



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

December 16th, MMXVIII

Third Sunday of Advent/Gaudete Sunday

Month of the Divine Infancy

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Gaudete in Domino semper! RADUJCIE SIĘ ZAWSZE W PANU!

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS!

Today is the third Sunday of Advent also known as *Gaudete* Sunday or Rose Sunday from the prayers of the Mass and the color of the vestments and altar decorations and appointments. Advent is supposed to be a rather somber and quiet liturgical season. It is not a sad or penitential time of year, but rather a time to be quiet and reflective. It is undoubtedly a season of hope-filled anticipation, but really should not be a time of celebrations and festivity. This *Gaudete* Sunday, however is different.

The Church actually encourages us to let loose with A LITTLE rejoicing and public manifestation of our joy at the upcoming birth of our Redeemer. We are recommended to decorate the altar with flowers so as to create a contrast from the empty spaces we have been looking at for the last two weeks. The organist is encouraged to lift our spirits with joyful hymns and grand preludes and postludes. The rose color is much happier and lighter than the striking and somber violet of the rest of the season.

Today the Church says Rejoice! You know you want to! Go for it! But this is a one-day only affair. Monday morning we go right back to the quiet of Advent, and it will be more of a challenge to keep the spirit because Christmas will be only eight days away! The final preparation for Christmas that I would recommend to you, is to use these last days of Advent to pray the Christmas Novena. Monday, December 17th would be the day to begin. The prayers included in this week's bulletin are to the Infant of Prague. The prayers of this novena should help all of us get in touch with the real spirituality of the Christmas Season. I hope you will use them to your advantage.

I want to remind all of our parishioners that advent is a fine time to go to confession, especially if you have not been in a while. Confessions are heard every Saturday afternoon at 3 PM. You may also go to confession on Thursday, December 20th at 1 PM or 6 PM or on Friday, December 21st at 1 PM or 6 PM. You may also attend a vicariate penance service, on Thursday, December 20th at 7:00 PM at St. Frances Cabrini in Allen Park or on Saturday afternoon, December 22nd at 12:00 noon at Sacred Heart on Grosse Ile. Of course you may always ask me to hear your confession at any reasonable time.

A Fascinating Look at the Infant of Prague Devotion

Though devotions to the Infant Jesus have been a longstanding tradition in the Church, they took on even stronger meaning in the 17th century after several miracles were associated with an Infant Jesus statue in the city of Prague.

Carved of wood, covered with wax, and 18 inches high, the statue was a wedding gift to the Princess Polyxenia of Lobkowitz. In 1628, when war broke out in the region and brought poverty to the Carmelite monastery in Prague, Polyxenia gave her cherished statue to the Carmelites. Honor and respect the Child Jesus, she told them, and you shall never be in want.

Indeed, the Carmelites prospered as they maintained their devotion to the Child Jesus. Then, when the Saxons plundered Prague in 1631 during the Thirty Years' War, the Carmelites were forced to flee, and the statue was left behind. The statue ended up being damaged. Then it was thrown in the garbage.

A devotee to the Infant of Prague, Father Cyril, a Carmelite Monk, retrieved the statue in 1637. It was in poor condition, and its hands were missing.

One day, while praying before the statue, Fr. Cyril heard Jesus say, "Have mercy on Me, and I will have mercy on you. Return My hands to Me, and I shall give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I shall bless you."

With the help of generous benefactors, the statue was soon restored and placed back in the monastery where it became the center of devotion for the monks. Up until that time, the monastery had been impoverished. But, when the devotion was reestablished, the financial crisis of the monastery was resolved, sick people were cured, and peace was restored.

Jesus' directive to "honor Me," the devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague has spread throughout the world. To this day, many have received special favors while praying to the Infant of Prague. Today the statue is in the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Prague. The Infant's left hand grasps a miniature globe capped by a cross, and His right hand is extended in blessing. Atop His head is a special crown called a tiara. The statue symbolizes the Kingship of Christ and His Holy Childhood. It reminds us that Jesus embraces the whole world in His loving hands.

Novena to the Infant of Prague

To be recited daily from December 17th to the 25th

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, You who so lovingly said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you," have mercy on me now, and through the intercession of your most holy Mother, I humbly ask you to grant me the grace I need.

(Mention your request.)

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, you who so compassionately taught, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes," have pity on me now. I do believe; help me. Increase my weak faith through the Blessed Mother's intercession; I humbly ask you to answer my request.

(Mention your request.)

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, You who once said to the Apostles: "If you have faith even like a mustard seed, you will say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it will obey you," hear my prayer, I humbly ask. Through the intercession of Mary most holy, I feel certain that my prayer will be answered.

(Mention your request.)

