



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

January 20th, MMXIX

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Holy Name

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Candlemas Day, the last day of "Polish Christmas," is officially Saturday, February 2nd. This year we will observe some of the elements of this solemn feast, which celebrates the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple and the purification of the Blessed Virgin at our Sunday Mass on January 27th at the noon Mass. This will be the last time to hear and to sing the beautiful carols and Polish kolędy of the season. We will take one last loving and thankful gaze at the little Lord Jesus in His manger bed. We will enjoy the beautiful lights of our Christmas trees for the last time and be warmed by the deep red hues of the many poinsettias that were lovingly offered once again this year for our beloved deceased. And then it all must be lovingly packed away until next year's celebration, so.... **DON'T MISS THIS LAST GRAND CELEBRATION!** This is the kind of event you will definitely want to invite your friends, neighbors and extended family members to!

Holy candles for your home will be blessed at this special Mass which will take place at noon on Sunday, January 27th. It has been a wonderful Christmas this year at Our Lady of the Scapular. So many people spend so much of their own time so freely to make our observance of the Lord's birth the great event that it truly is in our church! May God reward each one for their generosity!

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. When He was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the kings that ever reigned have not affected the life of man as much as that One Solitary Life.

Monday, January 21st, Feast of St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr

Almost nothing is known of this saint except that she was very young, twelve or thirteen, when she was martyred in the last half of the third century. Various modes of death have been suggested, beheading, burning or strangling.

Legend has it she was a beautiful girl whom many young men wanted to marry. Among those she refused was Eutropius the governor's son. She spurned him and his costly gifts and declared, "I have chosen a spouse who cannot be seen with mortal eyes, whose mouth drips with milk and honey." In his jealousy, Eutropius reported her to his father as being a Christian. The governor summoned the maiden before him, offering her honors and estates if she would marry his pagan son. When she refused he threatened her, but Agnes was unmoved even when exposed to the sight of cruel instruments of torture.

The governor arrested her and ordered her stripped naked and lead through the streets to be confined to a house of prostitution. Miraculously, her rich golden hair suddenly grew in great profusion and entirely concealed her shame. The legend continues that the only customer bold enough to approach her and look upon her lustfully was Eutropius. In doing so he lost his sight but then had it restored by Agnes' prayer.

She was condemned, executed and buried near Rome in a catacomb. That eventually was named after her. The daughter of Constantine built a basilica to in her honor. The name Agnes means "pure" in Greek. It sounds like the Latin word agnus, which means "lamb." Every year on this day, two lambs from a special flock are blessed in the Roman church that bears her name. At Eastertime, the soft wool from these lambs is sheared and made into special vestments called palliums reserved for archbishops of the church.

A statue of St. Agnes can be found in our church just above the side entrance to the church from the parking lot. She can be seen holding a lamb in her arms.

Wednesday, January 23rd – Feast of the Betrothal of Mary & Joseph

When the Gospel mentions Mary and Joseph as being betrothed or espoused, it would be in, American terms, something more than an engagement, yet less than a marriage. An espousal or betrothal is a formal agreement to marry. In the Jewish culture of New Testament times, a young woman became marriageable at the age of twelve and a half. At a ceremony of betrothal, the bride and groom would exchange marital consent, but normally the bride would remain in the house of her father for somewhere between three months and a year. Marriage had the aspect of a man acquiring title to his bride, only later did he acquire actual possession.

We know that Mary and Joseph had completed the contract of betrothal from the testimony given by St. Matthew and by St. Luke. What causes some confusion though, is Luke's reference to "Mary his espoused wife" when Mary and Joseph were already in Bethlehem, seeking a place to give birth to our Infant Lord. For them to be in Bethlehem together, Joseph had obviously taken Mary from her father's house, and it seems clear that their betrothal had already been converted into a marriage. As he was aware of the circumstances of our Lord's conception by the Holy Spirit, Luke was probably following the custom of referring to a non-consumated marriage as an espousal.

The Scriptures don't record exactly when Mary and Joseph were married, but the first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel describes the circumstances. It speaks of them being "betrothed...before they came together." Joseph, on learning that she is pregnant with the child Jesus, considers what he ought to do, then the situation is explained to him by an angel. We are then

told that he “did as the angel commanded him, and took unto him his wife.” Presumably, this took place in Nazareth, as he would not have brought her to Bethlehem if she was still a member of her father’s household. It obviously has to have followed the Annunciation, and very likely followed the three months Mary spent with Elizabeth. No mention is made of Joseph in the narrative of the Visitation, which has Mary leaving Nazareth “in haste into the hill country, to a town of Judea, (Ain Karim),” and concludes about three months later with Mary “returned to her own house.” That would put the events of Matthew at roughly the fourth month of Mary’s pregnancy; a reasonable guess in that neither account has them immediately hurrying off to Bethlehem, and in that they are likely to have married before Mary publicly appeared to be pregnant. The Church commemorates the espousal of Mary and Joseph on January 23rd, which would put a July or August wedding celebration nicely within the three to twelve months normally observed at home after the espousal.

