

Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

July 15th, 2018

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Most Precious Blood

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and the Scapular

This weekend we are observing the feast day of the patroness of our parish. This feast day (which is actually Monday the 16th) is a very important event in the spiritual and liturgical life of the parish. In Polish the patronal feast day of a parish is called *Odpust* which literally translates as indulgence. Parishioners may receive an indulgence by going to confession and Holy Communion at Mass on the patronal feast of the parish. This is a day for all parishioners to give thanks to God Almighty for the blessing of the parish in which some of the most important events in life's journey take place.

The parish is the place where we are baptized, the place where we receive regularly the Bread of Life, the place where our sins are forgiven. It is the place where the joy of the sacrament of matrimony takes place as well as the place where our God consoles us as we bury our beloved deceased. The parish church makes our faith life rich in the remembrance of Christ's birth at Christmas and His sacred passion, death and glorious resurrection at Easter. Where would we be without our parish church?

Ours is a parish dedicated to Blessed Mary, Mother of God. At present we are calling it **Our Lady of the Scapular**, which is a more literal English translation of the "folksy" Polish name for the parish, *Matki Boskiej Skaplerznej*. Actually, from an official Polish liturgical perspective it is *Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Góry Karmel*. This comes from the official Latin name, *Beatae Mariae Virginis de Monte Carmelo*, which has been translated as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It really is not so terribly important as to which particular title we use. What is important is that we know the story and history related to this image and appearance of Our Lady.

Mount Carmel in the Holy Land was a holy place hundreds of years before Christ. There the prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of the pagan god Baal to a contest where the power of God was shown forth. Later, in the early centuries of Christianity, people who wanted to pray and grow close to God settled on the slopes of Mount Carmel. In time a monastery was built there.

It is believed that in 1251 Our Lady appeared to the Prior General of the Carmelite Order named Simon Stock on Mt. Carmel. She gave him the brown scapular which was modeled after her own holy vesture and became a part of the habit of the Carmelite order. A smaller version was shared with the laity to wear and enjoy Mary's maternal protection. Obviously, no magic way of salvation is intended. Rather, the scapular is a reminder of the gospel call to prayer and penance – a call that Mary models in a most splendid way.

When the Blessed Virgin appeared at Fatima in Portugal she strongly recommended all to wear the scapular. The prayers of the Virgin Mary are very powerful and a great hope to those in that very real place called purgatory.

In our church, it would seem that there are four images of our patroness. The first and perhaps most obvious is painted at the top of the apse, the ceiling directly above the high altar. Our Lady is seen there on a

cloud. To her left and to her right are angels unfurling fragments of a scroll which reads, "*Matko Boska Karmelitańska módl się za nami.*" Yet another version of the title of Our Lady Patroness, asking for her prayers! Of course the statue in the Blessed Mother's altar is that of the patroness. She is also found in the central window of the choir loft. Finally, it is somewhat debateable, but it would seem that the depiction in the third window from the vestibule on the parking lot side of the church might very well be Our Lady giving either the religious scapular or the entire habit of the Carmelite order to St. Simon Stock.

At this point in history there has been at least one Polish-American parish in the city of Wyandotte for 119 years. From the first Polish parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, grew two other similar parishes, St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Helena. As time has marched on, these three have come back together again in the form of one Polish American Parish, Our Lady of the Scapular. **THIS IS OUR PARISH.** It will be what we make of it! It is composed of hard working and decent Catholic people. It will be a friendly and welcoming parish if each one of us chooses to be friendly and welcoming. Its pews will be filled if we all help to fill them by inviting others to join us in our worship. Our parish will not suffer want if we are generous with our time and resources.

And so as we celebrate this feast day of our parish, I appeal to every member to pause for a moment and consider just what your parish means to you and how many graces God bestows on you through your parish. It is true that there have been many changes over the last few years, but a traditional Polish American parish remains for all of us to take pride in, in spite of all the changes. And Our Lady continues to watch over and intercede for that parish!

There is a great need in our parish for involvement of its many members. Frequently we are in need of ushers, altar servers and lectors for our worship. Always we are in need of volunteers for our many necessary fund raisers. The festival is approaching and there is a great need for volunteers and generosity. Some who have volunteered in the past are not able to do so this year for various reasons. New, devoted and committed leaders, and lovers of the parish need to come forward. The expenses of the festival will be presented here in next week's bulletin. Your generosity is needed, and your hard work, to insure a successful festival.

We all want our parish to not only survive but to thrive. It can do this but we must all work together to that end. As our patronal feast day approaches this week, we are all invited to renew our commitment and devotion to the parish, that wonderful place, like no other, where we continually meet our God!

