



# Stronica Proboszcza

## The Pastor's Page

January 6<sup>th</sup>, MMXIX

Solemnity of the Epiphany/Feast of the Three Kings

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*Month of the Holy Name*

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

## Epiphania Domini, OBJAWIENIA PANSKIEGO, THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD,

*Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice!*

**T**he Epiphany of Our Lord is a Solemnity of the Christmas Season and the Church Liturgical Year. This Sunday's Solemn Feast of the Lord's Epiphany is considered to be one of the oldest feasts of Christianity. It was celebrated as far back as the second century in the Eastern Church. In the East, the feast meant the adoration of the Magi, the baptism of Christ, and the miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana. At each of these events, there was some manifestation of Christ's divinity. This is what Epiphany means, *manifestation*, or *revelation*. In the West, the feast came to mean the visit of the Magi who represent all nations. St. Matthew records the event in his Gospel. These Three "Kings" traveled to Jerusalem from the east. They followed a star that they believed would lead them to an infant who would be King of the Jews. When they found the Child with His mother, they fell on their knees and offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Fathers of the Church much later interpreted these gifts to be symbolic of the royalty (gold), the divinity (incense), and the Passion (myrrh) of Christ.

The readings for the feast emphasize the universality of God's power, love and presence to all people. Jesus is the Light of the Nations – all nations. Jesus has come for all because there are no limits to His love, and He will bring all people to his Father.

The Feast reminds us that we are responsible for sharing the Church's gifts, especially the gift of Christ with the world. Our outlook is to be ecumenical. We are to reach out in prayer, sacrifice, and active charity with the vision that God's kingdom is for everyone.



20 + K + M + B + 19

## THREE KINGS DAY! *TRZECH KRÓLI*

The Feast of the Epiphany, a.k.a. Three Kings Day, is celebrated in a special way by Polish people every where. In Church, chalk and incense are blessed and distributed to the faithful. The incense is meant to remind us of the gifts the Three Kings gave to Jesus and the chalk is used in a special ceremony in each home.

Upon returning to their homes with the blessed chalk and incense, families light the incense and allow the fragrant smoke to fill and sanctify the house, reminding everyone again of the Three Wise Men and also of the spiritual gifts the Church offers us.

The blessed chalk is used to inscribe **20 + K + M + B + 19** over the inside door of the house because the door to the home is a holy threshold. The letters are the initials of the Three Kings: - *Kaspar – Melchior – Balthasar*. They are written over each entrance into the house not only to commemorate the feast of the Magi but also to remind the inhabitants that they must treat all who come to their doors as kings – as kings searching for Jesus (for are not all people searching for God?)

Hospitality and kindness must be shown to all just as one would show respect and kindness to the Three Kings searching for Jesus! This holy inscription is a blessing on all who come in and go out of this door. It announces to all that inside these doors, under this roof anyone who seeks consolation, understanding, hospitality, rest, forgiveness or love will find them all here. In other words, if someone is looking for Jesus, he will find him under the sign of 20 + K + M + B + 19!

It is most fitting that we should bless the doors to our homes every year in January because *janua* means “door,” and the first month is the door to the New Year. May it be a happy and truly holy one!



## An Italian Custom on the Epiphany

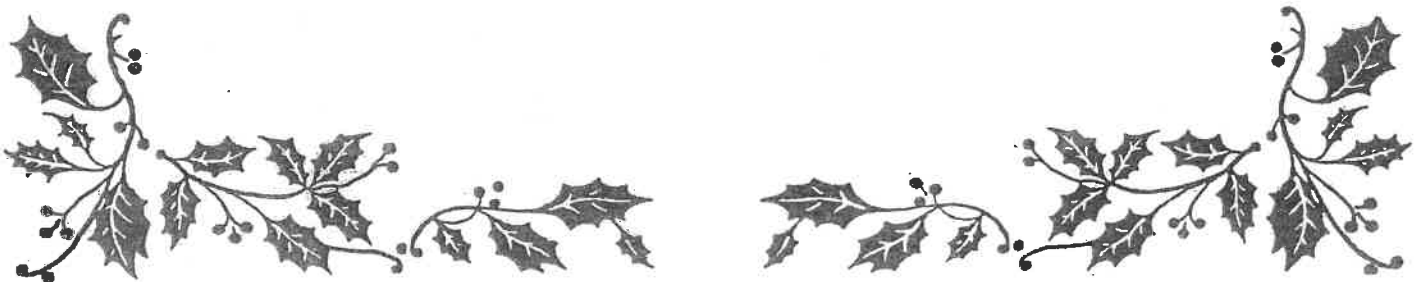
One of the first things many of us Americans think of when we think about Christmas is the jolly old fat man we know as Santa Claus. However, in Italy, children eagerly await the coming of the Christmas Witch, La Befana.

