



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

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Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Month of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Monday, August 6th – Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

At the time of year when the harvest is abundant, we celebrate a feast of God's glory. The marvelous events of this day are told in the gospels of Matthew (chapter 17), Mark (chapter 9) and Luke (chapter 9). Peter, James and John were led up to a high mountain by Jesus. Suddenly his face shone as bright as the sun. Moses the Lawgiver and the great prophet Elijah appeared. They talked about Jesus' coming death and resurrection. In awe, Peter blurted out a strange suggestion. He wanted to set up booths for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

A cloud surrounded them. Then the voice of God proclaimed that Jesus is God's son, the Beloved. The three apostles were terrified. They fell down in fear. Then they looked up, but the amazing scene was gone. Jesus was there alone. What did Peter mean when he asked if he should set up booths? The answer is found in a custom of the Jewish harvest festival of *Sukkot*. During *Sukkot*, booths are set up. They're constructed out of green branches and decorated with fruits and flowers. They symbolize creation. Moses and Elijah and all the ancestors are invited to enter in spirit. If Peter wanted to set up harvest booths, perhaps he wanted all of creation to share in the Transfiguration of Jesus.

In the time of Moses, when the Israelites traveled through the desert on their way to the Promised Land, God traveled with them. God appeared as a cloud within a tent. In the gospel story of the Transfiguration, God again appears as a shining cloud. But instead of filling a tent or a harvest booth, the cloud surrounds Jesus and his disciples. Perhaps the human body is like the tent of God's presence.

The feast of the Transfiguration is a day of rejoicing. In Rome, the grape harvest is blessed. New wine from these grapes is used at Mass. Eastern Christians hold a harvest procession in celebration of the springtime flowers and seeds that have been "transfigured" into summertime fruit and grain. Altars are decorated with fruit and sheaves of wheat. Often there's a summer fair after the services end.

Wednesday, August 8th – Feast of St. Dominic

St. Dominic was born in 1170 in the Castile region of Spain. His parents were nobles of the well known Guzman family. He became an Augustinian priest and lived in community for several years, spending his time in study and quiet prayer. His life might have continued that way except for a group called the Albigensians. They taught that the body is evil and only the spirit is good. This mistaken idea was probably popular because the Albigensians fasted and lived in poverty. People found them more trustworthy than many luxury-loving Christians of the era.

Dominic asked the pope for permission to begin a new religious order for men and women. It would

be called the Order of Preachers, and preaching the truth of the goodness of the body would be its first task. The order was founded in 1218 and an order of Dominican Sisters eventually followed.

The priests who joined the Dominicans could have as many books as they wanted so that they would continue to study and therefore preach clearly. But they would also live lives of Christian charity and poverty. This would help people trust and believe them.

Unlike other religious orders, the Order of Preachers traveled wherever they were needed. Dominic trained his priests to use only kindness and tact, not harsh judgment, when debating. He sent them to great universities. Many of them received doctorates and became famous teachers themselves.

Dominic traveled through Europe to organize the Order of Preachers. He died in 1221 when he was only about 51 years old in Bologna, Italy. But by that time the order had spread as far as Britain, Poland, Scandinavia and Palestine. Nowadays, the Order of Preachers also is known as the Dominican Order. Like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic helped to revolutionize the thirteenth century.

Both the Dominican Fathers and Sisters have a great devotion to the Holy Rosary. In fact pious legend says that the first rosary was given to St. Dominic by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself with the child Jesus in her arms looking on.

In our church an image of St. Dominic can be seen in the mural above the side altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is seen kneeling at the right of Our Lady while receiving the holy rosary from the Christ Child, while at the same time the Virgin presents a wreath of roses to the Dominican Saint, Catherine of Siena kneeling at her left.

Thursday, August 9th – Feast of St. Teresa Benedict of the Cross

Edith Stein was born in Breslau/Wroclaw, Poland in 1891, the eleventh child of a Jewish family. She was as a practicing Jew but by her teenage years she had become a convinced atheist. She studied philosophy under Husserl, the leading phenomenologist of his day. Her reading of the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila caused her to rethink her atheism.

After being received into the Catholic Church in 1922 at age 31, she taught in Speyer and Munster. In 1933, at age 42, she entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany where she received the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. At the end of 1939, she moved to the convent at Echt, Holland, on account of the Nazi persecution of Jews, but in 1942, during the German occupation of Holland, she was arrested, transported to Poland, and killed at the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz at age 50.

