



# Stronica Proboszcza



## The Pastor's Page

August 4<sup>th</sup>, MMXIX

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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*Month of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!  
Praised be Jesus Christ!

### Sunday, August 4<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. John Mary Vianney

John Vianney and the French Revolution were born at about the same time. In Paris and other French cities, angry mobs slaughtered the powerful and the wealthy. Because in the past the Church had often sided with the rich, many priests were also killed. Those that were left were forced to go into hiding.

In 1786 John was born near Lyons in France. His family was very devout. Every so often, a priest came to the farm village of Dardilly, where John lived, to celebrate Mass secretly in a barn. By the time John was in his teens, Mass could be said in public again. There was still a great shortage of priests, and John wanted to help fill the gap. His vocation was stimulated by contact with a holy priest. He was needed on the farm, but finally when he reached age twenty his parents let him go to the seminary.

John had a lot of trouble with his studies. Although he was older than the other students, school had never come easily for him, and he hadn't had much preparation for difficult subjects, such as Latin. After failing his examinations, in 1815 at 29 years of age he was ordained anyway, mostly because he was so prayerful and committed to his ministry. Soon afterward the vicar general told him, "My friend, you have been appointed *curé* of Ars. Ars is a little parish where there is not much love. You must put some into it." In French *curé* means parish priest.

John found that the people of his little parish were indifferent to their faith. He prayed for them, preached to them and tended their needs in every way he could think of. He visited every family, began religious education classes for children and adults, and later began schools and an orphanage. John reached out most powerfully in the sacrament of reconciliation. He understood that people needed a connection with God. He sat in the drafty church and heard confessions for up to twelve hours a day in the winter – up to sixteen hours a day in the summer. His parishioners grew to appreciate him greatly and opposed his transfer, even though John himself tried several times to leave Ars in order to follow a contemplative life. After 42 years of faithful service, John had made a great difference in the people of the parish. In one of his sermons he said, "You pray. You love. And there you have our happiness on earth." He died in 1859 at the age of 74, as he predicted, peacefully and without fear. He was canonized in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, who also named him patron saint of the parochial clergy in 1929.

## **Our Lady of the Snows**

According to legend, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 352 – a sultry night in Rome – our Lady appeared in a dream to a childless, elderly, wealthy couple, who had prayed that the Blessed Mother might identify who should inherit their fortune. However, Mary expressed her wish that a church be constructed in her honor and told the couple that the church site would be covered with snow. Mary also appeared that night in Pope Liberius's dream, telling him of her desire.

The next morning, Rome awoke to the astonishing sight of a snow-covered Esquiline Hill – remarkably, the snowfall was arranged in the outline of a church. The summer snow was deemed a miracle indeed, and the childless wife and husband took the snow as a sign and donated the money to build the church. It was completed in two years and became the most important church in Rome dedicated to the Blessed Mother. It was also known as the Basilica Liberiana, having been consecrated by Pope Liberius. But it came to be called the Basilica of St. Mary Major in the seventh century.

Within the basilica, in the Borghese Chapel, is an ancient Byzantine painting, attributed to Saint Luke, of the Madonna and Child. Known as the *Salus Populi Romani*, or the Protectress of the People of Rome, this is the most venerated image of our Lady in Rome and is said to have ended an attack of the plague in 604 and an epidemic of cholera in 1837.

Renovated several times, the Basilica of St. Mary Major is known as the first shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. To commemorate the miraculous snowfall, the celebration of her feast on August 5<sup>th</sup> includes a shower of white rose petals from the dome of the Chapel of Our Lady during the solemn Mass.

Our Lady of the Snows has a worldwide reputation, and the largest outdoor shrine in the United States is the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, located in Belleville, Illinois. Its meditation gardens, meeting centers and programs are all designed to bring pilgrims to a greater awareness of the presence of Christ in their lives.

### **Monday – August 5<sup>th</sup> – Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome**

The city of Rome sits on seven hills. Atop the Esquiline Hill is a famous church called St. Mary Major. The word “major” refers to its size – for centuries it was the largest church in the world named in Mary's honor. It is a basilica, a word that means “a building fit for royalty.” In the 1600 years since it was first constructed, it's been rebuilt many times. But it still has the flavor of early Christian times.