The "Second Part" of Advent

On the 17th of December we begin the second part of the season of Advent. The intensity of the hopeful and joyful waiting is increased and the prayers at Mass are intended to serve to prepare more directly for the Lord's birth.

During the first days of Advent, you may have noticed a kind of theme in the prayers used. They speak of living amid the passing things of this world and judging wisely between the things of earth and the things of heaven. We are encouraged to hold firm and fast to that which endures and to come to truly love and long for the things of heaven. This would seem to be very wise advice at this time of year when consumerism is at its height and we spend a great deal of time, energy and our resources in obtaining material things, so as to celebrate the holiday.

Now the prayers of Advent speak of lamps and torches lit waiting the final arrival of the Savior. There is mention of hearts aflame and going out to meet the Lord in humble adoration. These are the late days of the season which is like night time. These last days are like the hours before dawn. All nature is waiting for the glorious sunrise of the Son of God!

Let us pray.....

Dear Lord, let all my Advent preparations include thoughts of You!
When I impatiently gaze at the long lines while shopping for last minute gifts,
remind me of Your patience. You still wait for me to accept Your gift of love.
When I scribble the last of my Christmas cards,
remind me of Your words of encouragement.
They're mine for the asking in Holy Scripture.
When I string the tree with lights, remind me of Your Son, Jesus.
He brings peace and light to the world.
When I prepare the holiday feast, remind me of Your food, the Holy Eucharist.
You never allow us to hunger for You. When I gaze at the faces of my loved ones,
Remind me of Your love shining through all their eyes.
Lord, Your many gifts bring me salvation. Remind me once again.

History of the Christmas Tree

The use of evergreen trees, branches, wreaths and garlands as decorations dates back to pre-Christian times. People have forever been fascinated by this singular tree that stays green all year long despite the cold and snow of winter. The evergreen has been seen as a wonderful and comforting reminder of life, even in winter when life seems to have vanished.

The German people are known to be the first to connect the evergreen with the celebration of Christmas. There are many legends of its first use in Germany, but one of the most charming is the story of Martin Luther. After taking a night time walk in the forest and observing starlight shining through the branches of a fir tree, he then brought a tree into the home and attached candles to it, to recreate that beautiful scene. Within two centuries of this event the use of "Christmas Trees" had become common place throughout all of Germany, though it was still rather unknown in the rest of Europe.

All of this changed in the early 19th century after the marriage of Queen Victoria to the German Prince Albert. In 1848 the very popular royals set up a Christmas tree for the holidays at Windsor Castle. By means of the early press this information spread quickly throughout Europe and even reached the United States. It soon became the fashionable thing to do!

In our country the custom was practiced first by German immigrants in Pennsylvania. But after the Queen of England adopted this practice, its appeal spread quickly throughout the nation. Early decorations were of the homemade variety but by the height of the Victorian era in the 1890's, elegant blown glass

ornaments from Germany were all the rage. To make the Christmas tree something truly American and to prevent the tragedy of house fires caused by lighted candles on trees, Thomas Edison invented the first Christmas tree lights.

The popular Christmas Carol – O Tannenbaum/O Christmas tree, has become a beloved part of the American Christmas tradition, however *tannenbaum* refers to the evergreen or fir tree, while a Christmas tree in German is actually known as a *Weihnachtsbaum*.

Just Who Started This Christmas Thing?

One day, just before Christmas, a woman was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable, and after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season. Overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card.

Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all their bags of stuff. When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the car everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry we already crucified Him."

For the rest of the trip down, the elevator was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. Don't forget this year the One who started this whole Christmas thing, in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we could all do this, just imagine how very different this whole world would be!

The Christmas Pledge

1. To make my Christmas a holy day with Christ – not a Holiday without Him.
2. To observe Christmas as the birthday of Christ – not just a day to give and receive material gifts.
3. To remember that the real symbols of Christmas are the Star, the Stable and the Crib – not Santa Claus and his reindeer.
4. To teach my children that *Santa Claus* is the nickname of Saint Nicholas – who gave to the poor in honor of Christ.
5. To help one poor family – in honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family of Bethlehem.
6. To send Christmas cards remindful of Him, the Infant Savior – not decorated only with candy canes, dogs, ribbons and wreaths.
7. To make room in my home for Him – with a Christmas Crib to remind me that He was born in a stable.
8. During this season, in a special way to honor Mary, His mother – who kept the first Christmas vigil beside the manger.
9. To begin this day by leading my family to His table – to receive the Bread of Life.
10. Today and every day, to give *Glory to God in the highest* – to work and pray for *Peace on earth to men of good will*.

Wrinkles mean you laughed, gray hair means you cared, scars mean you lived.