



Stronica Proboszcza



The Pastor's Page

February 17th, MMXIX

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Passion of the Lord

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Sunday, February 17th – the Feast of the Flight into Egypt

There is an ancient tradition in the Church that on the seventeenth day of February, that is precisely fifty-five days after the birth of Jesus, when King Herod's soldiers, sent to slaughter all little boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old or under, in order to get rid of Jesus, were getting perilously near the cave at Bethlehem, where at first they little expected Our Lord to be, that Saint Joseph and Our Lady set off with their Divine Child, left the land of the Jews and went off to a land of the Gentiles.

While we can't be certain it was fifty-five days after Jesus' birth, we do know that this flight into Egypt did take place as it is related in the Gospel of St. Matthew. St. Joseph was warned and instructed by an angel. Egypt was a logical place to find refuge as it was outside the dominion of King Herod, but both Egypt and Palestine were part of the Roman Empire, linked by a coastal road know as "the way of the sea," making travel easy between them and relatively safe.

The tradition says they took no one with them, by way of servants or friends, as Saint Peter Chrysologus tells us. The town to which the Holy Family fled was called Fostat. It was three hundred miles from Bethlehem. A church has been erected there on the site of the house where the Holy Family lived during their exile.

The little town where the Holy Family stayed in Egypt was not far from Heliopolis, a city in which, when Jesus, Mary and Joseph passed through it, statues of pagan gods crashed to the ground. Both Fostat and Heliopolis are not far from Cairo in Egypt. Other pious legends say that palm trees along the road bowed to the Holy Family as they passed by and even wild beasts of the desert paid homage to the Christ Child. One legend says the Holy Family was about to be robbed by two thieves on the road but for some miraculous reason the robbers changed their minds at the last moment and let the travelers pass unharmed. The story says that those thieves encountered Jesus years later when they were crucified on his right and his left on Calvary. Of course there is no surety of any of this.

King Herod died in 4 A.D., supposedly by way of a particularly gory death. Originally it is to Judah that the Holy Family is described as returning, although upon discovering that Archelaus had become the new king of Judah, they fled to Galilee. Historically, Archelaus was such a violent

and aggressive king that in the year 6 A.D. he was deposed by the Romans in response to complaints from the population. Galilee was ruled by a much calmer king, Herod Antipas, and there is historical evidence that Galilee had become a refuge for those fleeing the iron rule of Archelaus.

“Remember that nothing important ever happens until someone takes a chance.”

Friday, February 22nd – the Feast of the Chair of Peter

The theology and history behind the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter is most interesting. In pagan times in Rome this day was called *Parentalia* or “Ancestors’ Day.” From February 13th through the 22nd people remembered the dead, especially their parents. At this celebration a chair was left empty for particular deceased persons. The Christians of Rome began to celebrate this day in memory of St. Peter, their “founding father,” their first bishop. Peter had come to Rome because Rome was the center of the empire and a center of the new Christian faith.

Why is this day’s feast called the *Chair* of St. Peter? It commemorates Christ’s choosing Peter to sit in his place as the servant-authority of the whole Church. St. Peter was the first Pope and first among the original “bishops/apostles” of the Christ’s Church. Every bishop has a chair from which he presides and preaches. In Rome, in the basilica of St. Peter, an ancient wooden chair is preserved because it is thought to have been St. Peter’s. The Latin word for a bishop’s chair is *cathedra*. From this word comes our word “cathedral” which is the home church of the bishop of each diocese. In the Archdiocese of Detroit the bishop’s home church or Cathedral is the Church of the Blessed Sacrament on Woodward Avenue. It is there that our archbishop’s *cathedra* or chair, sometimes called a throne can be found. From this chair he officially and liturgically presides over the Church of Detroit. The feast of the Chair of Peter honors the unity of the church. Peter’s chair has served as a symbol of his role as pastor of the whole church. This role has given popes great influence to speak for human needs and to condemn injustice.

*If someone says something unkind about me,
I must live so that no one will believe it.*

Saturday, February 23rd – the Feast of St. Polycarp

St. Polycarp was born of Christian parents sometime between the years 75 and 80. He grew up knowing people who had known Jesus. That made him a “second generation Christian.” We know the names of very few people of this generation. Two others are St. Justin and St. Ignatius of Antioch, who met and talked with Polycarp on his way to Rome to be martyred. It was the apostle John himself who appointed Polycarp bishop of the city of Smyrna, now Izmir in Turkey. These links with Jesus made Polycarp precious to his people.

During his long service as bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp faced many challenges. Christians were a minority there. Most of the people of Smyrna enthusiastically worshipped not only the Roman gods but the living emperor as well. Polycarp also faced difficulties from within the faith. A parade of false teachers appeared, one after the other. Polycarp bravely spoke against them to protect his people from confusion.

Around the year 155, a great pagan festival was held in Smyrna. The Romans were hunting for known Christians who could be sacrificed. Polycarp was 86 years old, an old man, and his

friends insisted that he hide. When Roman police found his hiding place, he offered them a meal. While they ate, Polycarp prayed for all Christians throughout the world.