She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1998 and then declared co-patroness of Europe along with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget of Sweden.

Friday, August 10th – Feast of St. Lawrence

The word “deacon” means “servant.” The word was first used to describe someone who waited on tables. St. Stephen, the first martyr, was a deacon of the early Church. Christian deacons in the early days of the Church were men and women who helped the needy. They distributed the community’s goods. Because of their work, deacons were especially visible in times of persecution when many other Christians would go into hiding.

Two centuries after the death of St. Stephen, the emperor Valerian was in power in Rome. He forbid the Christians to assemble. Valerian’s henchmen had murdered Pope Sixtus II in 258. The deacons of the diocese of Rome had all been beheaded. Lawrence was the only deacon left alive. He was a Spaniard, called to Rome from Toledo by the pope. Finally, he too was found and arrested.

Legends about St. Lawrence say that he spent the last days of his life selling the possessions of the community and giving the money to the poor. When a Roman official demanded that he produce the Church’s wealth, St. Lawrence brought blind, lame and needy people to this official. The official was so enraged that he ordered Lawrence roasted to death over a fire. To encourage the poor, who were forced to watch, Lawrence was said to have joked, “Turn me over. I’m done on this side.” His martyrdom took place in the year 258. When the legends about St. Lawrence first appeared many years after his death, he became

famous. Many churches were named after him, and he has become one of the patron saints of Rome. Outdoor barbecues are a custom to celebrate his feast. That may seem like a grisly way to remember the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. But it is also a way to laugh at Valerian and all dictators.

Saturday, August 11th – Feast of St. Clare of Assisi

Clare was born in 1193 of the aristocratic Offreducio family in Assisi. During her adolescence she had met St. Francis numerous times. At age fifteen she refused to enter into a marriage arranged by her parents. At age eighteen on Palm Sunday night of 1212 the beautiful young Clare silently slipped out of her father's palace in Assisi and made her way to the Portiuncula, outside Assisi, where St. Francis lived with his small community. She was dressed in her best gown, wearing all her jewels. Francis cut her hair, gave her a dress made of rough gray sackcloth tied with a rope. For the time being he arranged for her to stay in a Benedictine convent. When her father heard about her plan to live in poverty like Francis, he came with Clare's uncles to the convent and tried to take her back by force. She clung to the altar of the church, threw aside her veil to show her cropped hair and remained adamant. When her father saw her determination to stay he finally gave in to her wishes.

Later she was joined by her sister Agnes, who was only fifteen years old, and still later by her own mother and several women of illustrious families. St. Francis then placed them in a house adjacent to the church of San Damiano and named Clare the superior. They called themselves the Poor Ladies.

Clare was the superior or abbess of this monastery of nuns for forty years. She took an unusual approach to being the head of the convent, by thinking of herself as the servant of the other women. She waited on them at meals. When they came in from outside, she knelt joyfully to wash their dirty feet. When they got sick, it was Clare who gently tended to them. St. Clare became so well known for her holiness and spiritual wisdom that popes, cardinals and bishops often came to consult her, yet she herself never left the walls of the convent at San Damiano.

Because they wore no shoes, ate no meat, slept on the ground, observed almost complete silence and lived in absolute poverty, that is, on alms alone, their order was eventually known as the Poor Clares. As individuals and as a community, they were to own nothing. St. Clare's spirit was soon felt all over Europe. Among the women who flocked to join the Poor Clares were princesses and other noble ladies. Like Clare, they had lived with wealth and power. They realized these things didn't bring joy.

A well known story concerns her prayer and trust. She had the Blessed Sacrament placed on the walls of the convent when it faced attack by invading Saracens. "Does it please you, O God, to deliver into the hands of these beasts the defenseless children I have nourished with your love? I beseech you, dear Lord, protect these whom I am now unable to protect." To her sisters she said, "Don't be afraid. Trust in Jesus." The Saracens fled.

After St. Francis's death, Clare lived thirty years longer. Many people thought the "poor ladies" should have farms and vineyards, as other convents had. St. Clare insisted that the sisters should own nothing. This was her way of protecting the spirit of St. Francis. In a time when the Church and the town of Assisi were wealthy, her choice was a challenge and an example to others. She died in 1253 at the age of sixty after suffering from serious illness for the last 27 years of her life.

