



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

December 2nd, MMXVIII

First Sunday of Advent

Rev. Mark A. Borkowski

Month of the Divine Infancy

FmarkB@aol.com

Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Today we begin a new liturgical year. The season of advent is the beginning of our annual cycle of commemorations of the events of our salvation. It is a time of waiting. It is a time of hope, not necessarily a time of penance though only purple vestments are to be used during this season. We are to excite in our hearts sentiments of joyful expectation at the *advent* or coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is NOT just prep time for Christmas! It is not a countdown to Christmas and most importantly, Advent IS NOT Christmas! No matter how many decorations cover shopping centers and malls! No matter how many Christmas parties you are invited to or how many ads for presents you will see on TV. Advent is not Christmas and we will not have Christmas in church until it is time for it! We will not miss out on this opportunity to spiritually reflect on the coming of Christ. We need to reflect on what His birth 2018 years ago did for us and to consider what His second coming, which might take place at any time, will mean for us. I urge you to resist the temptation to jump the gun and have Christmas now, with all your strength! Happy New Year & Happy Advent to all!!

Advent Wreath & the Advent Calendar

Advent is a time of waiting. It is also a time of counting. Children count the days until Christmas, hopefully because they are looking forward to joyfully celebrating the birthday of the child Jesus, but undoubtedly they are also counting the days until Santa comes and gifts are received! Both the Advent wreath and the Advent calendars were created to be of help in this counting and waiting. Both have their origins with German Lutherans, but now have been accepted as seasonal elements of many other religions including the Catholic Church.

The Advent wreath uses the symbolism of the circle as a reminder of eternal life. The greens and lights of the candles are symbols of the persistence of life even in winter, when there is greater darkness and little foliage. Advent wreaths have been in use since the 16th century to mark the weeks until Christmas.

The Advent Calendar made its first appearance in 1851 in Germany. Until that time the days were often counted down with a chalk mark on a door or a collection of candles lit one by one for each day. Actually, most Advent calendars only countdown the 24 days of December until Christmas, while Advent can begin in November. The first paper calendars with little doors opening to reveal a picture, a message or even a piece of candy were printed in 1902.

Monday, December 3rd – Feast of St. Francis Xavier

Francis Xavier was the son of noble Basque parents born in a castle in Navarra, Spain in 1506. At age 24 he experienced a radical change in life which came about when he was a student at the University of Paris. It was there that he met another student and future saint, Ignatius of Loyola.

At first, Francis thought that Ignatius was a strange person. Ignatius was an ex-soldier. He challenged those around him to take Christianity more seriously than they ever had before. In time he invited Francis and five other young men to form a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, also called the Jesuits.

Shortly after Francis was ordained a priest, he began his life's work of bringing the gospel to the Far East. Even though he often got seasick and had trouble learning foreign languages, he eventually taught and baptized people in India, Ceylon, the Philippines and Japan. In the course of his short life as a missionary he baptized over 30,000 persons.

Francis refused any comforts that weren't available to the people he served. Often he slept on the ground and lived on rice and water. Despite his noble birth, he never allowed himself to be waited on by servants. Wherever he went, he sang to the children and cared for the sick. He spread the gospel by dealing with people in a gentle and courteous way.

For years St. Francis Xavier dreamed of working in China. At age 46 he finally boarded a ship sailing to the city of Canton. But he caught a fever, and the frightened sailors left him on the island of Shangchwan near the mainland. There he died on December 3rd, 1552.

Tuesday, December 4th – Feast of St. Barbara, Virgin & Martyr

St. Barbara was the daughter of a third-century pagan named Dioscuros of Heliopolis, a city in northern Egypt. This was the city through which our Lady and Saint Joseph carried Our Lord on the Flight into Egypt. There is a legend that all the pagan idols crashed to the ground when the Holy Family walked through the streets. Because Barbara was extremely beautiful, her father imprisoned her in a tower whenever he was away to protect her from harm. Despite her father's over protectiveness, Barbara discovered the Christian faith by means of a Christian who disguised himself as a physician and instructed her in the faith. She decided to convert. When Dioscuros learned that his daughter had been baptized a Christian, he flew into a rage and ordered that she be tortured and beheaded.

St. Barbara is the patron saint for miners and all those who work with fire and explosives. Because legend says that Dioscuros was struck by lightning after he himself killed his daughter by cutting off her head, people began to think that Barbara could control thunder. Soon they began to pray to her to protect them during thunder and lightning storms.

When gunpowder was invented, the noise reminded people of thunder, and miners began to ask St. Barbara for protection against accidents from the use of explosives.

In Europe, a statue of St. Barbara is often found at the entrances of mines or tunnels, and some mining companies incorporate her name in their company's title. Australia also holds an annual St. Barbara's Mining and Community Festival in December. In the Czech Republic, St. Barbara's Cathedral was built by rich mine owners, and many of its interior decorations reflect mining life.

First Friday, December 7th

Mass is offered in our church on the first Friday of every month at 6:30 AM, 8:00 AM and at 7:00 PM. On First Friday we should try to take time out of our busy schedules to adore Our Lord present in the Holy Eucharist and to receive Him in Holy Communion. When we do this we begin to show our appreciation to Almighty God for this wonderful Sacrament and all the other blessings God regularly bestows upon us. Are you thankful? Another month of your life has quickly passed. This week you have that special opportunity once again to show your thankfulness to God by honoring His Son and taking refuge in His Sacred Heart!