Polycarp was taken to the Smyrna stadium. The festival crowds gathered the wood for his execution by fire. But, according to an ancient story, the flames would not burn him, so he was stabbed to death. Polycarp showed so much courage when he died that the emperor's police burned his body so that Christians would not try to worship it. Polycarp's burnt bones are entombed with honor in the church of St. Ambrose in Rome. The name Polycarp means "many fruits." In northern lands, the sap begins to rise in trees around this time, which means the spring is almost here.

Please Remember to Use Your Church Envelopes!

This week I reported about how much money comes in the collection not in an envelope. The exact amount was \$40,301.08, such a great deal of money not to be claimed by anyone as their personal offering to the Lord and not to get tax credit for, at this time of the year when we are all hustling around gathering financial data so as to submit our Income Tax returns.

Some folks have told me that frequently in the rush to get out of the house on Sunday morning and to the church on time, they forget their collection envelopes and so just toss their cash offering into the basket when it passes by. Then there surely are other folks who are just visiting and perhaps appreciate what they experience here in the parish enough that they plan on attending again and maybe even joining the parish.

As a help to both groups of people, you will find in the pews of the church packets of offering envelopes you can use in these situations. If you are a parishioner just write your name on the envelope and your envelope number if you can remember it. If you are a visitor and would like to be contacted about becoming a parishioner here, just fill out the envelope and put it in the basket. Hopefully these envelopes will be a help to those worshipping in our parish.

If you have not used your envelope in the last two years, and there were actually 95 such households last year, your parish registration has been moved to the inactive file. It can however be reactivated simply by using an envelope when you make an offering.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Because an unmarried Jew in His early thirties spoke for the first time the mystic words of Consecration at a farewell banquet in a city of the Near East over two thousand years ago, and then knowingly went out to let Himself be killed like a common criminal the following afternoon, over one million men, women, and children, all over the earth, today in the Mass, share the secret of life everlasting.

For the young Jew was also Almighty God. In every age since the moment of His shameful public execution, not a day has dawned, which did not witness that death repeated. Through all ages, what He did is done again, somewhere, always. Through His death – and the burst tomb which followed it by three days – men and women live again and come once more to God. We who share in re-enacting this ancient secret, bear the name of Catholics. We call it the Mass

This is My Parish

It is composed of people like me. We make it what it is. It will be friendly, if I am friendly. Its pews will be filled, if I help to fill them. It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am a generous giver. It will bring other people to its worship and fellowship if I bring them. It will be a Church of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a Church with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these qualities. Therefore, with the help of God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my Church to be.

The Bare Facts!

I would like to present to you a short report here in the bulletin that I call **The Bare Facts!** In this article I will inform you of some of the financial issues we face in our parish insofar as stewardship is concerned. The still relatively new parish of Our Lady of the Scapular has some great challenges set before it, but it is my conviction that all parishioners working together and looking toward the future can conquer these challenges and continue to build a parish that is not only financially healthy but also truly Catholic in every sense of the name.

Fact #1. At the present time we have **862** registered households in our parish who have regularly received envelopes. Last year at this time we had **860** registered households. It would seem we have gained **2** households.

Fact #2. During the last year **95** households did not use their envelopes and thus were not credited with giving anything to the parish for the year 2018. During the previous year of 2017, **127** households did not use their envelopes.

Fact #3. Offerings to our parish in the year 2018 ranged from **\$1.00** for the whole year to **\$6980.00**. Last year the largest offering was **\$7675.00**

Fact #4. In the year 2018, **117** households gave less than **\$100.00** for the whole year. That is less than **\$2.00** per week. In 2017 **123** households gave less than **\$100.00** for the whole year

Fact #5. Last year **134** households gave more than **\$1500.00** for the whole year. **\$1500.00** a year is a weekly contribution of **\$29.00**. In 2017, **138** households gave more than **\$1500.00** for the whole year.

Fact #6. The average of parishioner's weekly donations is **\$737.34** a year, which means **\$14.18** per week. Last year the average of parishioners weekly donations was **\$749.71** a year and **\$14.54** per week.

Fact #7. The Total Collection for the year of 2018 was **\$684,647.19**. In 2017 the total collection for the year was **\$709,415.41**. That is **\$24,768.22** less than the previous year.

These figures give all of us a truly realistic picture of the parish of Our Lady of the Scapular. Certainly, a great thanks is due to those parishioners who have been as generous as they possibly could over the last year to the parish. This generosity is a testimony to your love and dedication to your parish, and God WILL reward you for that. A decrease in offerings is a challenge but hopefully, in spite of these difficulties, with the generosity of our parishioners and the money saving strategies that continue to be put into place, we will be able to accomplish many wonderful new things in the parish.

I do however have one request. **\$40,301.08** was donated to us this year without the benefit of a church envelope. This is just too large of a sum to be given anonymously. No one took credit for giving this money. No one will be deducting it from their taxes and I have to wonder about who gave it. I can be certain that our registered parishioners gave **\$635,593.11** because they put it in an envelope with their name on it. But where did we get the rest from? Was it from one time only visitors or tourists? Can we count on it next year? Can we build a strong a secure parish budget on it? I don't know! I can't be certain. Will it be there next year when I give this report? Maybe, maybe not! PLEASE! Always use your envelope. There have been a few other forms of revenue that are not reflected in this report. For your generosity I am most grateful. We all want to feel security insofar as our financial future is concerned. Please help me feel that security by letting me know for sure that it is you, the committed parishioners of Our Lady of the Scapular Parish who are keeping our ship afloat!