La Befana's origins are much more intimately connected with the Christian roots of the Christmas holiday. Legend has it that the elderly La Befana was attending to her house work when a few days before the birth of Jesus, the Three Wise Men approached her and asked her if she knew where they could find the newborn baby, who was the Son of God. La Befana did not know where this baby was, but she offered the Three Wise men shelter in her home for the night as she was considered the best housekeeper in her village with the most pleasant home.

In the morning, the Three Wise Men asked La Befana to join them in following the great Star, but she refused, saying she had too much housework to attend to. Later that night, as she was sweeping, La Befana looked up into the sky and saw the brilliant star the Three Wise Men had been following and had a change of heart, regretting that decision. So she loaded a basket with fruits, pastries and nuts as gifts for the Christ Child and left her home to find the Three Wise Men. She also took her broomstick planning to help the new mother of Jesus with her cleaning.

Sady La Befana never found the Wise Men or Jesus, though she diligently continues to search, visiting the homes of children everywhere on the vigil of the Epiphany at night looking for the Christ Child. For good children she leaves toys and candy. For those who misbehave she traditionally leaves coal, onions or garlic! If a child attempts to get a look at La Befana he or she will feel a thump from her broomstick as La Befana does not wish to be seen. She enters homes by way of the chimney, therefore she is covered in soot. She looks for hospitality in every home she visits, usually enjoying bread soaked in either milk or wine as she has lost most of her teeth. Before leaving La Befana sweeps clean every home she visits. This sweeping is said to whisk away all the problems of the previous year and prepare the home for the blessings the New Year brings.

As charming as this legend is, there is contained within it some very important life lessons for every Christian. First is the lesson of hospitality. La Befana graciously extends hospitality to the Three Wise Men as they pass through her village. Hospitality is the hallmark of a true Christian. Secondly there is a type of evangelization in the Three Wise Men's invitation to La Befana to come with them. We who believe, must invite others to join us in our quest to find Jesus. Third, there is La Befana's refusal. How often do we reject the multiple daily invitations to serve God because of so many earthly distractions? But La Befana had a change of heart! Conversion is such an important part of the Christian life. Despite the wrong decisions we have made in this life we can always change and become pleasing to God. Finally, it is said that although La Befana searches for the Child Jesus when she visits homes, she leaves gifts for every child because she sees Christ in every little child. This is one of the greatest challenges we face as Christians. To be able to look past our differences and to be able to see our dear Lord and Savior in every person we encounter here on earth. The more this happens, the more the message of the Christmas angels comes to pass, "Peace on Earth to All People of Good Will!"



# The Solemn Annual Proclamation of the Moveable Feasts of the Church Year on the Epiphany of the Lord

*In ancient times, before people had calendars in their homes, it was the custom for the parish priest on Epiphany Day to solemnly proclaim in the church at Mass the important church feast days of the new year.*

*Let it be dully and solemnly noted, dearest brothers and sisters, that just as we through the bounteous mercy of God, have rejoiced in the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise should we proclaim the joy of the glorious Resurrection of this same Saviour.*

*Ash Wednesday is to be observed on the sixth day of March, marking the beginning of the most holy Lenten fast.*

*With great rejoicing, we will celebrate the Paschal Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the twenty-first day of April.*

*The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be celebrated on the second day of June, while the Solemn Feast of Pentecost is to be celebrated on the ninth day of the month of June.*

*The Feast of the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Christ is to be celebrated on the twenty-third day of June.*

*The first day of December shall be the First Sunday of the Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*