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Saturday, December 8th – A Holy Day of Obligation

What does the Immaculate Conception mean? Surprisingly and unfortunately many Catholics today haven't a clue! Frequently Mary's Immaculate Conception is confused with Jesus' Virgin Birth. This phrase, Immaculate Conception, means that Mary, from the first moment of her conception, was free from all stain of sin by a special act of God in virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ. By a most extraordinary privilege, the soul of Our Lady was from the first instant of her existence in the womb of Anna her mother, preserved from all stain of original sin, the consequence of Adam's sin in no way tainted her immaculate being, she was in the state of grace from the very beginning of her life.

Mary Immaculate watches over us in a special way, for in 1846, at the first meeting of the bishops of the United States in Baltimore, our nation was officially and solemnly dedicated to Mary, immaculately conceived. Since that time this feast day has been a very special one for all Americans! Mary loves us with a mother's love. She feels for us, desires to help us that we may love God and neighbor with our whole heart and thus save our immortal souls. Please be certain to come and honor Our Blessed Mother, Mary Immaculate at one of the Holy Day Masses that will be celebrated on in our church.

Masses are at 7:00 PM on Friday (in Latin), December 7th, and at 8:00 AM and 12:00 noon on Saturday, December 8th.

☉ **Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee!**

Christmas Cards

The custom of sending Christmas cards was started by Sir Henry Cole in England in 1843. At the time he was a civil servant who wondered how ordinary people could be encouraged to use the new Public Post Office. He conceived the idea of Christmas cards, and with his friend John Callcott Horsley, an artist, they designed the first card. It had three panels. The outer two showed people caring for the poor and the center panel was a family having a large Christmas dinner. By the 1900's, the idea had spread throughout Europe and was especially popular in Germany.

The first cards usually had pictures of the Nativity scene on them. In late Victorian times, robins and snow-scenes became popular. Christmas cards appeared in the United States in the late 1840's, but they were so expensive that most people couldn't afford them. Then in 1875, printer Louis Prang began mass producing cards to make them more affordable. Mr. Prang's first cards featured flowers, plants and children.

In spite of the technology of the day, the sending of Christmas cards remains popular, with well over a billion being sent in the United States every year. Of course it is much easier and cheaper these days to send an e-card, or to offer "Holiday" wishes on Facebook or to Tweet or text, but somehow these just do not convey the same feeling as a printed card, that at the very least, contains a hand written signature.

Then there is the question of the theme of a Christmas card. Many cards today only remotely acknowledge the "reason for the season," so as to not offend the religious sentiments, or lack thereof of the receiver. In a world that is continuously moving away from God and the Christ the Father has sent into it, sending a Christmas cards that somehow acknowledge the presence of the Divine in our world has the potential of becoming a kind of small Gospel announcing the Good News that God continues to dwell among

Stay Humble, Work Hard, Be Kind

Bądź pokornym, Bądź pracowitym, Bądź uprzejmym.

Welcome St. Nicholas!

This weekend here at Our Lady of the Scapular we honor the holy Saint Nicholas, patron of children. His actual feast day will be Thursday, December 6th, but he is such an important character in the advent season that it is not inappropriate for us to think of him often during these days and celebrate his excellent example of true Christian charity!

St. Nicholas is possibly one of the most popular saints in Christendom, venerated for centuries by Protestants and Catholics alike. This holy, 4th century bishop of the diocese of Myra in Asia Minor was a man whose deeds became legendary and around whom developed many of our popular Christmas traditions.

Our current concept of gift-giving is directly connected to the charity of St. Nicholas. A man who inherited great wealth, he spent it all to help the needy. Once, in order to save an impoverished family, he threw three bags of gold down the chimney of their home. Legend has it that the money landed in stockings hung by the fireplace to dry. Attributed to him are many miracles involving children, including restoring life to three murdered boys. He became the patron saint of children, and gifts were given them on December 6th, the feast day of his death.

In the Polish tradition, *Święty Mikołaj* comes down from heaven on his feast day. He travels the countryside on a white horse or in a horse drawn sleigh. In many areas he leaves treats under children's pillows, or in a shoe next to their bed. In other areas he meets the children face to face and asks questions concerning their faith, their school lessons or their behavior.

In still other areas he is joined by an angel who helps with passing out the treats and/or a little devil, who passes out switches to be used on the children who have misbehaved. In place of the switch their reward may be a lump of coal! As his fame spread across western Europe, he began to develop into the person of Santa Claus (from the Dutch for Saint Nicholas, *Sinte Klaas*), who rides the sky on a white horse, landing on rooftops to descend chimneys and leave treats in the stockings of good children and switches in those of bad children to show his displeasure. Some even believe that he placed the *tannenbaum* (Christmas tree) in each home.

He was brought to America by the Dutch settlers of New York, and his final transformation from bishop saint to folk figure took place in 1823 with the publication of Clement C. Moore's poem *The Night Before Christmas*. Although the name has changed, the white horse exchanged for reindeer and sleigh, and the bishop's robes for a fur-trimmed suit, one thing remains the same: Saint Nicholas, and our present Santa Claus, is the continuing symbol of selfless giving – the true meaning of Christmas!

*Good St. Nick, Help us to keep
CHRIST in Christmas!*

*Święty Mikołaju,
módl się za nami!*