Saturday, August 11th – Feast of St. Suzanne

Saint Suzanne was a Roman noble of the third century and the beautiful daughter of Saint Gabinus, a priest, and the niece of Pope Saint Caius. Her name, in Latin – Suzanna, means lily. She lived in the city of Rome in the early part of the Emperor Diocletian's reign when the last large-scale persecutions of Christians were building steam. Having made a private vow of virginity, and not wanting to be part of a family that murdered her family in faith, she refused to marry Maximian, Diocletian's son-in-law. Her piety was such that she converted Claudius and Maximus, relatives and the messengers of the emperor sent to bring her to Maximian. In revenge, she was exposed as a Christian, beaten, and martyred. She was beheaded on August 11th, 295 in her father's house in Rome and then buried by Diocletian's wife who was a closet Christian.

By the fifth century the house where she was martyred had become the original St. Suzanne Church in Rome. Later it was rebuilt as a minor basilica and at present serves the needs of American and English speaking Catholics in the city of Rome and has been designated as the American National Church in Rome by the Holy Father. It has been under the direction of the Paulist Fathers since 1921. From 1946 to 1958 Cardinal Edward Mooney was the America Titular Cardinal of St. Suzanna in Rome.

Saturday, August 11th – Our Lady of Święta Lipka

Thursday is the Feast day of Our Lady of Święta Lipka, which is translated literally as Our Lady of the Holy Linden Tree. This feast is found on the 11th of August only on the Polish Liturgical calendar. The Blessed Virgin Mary is known by many titles and by many places throughout the world. We are most familiar with titles like Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe or Our Lady of Częstochowa. In all of these places Our Lady appeared with some message or to bring about some kind of miracle. Święta Lipka is a tiny village in the north of Poland. The village sprang up after the Blessed Virgin made herself known in that place. It happened in this way. In the thirteenth century a criminal awaited the carrying out of his death sentence in the dungeon of a castle in the nearby medieval town of Kętrzyn. He prayed to the Holy Virgin to save him, and on the night prior to his planned execution she revealed herself to him, and gave him wood and a chisel so that he could carve her figure and then present it to the jury the following day. The convict obeyed her words and though he had never carved before, he managed to produce a fine small statue of Mary with the Child Jesus in her arms. Believing this to be a sign from God, the judges let him go free. The grateful man placed the statue on the first linden tree by the road from Kętrzyn to the town of Reszel. Before long it gained fame as a miraculous statue. The locals carried it to the church in Kętrzyn, however the statue vanished twice and returned to the linden tree where it was first placed. This was considered irrefutable proof that the Holy Virgin had chosen that spot. A decision was made to erect a chapel there.

By the time of the fifteenth century the shrine of Our Lady of Święta Lipka had become a place visited by pilgrims from all over Europe. However in 1530 after the Protestant Reformation the shrine chapel was ordered destroyed by the Lutheran civil authorities. The miraculous statue of Our Lady was thrown into the nearby Lake Wirowe and the holy linden tree was cut down. The Catholic faith was banned and this region of Poland became part of Prussia. Catholic priests were exiled and any pilgrim to the place of this former shrine received the death penalty. Later in 1618 when Catholics regained their religious freedom King Zygmunt III of Poland bought the whole of Święta Lipka and turned it over to the Jesuits to rebuild the shrine. In the spot where the holy linden tree once grew and the statue of Our Lady once stood, a painting of the Blessed Lady of Święta Lipka was placed and it also became a source of miracles. Later at the end of the seventeenth century a superb baroque church was built at Święta Lipka and on August 11th, 1968 the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński crowned the miraculous image of Our Lady of Święta Lipka, the Holy Linden.

CSA Reminder!

We continue to collect for the annual Catholic Services Appeal. Officially the campaign is to end in August but we always end up collecting until the next campaign begins in May. There are still over 500 households that have not made a contribution. If you are one of these please consider making a donation or pledging so that finally this year we can meet our goal. At present we have collected \$30,113.00. We still need \$46,652.00 so as to reach our goal of \$76,765.00. If everyone who has not yet pledged or given an offering would give \$100 we would reach our goal. That would be something very significant as we never seem to reach our goal. Last year we had to use over \$18,000.00 of our Sunday collection money to pay off our assessment.