

Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

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Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

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Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!



Sunday, June 24th – Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

During the great cycle of the Christian year, there are three festivals in celebration of a person's birth. We celebrate the births of John the Baptist, of Mary, and of Jesus. These are the holy ones who were filled with the Spirit even before their birth.

Keep in mind that, in the liturgy of the church, a "nativity" is not a birthday. Birthdays are anniversaries of a birth. Instead, a nativity is the birth itself. Today is not John the Baptist's birthday. Today John is born. That's what we sing in the liturgy today. Rejoicing at John's birth is a commandment of the gospel. Even the angel Gabriel tells us to rejoice (Luke 1:14). The Gospel of John records that Jesus himself praises John the Baptist.

The feast of John's birth was established very early in the Church's history, at about the same time as the feast of Christmas. Luke tells us that the angel Gabriel announced the conception of Jesus six months after announcing the conception of John. So the date of this feast is six months before Christmas. The old customs that centered around the summer solstice became ways to honor John. In Europe and other parts of the world, some people stay up all night to burn St. John's fires. And the celebration goes on all day as well.

In Poland, wreaths lit with candles-which look like Advent wreaths-are tossed into streams to float downriver. Young unmarried girls weave the wreaths of flowers and herbs, each girl trying to make her wreath as distinctive as possible. Lining the sides of the river bank or pond, the girls would attach lighted candles to their wreaths and then cast them into the water. In former times so plentiful were the wreaths and flowers on the waters that the saying arose that "on St. John's the water blossoms."

As the girls watched their wreaths, they sang songs to the boys who either jumped directly into the water or skimmed over it in small boats to retrieve the wreaths of their choice. For some, marriage matches were made on this night and if not, young maids went to sleep thinking of the man they would like to marry, for it was believed that dreams dreamed on midsummer night were likely to come true.

The most outstanding feature of St. John's Night in Poland however, were the bonfires. Country people would travel up into nearby hills and mountaintops, or to large clearings in the forests. Once there, they would ignite huge bonfires by the traditional, primitive method of rubbing two sticks together, or by striking flint in order that the fire be "live" or "new." The darkening horizon would be fiery with hundreds of bonfires while young and old gathered around the flames. The religious understanding of the bonfires was that once Jesus had called St. John the Baptist "a burning and shining light," and so it was believed that the fires were a symbol perpetuated in memory of St. John the Baptist.

Wednesday, June 27th – the Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Najświętszej Maryi Panny Nieustającej Pomocy

MATER DE PERPETUO SUCCURSU

The Mother of Perpetual Help story begins in the fifteenth century, when according to legend, a merchant stole a miraculous painting from a church on the island of Crete and set sail across the Mediterranean. Nearly shipwrecked in a wild storm, he made landfall and eventually brought the stolen painting to Rome.

There he became ill. Upon his deathbed he revealed the secret of the painting to a friend, begging that the icon be placed in a church for public veneration. The merchant died, the friend having promised to fulfill his wish. But the friend's wife so loved the image that she refused to part with it.

After the friend died the Blessed Mother herself intervened, appearing to the couple's six-year-old daughter. Referring to herself as the Mother of Perpetual Help, Mary asked the child to tell her mother and grandmother to have the icon venerated in a church between the churches of St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran. At the time the Church of St. Matthew the Apostle was found in that location, and with much reluctance, on March 27th, 1499, the child's mother obeyed Mary's request.

Over the next three hundred years, the icon's beauty and wonderworking powers attracted the devotion of the people. When in 1798 Napoleon's troops nearly destroyed the Church of St. Matthew, the icon moved with its Augustinian caretakers to a nearby monastery. Then in 1819 the Augustinians took the painting with them to the Church of St. Mary in Posterula. As Our Lady of Grace was already venerated there, the Mother of Perpetual Help was placed in a private chapel, forgotten by all except

Brother Augustine Orsetti, who ensured that one of his altar boys, Michael Marchi, knew the icon's story.

In 1855 the priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, known as the Redemptorists, acquired the lands of the Villa Caserta, which included the spot where the Church of St. Matthew the Apostle had been located. There they constructed the Church of St. Alphonsus. Becoming interested in the history of their land, the Redemptorists turned up the story of the Mother of Perpetual Help icon. Michael Marchi, then a Redemptorist novice, remembered what Orsetti had said and directed his confreres to the image. Pope Pius IX granted the Redemptorists custody of the painting, telling them to make the Mother of Perpetual Help known throughout the world. Thus in 1866 the icon was returned, cleaned and installed in the very spot between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran that the Mother of Perpetual Help had chosen as her sanctuary centuries before. Her feast day was established on June 27th.