Sunday, July 15th – Feast of St. Bonaventure

Not much is known about Bonaventure's childhood near Viterbo, an Italian town northwest of Rome. At an early age he entered the Franciscan Order, where he could imitate Jesus as Francis of Assisi had done. St. Francis had died in 1226, when Bonaventure was about five years old. Since that time the Franciscans had been struggling to decide how best to follow their founder's example. Many different groups within the order had strong opinions about how things should go.

Bonaventure was appointed the leader of all the Franciscans around the world when he was only 35 years old. In the 18 years that Bonaventure was their leader, he worked hard to bring all the groups into peaceful agreement. He called five general meetings of the order. He also invited the friars. To help them understand Francis better, Bonaventure wrote a biography of the saint.

Everyone who knew Bonaventure seemed to agree that he was a lovable person. He also was considered, with his friend St. Thomas Aquinas, to be one of the great thinkers of his time. Despite Bonaventure's own intelligence, he taught that people didn't have to be bright or well-educated to be loved by Jesus. At the end of his life Pope Gregory X made him a cardinal and the bishop of Albano, Italy. He died on July 15th at Lyons in France in 1274 during a major Church Council. He was canonized in 1482 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588.

The well known church of St. Bonaventure in Detroit is also the chapel of the monastery of the Capuchin Fathers and the burial spot of the Saintly Father Solanus Casey. If you have never been there it is located on Mt. Elliott directly across from the cemetery. This monastery was started in 1883.

Tuesday, July 17th – Feast of St. Hedwig/Jadwiga Queen/King of Poland

Hedwig was born in 1374 and was the daughter of King Louis I of Hungary and Elizabeth of Bosnia. Both of her parents were descended from the House of Piast, the ancient native Polish royal dynasty. At that time Poland was ruled by the King of Hungary, since Louis was the son of the sister of the last Polish King, Casimir III, who had no male heir. Because Louis was of the Piast Dynasty he was chosen by Casimir before his death to rule Poland. Louis' daughter Hedwig or Jadwiga as she is known in the Polish language, was brought up at the royal courts in Buda and Visegrad in Hungary. She learned to speak six languages, including Latin, Bosnian, Hungarian, Serbian, Polish and German. Already when she was just four years old she was betrothed to an Austrian royal and it seemed as if her life would be used to advance political alliances in medieval Europe. She was well-educated and had interests in the arts, music, science, and court life. She was also known for her piety and had a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In 1382 when King Louis died, the Hungarian throne went to his oldest daughter Mary. In Poland however Jadwiga was chosen to rule, with her mother's permission at the young age of just eight! She did not come to Poland however, until she was ten years old. On October 16th, 1384 Jadwiga was crowned King of Poland. Polish law had no provision for a female ruler, but did not specify that the King had to be a male. The masculine gender of her title was also meant to emphasize that she was monarch in her own right, not a queen consort.

Soon after Jadwiga's coronation at age ten, many suitors appeared at the royal court seeking her hand in marriage, including the Austrian royal who had been promised her hand by her father when she was just four years old! He was rejected by Jadwiga and thrown out of the country! Eventually, however, a political marriage was arranged for her with the Lithuanian Duke Jagiello. He had promised to be baptized and to except Christianity as the official religion of Lithuania. In return Jadwiga would be his wife and he would become King of Poland. First Jagiello was baptized and took the Christian name Ladislaus. Then in March of 1385 they were married in Kraków. Jagiello was twenty-six years old and Jadwiga, twelve. This followed immediately by Jagiello's coronation. Jadwiga however retained her royal rights, though she probably had little actual power as a monarch. Rather she tended to cultural and charitable activities. She sponsored writers and artists and donated much of her personal wealth to charity, for purposes including the founding of hospitals. Among her most notable cultural legacies was the restoration of the Kraków Academy, which in 1817 was renamed the Jagiellonian University in honor of the couple.

Tragically, on July 17th, 1399, she died in Kraków, within a month of giving birth to her daughter Elizabeth at the age of twenty-five. From the time of her death, Jadwiga was venerated widely in Poland as a saint. It is a well known story about her that she often prayed before a large black crucifix hanging in the north aisle of the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków. During one of these times of prayer, the Christ on the cross is said to have spoken to her. The crucifix, now known as St. Jadwiga's cross, still hangs there in the cathedral and the relics of St. Jadwiga's body are enshrined beneath it.

She was also known to like to smuggle food from the castle to give to the poor, and carried it in her apron. King Jagiello was informed of these excursions at night, and was told that Jadwiga might be giving information to rebels. King Jagiello was enraged and decided to find the meaning of these wanderings after dark. One night, while Jadwiga was leaving by a secret door, Jagiello sprang out of the bushes and demanded to see what was in her apron. A miracle occurred and the food she was carrying, which would have earned her a death sentence, turned into a garland of roses. To this day, Jadwiga is always depicted wearing an apron of roses.