Be open and accessible. The next person you meet could become your best friend!

Thursday, January 24th – the Feast of St. Francis de Sales

The noble father of Francis de Sales had planned a brilliant career for him as a lawyer in the senate of Savoy in France. But Francis had other plans. Although he earned a degree in law in his early 20’s, his heart’s desire was to serve the poor and preach the gospel. He struggled gently to persuade his family to allow him to enter the priesthood.

Francis was offered the opportunity to become an official of the diocese of Geneva. His father gave in and allowed him to be ordained. Francis found his work challenging, to say the least. At that time Geneva was a center for the heretical Calvinists. Francis set out to convert them, especially in the district of Chablais. By preaching and distributing the little pamphlets he wrote to explain true Catholic doctrine he had remarkable success.

People in one province of his large diocese were warring with one another. Francis traveled on foot through the area for several years, preaching and ministering to the people. During this time he endured many dangers. Once he was beaten by a mob. On another occasion he spent a winter night in a tree surrounded by a pack of wolves. Eventually he restored peace and a prayerful spirit to the diocese.

In 1602 at age 35, Francis was appointed bishop of Geneva. He continued to travel constantly and took great joy in preaching and giving spiritual direction. He also loved teaching the children of his diocese, who followed him wherever he went. For his writings, he has been named patron of the Catholic Press.

Francis loved to counsel ordinary people about their prayer lives. He assured them that “saintliness is both desirable and possible.” For them, Francis wrote the Introduction to the Devout Life. It was translated into several languages and is still in print today.

In spite of his busy schedule and comparatively short life, he had time to collaborate with another saint, Jane Frances de Chantal, in the work of establishing the Sisters of the Visitation.

Francis’s last word before he died was the name of Jesus.

**KTO RANO WSTAJE, TEMU PAN BÓG DAJE!
GOD GRANTS BLESSINGS TO THE ONE WHO RISES EARLY!**

Friday, January 25th – the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul

The ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of Paul's conversion to Christ. This story is so important that St. Luke includes it two other times in the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul tells the story in his own words in the first chapter of his Letter to the Galatians.

Before he became known as Paul, his name was Saul. He was a tentmaker from the city of Tarsus. Saul had studied to become a teacher. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was killed, Saul held the coats of those who threw stones.

Saul set out for Damascus. He wanted to arrest any Christians who had escaped from Jerusalem after Stephen's death. Along the way, Saul was struck down to the ground and blinded. He heard the voice of Jesus. Jesus asked him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Saul was in shock. He allowed himself to be led to the home of Christians in Damascus. A holy man named Ananias prayed with him and his sight was restored. Saul went to an isolated spot to reflect on his new faith. Then he returned to Damascus and began preaching the gospel.

Everyone was astounded at the change in him. Now Saul was the one being persecuted. His friends feared for his life. They helped him to escape from Damascus by lowering him over the wall of the city in a basket.

Saul, who began to call himself by the Roman name of Paul, went out on missionary journeys. He crossed the Roman Empire four times to bring the good news of Christ to the world.

Saturday, January 26th – Feast of Saints Timothy and Titus

On the day after the feast of St. Paul's conversion we remember his partners, Timothy and Titus, who traveled with him. Sometimes St. Paul would send one of them ahead as his messenger, or else he would ask one of them to stay behind when he moved on. That helped a new community establish itself.

Timothy and Titus served as St. Paul's representatives when he could not visit a community that needed him. Because they had some Gentile ancestry, both these young men seemed well-suited to bring the gospel to Gentile lands. Also, both were beloved friends of St. Paul.

Timothy's mother was Jewish, so he studied the scriptures while growing up. That early training helped him to understand St. Paul's message when the apostle first preached in Timothy's hometown of Lystra. St. Paul called Timothy a preacher; this was a high compliment.

Eventually Timothy became the first bishop of Ephesus, a city in what is now Turkey. This meant that he carried responsibility for all the churches in the region. He was martyred for protesting the worship of pagan gods.

Titus was probably from Antioch, another city in Turkey. He served as St. Paul's secretary. He was a talented peacemaker, and he was sent by St. Paul to Corinth when there was a scandal in the community. He carried with him a stern letter from St. Paul.

Because Titus showed patience and tact, the Corinthians were able to accept St. Paul's scolding. Titus was so well respected in Corinth that he later returned there to ask for donations for needy members of the church. Eventually Titus was named bishop of the island of Crete. He worked very hard throughout his long life, and he died a peaceful death.

Mark your calendars TODAY! Our last big liturgical celebration of "Polish Christmas" will take place on Sunday January 27th, at the 12:00 noon Mass