With help from Mary herself the Redemptorists have indeed made her known throughout the world, and Our Mother of Perpetual Help now has shrines in Boston, New York and St. Louis; Haiti, where she is the country's patron; Santiago, Chile; Curitiba, Belem and Manaus, Brazil; Tequisquiapan, Mexico; Belfast and Limerick, Ireland; Torun and Kraków, Poland; Singapore; and Manila, Philippines. The perpetual novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, which was first established in St. Louis in 1927, has spread the devotion and attracts hundreds and thousands of people.

The painting itself depicts the Madonna and Christ child, with Saints Michael and Gabriel in attendance. All are identified by Greek lettering. The two angels are holding the instruments of the Passion: the cross, the spear, the crown of thorns and the sponge. The child, having been shown this vision of His future, has in His fright rushed into Mary's lap. He is still staring at the cross with fear, and his sandal has fallen off His right foot, a detail that emphasizes how quickly He has run to His Mother. Though she has taken hold of His hand to comfort Him, she is staring out of the image at the observer, her sorrowful eyes drawing all her children into her perpetual care and protection. The star on her forehead emphasizes her role as Mother of God and Mother of All People. At the same time, she directs the observer to focus on Jesus, the Son of God. As always, Mary guides the faithful to her Son, her mission being to bring all people to Christ, the source of all salvation.

In our parish the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help was begun by Fr. Bogusław Parzych in the late 1930's during his time as administrator of the parish for the sickly Fr. Kruszka. The Perpetual Help shrine was a gift to the parish from the altar boys in 1942.

Friday, June 29th, Feast of Saints Peter & Paul

This feast day celebrates two of the greatest saints of our Catholic Faith. After the Blessed Virgin Mary, there probably were not two other disciples of the Lord Jesus who were more devoted to the mission and to Christ's gospel. These apostles were very different from Mary, who always did God's will and the will of her divine Son perfectly, 100%! They struggled with their discipleship. Saints Peter and Paul had their moments when their own ideas and dreams took them in the exact opposite direction from what Christ was doing and saying.

St. Peter did not want to let Jesus go to Jerusalem to give up his life. Later he renounced the Lord publicly, saying he did not even know Him. In spite of this, Jesus called Peter the Rock upon which he would build his Church and eventually all the other disciples of Christ recognized St. Peter as their leader. In a dream Peter came to understand that the gospel message was for everyone on earth, not only for the Jews like himself. St. Peter was probably imprisoned three or four times before being

martyred around the year 64 during the persecutions of the emperor Nero. According to legend, he asked to be crucified upside down, since he did not feel worthy to die in the same way Jesus died. His tomb is under the High Altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

St. Paul went around actually rounding up and killing early Christians until the time of his conversion. After his vision of Christ and change of heart, he became a great missionary. He was well equipped for this with a bright mind and a good education. He was familiar with the scriptures because he had studied to be a rabbi. St. Paul was the first to write of Christ, in letter form. This preceded even the gospels. Like St. Peter, St. Paul was martyred by Nero, perhaps around 67. His tomb is located in the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls of the old city of Rome.

God took the very human characters of these two thoroughly diverse persons and made them great and made them holy. Christ built His Church on them and that Church endures today. Both gave up their lives as martyrs for the One True Faith in Rome.

Traveling? 1-800-MASS-TIMES

There is a nationwide ministry available to traveling Catholics providing free information on the location of the nearest church and times of Masses on weekends and holy days. This service is available to all parishes by calling 1-800-627-7846. Also visit the Mass times website at www.masstimes.org. The site provides search categories by city, non-English services, churches that provide wheelchair access, tourist Mass locations and web links for Catholic travelers. **In this day and age there is really no reason why a Catholic should end up missing the Sunday Mass just because he or she is out of town!**

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Because an unmarried Jew in His early thirties spoke for the first time the mystic words of Consecration at a farewell banquet in a city of the Near East over two thousand years ago, and then knowingly went out to let Himself be killed like a common criminal the following afternoon, over one million men, women, and children, all over the earth, today in the Mass, share the secret of life everlasting.

For the young Jew was also Almighty God. In every age since the moment of His shameful public execution, not a day has dawned, which did not witness that death repeated. Through all ages, what He did is done again, somewhere, always. Through His death – and the burst tomb which followed it by three days – men and women live again and come once more to God. We who share in re-enacting this ancient secret, bear the name of Catholics. We call it the Mass

This is My Parish

It is composed of people like me. We make it what it is. It will be friendly, if I am friendly. Its pews will be filled, if I help to fill them. It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am a generous giver. It will bring other people to its worship and fellowship if I bring them. It will be a Church of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a Church with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these qualities. Therefore, with the help of God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my Church to be.