have had a front row seat at Constantine's early initiatives for the church, the pope presided over a church enriched by the beauty of new structures and public liturgies. The *Liber Pontificalis* speaks of these churches as the result of Constantine's beneficences. The Lateran Basilica, for example, dedicated to the Savior and St. John the Baptist, was built on land donated by Constantine, acquired from the dowry of his second wife, Fausta (of the Laterani family). She was the sister of Maxentius, whom Constantine defeated in the battle for Rome. The basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul were also believed to have built under the

emperor's authority. It has also been suggested Pope St. Sylvester was responsible for Constantine's conversion to the faith.

Pope St. Sylvester died 31 December 335, New Year's Eve. He was buried in the cemetery of Santa Priscilla on the Via Salaria, now under the care of Benedictine nuns! New Year's Eve is called in some countries, "Sylvester Night," and revelers are called "sylvesters." One legend suggests the pope, after his death, was put in charge of the universe's clock, making him "Father Time!" Every day for the pope, was a feast day (experiencing the end of Roman persecutions seems like a good excuse for this!). Every day, every feast, brings us closer to the perfection to which we strive. At the end of the calendar year and the beginning of the church year, when we celebrate Christ's two comings, we look forward to the end of time and the beginning of eternity. St. Sylvester, pray for us and for peace!

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE: December 21-January 3, Matins will be at 7:30 a.m. Vespers (*with Mass*) will be at 5:15 p.m. as usual, Monday-Friday.

OFFERING: During the month of November, the congregation gave \$4028.00 to the monastery through the Sunday collection. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

WEBSITE: Please visit the Abbey website: www.saintmarysabbey.org for this newsletter and more up-to-date information about the Abbey. You can also visit the school website for news and events: www.delbarton.org.