According to another legend, Jadwiga took a piece of jewelry from her foot and gave it to a poor stonemason who had begged her for help. When the King left, he noticed her footprint in the plaster floor of his workplace, even though the plaster had already hardened before her visit. The supposed footprint, known as "Jadwiga's foot" can still be seen in one of Kraków's churches. In yet another legend, Jadwiga was taking part in a Corpus Christi Day procession when a coppersmith's son drowned by falling into a river. Jadwiga threw her mantle over the boy's body, and he regained life.

Like all the other royals of Poland, Jadwiga was buried in the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków when she died. Her body has however been exhumed at least three times. The first time was in the 17th century, in connection with the construction of a bishop's sarcophagus next to Jadwiga's resting place. The next exhumation took place in 1887. Her complete skeleton was found, together with a mantle and hat. The famous Polish artist, Jan Matejko made a sketch of her skull, which later helped him paint her official portrait.

On July 12th, 1949, her grave was opened one final time. This time she was reburied in a beautiful white marble sarcophagus where she is depicted with a dog, a symbol of fidelity, at her feet. This sarcophagus is oriented with her feet pointing west, unlike all the others in the cathedral. On display next to it are the modest wooden orb and scepter with which she had been buried as she had sold her jewels to finance the renovation of the Kraków Academy. Pope John Paul II canonized St. Jadwiga on June 8th, 1997 at a ceremony conducted in Kraków.

Friday, July 20th – Feast of Blessed Czesław – Dominican Priest

Blessed Czesław was born in Poland in the city of Kamień Śląski in Silesia, or south west, Poland, in the year 1180. He was a member of the noble Odrowąż family and a relative of St. Jacek/Hyacinth. After his studies for the priesthood at Prague and Bologna, he became a canon and custodian of the Collegiate Church of Sandomierz in south eastern Poland.

In 1218 he made a pilgrimage to Rome together with St. Hyacinth and their uncle, Bishop Iwo Odrowąż, the Bishop of Kraków, where they met the well known St. Dominic. The two decided immediately to join St. Dominic in his Order of Preachers and they received their habits from St. Dominic in Rome, who sent them back to their native country of Poland for their ministry.

Blessed Czesław traveled on foot from place to place teaching the true faith and building up Catholic life everywhere. In Wroclaw he established a Dominican Monastery and eventually Blessed Czesław was made Superior of the Dominicans throughout all of Poland. He also founded a Dominican Monastery in Prague. He is most remembered for turning back a Mongol invasion of the city of Wroclaw by his prayers. He also did missionary work in Bohemia, Pomerania, (northern Poland at the Baltic Sea, also known as Kaszuby) and Saxony, (western Germany). He was declared blessed by Pope Clement XI in 1713.

Flos Carmeli, Vitis Florigera, Splendor Caeli, Virgo Puerpera Singularis!

Monday we solemnly observe the Patronal Feast of our Parish at a special 7:00 PM Mass. We do this in both the English and Polish languages recalling and honoring the ethic heritage of those who began all three of the Polish parishes, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Helena, that have now become the one parish of Our Lady of the Scapular. As you will recall, Our Lady of Mount Carmel was founded in 1899, with Fr. Bernard Zmijewski as its first pastor, St. Stanislaus Kostka was founded in 1914, with Fr. Alexander Konus as its first pastor, St. Helena was founded in 1925, with Fr. Albert Marówka as its first pastor and Our Lady of the Scapular was founded in 2013 with me as its first pastor.

The Latin phrase at the head of this article comes from a well known prayer to our Patroness. Actually it is a hymn and a prayer. *Flos Carmeli* literally means Flower of Carmel. The Carmelite Order has its own personal rite of the Mass. This hymn was the sequence for the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel since 1663. It is said to have been written by St. Simon Stock himself.

Flower of Carmel, tall vine blossom laden, splendor of heaven, childbearing yet maiden. None equals thee. Mother so tender, who no man didst know, on Carmel's children thy favors bestow. Star of the sea, strong stem of Jesse, who bore one bright flower, be ever near us and guard us each hour, who serve thee here. Purest of lilies, that flowers among thorns, bring help to the true heart that in weakness turns and trusts in thee. Strongest armour, we trust in thy might: under thy mantle, hard pressed in the fight, we call to thee. Our way uncertain, surrounded by foes, unfailing counsel you give to those who turn to thee. O gentle Mother who in Carmel reigns, share with your servants that gladness you gained and now enjoy. Hail, gate of heaven, with glory now crowned, bring us safety where thy Son is found, true joy to see. Amen.