One rebuilding of St. Mary Major took place soon after the year 431. In that year, Mary was declared by a Church Council to be the Mother of God. So this basilica was rededicated in her honor at that time.

There is a legend concerning an apparition of the Blessed Virgin, who designated the place where the basilica was to be constructed. It was miraculously outlined in snow that fell in the night between August 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. From this derives the popular name Our Lady of the Snows. This legend is celebrated by releasing a shower of white rose petals from the dome of the basilica every August 5<sup>th</sup>. Since the seventh century it has also been called Blessed Mary at the Crib, because of a popular belief that the manger of Bethlehem was preserved in the basilica.

Above the entrance arch one can still see the words “Plebi Dei,” meaning dedicated to the People of God, from the fifth century. The central nave is decorated with mosaics that also date

back to the fifth century. St. Mary Major is one of the four Roman basilicas known as patriarchal cathedrals in memory of the first centers of the Church. St. Mary's represents the See of Antioch, where Mary is supposed to have spent most of her life.

Each year Christians honor the "birthday" of their parish church on the date it was officially dedicated. Our present parish church was dedicated on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1916. The date of dedication of the original church was July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1900. The dedication date of a church should annually be solemnly observed on the parish liturgical calendar with an anniversary Mass. The dedication of the basilica of St. Mary is one of the few church "birthday's" that is liturgically celebrated not just in the parish of St. Mary's but in all parishes.

## **Tuesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> – Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord**

At the time of year when the harvest is abundant, we celebrate a feast of God's glory. The marvelous events of this day are told in the gospels of Matthew(chapter 17), Mark(chapter 9) and Luke(chapter 9). Peter, James and John were led up to a high mountain by Jesus. Suddenly his face shone as bright as the sun. Moses the Lawgiver and the great prophet Elijah appeared. They talked about Jesus' coming death and resurrection. In awe, Peter blurted out a strange suggestion. He wanted to set up booths for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

A cloud surrounded them. Then the voice of God proclaimed that Jesus is God's son, the Beloved. The three apostles were terrified. They fell down in fear. Then they looked up, but the amazing scene was gone. Jesus was there alone. What did Peter mean when he asked if he should set up booths? The answer is found in a custom of the Jewish harvest festival of *Sukkot*. During *Sukkot*, booths are set up. They're constructed out of green branches and decorated with fruits and flowers. They symbolize creation. Moses and Elijah and all the ancestors are invited to enter in spirit. If Peter wanted to set up harvest booths, perhaps he wanted all of creation to share in the Transfiguration of Jesus.

In the time of Moses, when the Israelites traveled through the desert on their way to the Promised Land, God traveled with them. God appeared as a cloud within a tent. In the gospel story of the Transfiguration, God again appears as a shining cloud. But instead of filling a tent or a harvest booth, the cloud surrounds Jesus and his disciples. Perhaps the human body is like the tent of God's presence.

The feast of the Transfiguration is a day of rejoicing. In Rome, the grape harvest is blessed. New wine from these grapes is used at Mass. Eastern Christians hold a harvest procession in celebration of the springtime flowers and seeds that have been "transfigured" into summertime fruit and grain. Altars are decorated with fruit and sheaves of wheat. Often there's a summer fair after the services end.

## **Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. Dominic**

St. Dominic was born in 1170 in the Castile region of Spain. His parents were nobles of the well known Guzman family. He became an Augustinian priest and lived in community for several years, spending his time in study and quiet prayer. His life might have continued that way except for a group called the Albigensians. They taught that the body is evil and only the spirit is good. This mistaken idea was probably popular because the Albigensians fasted and lived in poverty. People found them more trustworthy than many luxury-loving Christians of the era.

Dominic asked the pope for permission to begin a new religious order for men and women. It would be called the Order of Preachers, and preaching the truth of the goodness of the body would be its first task. The order was founded in 1218 and an order of Dominican Sisters eventually followed.

The priests who joined the Dominicans could have as many books as they wanted so that they would continue to study and therefore preach clearly. But they would also live lives of Christian charity and poverty. This would help people trust and believe them.

Unlike other religious orders, the Order of Preachers traveled wherever they were needed. Dominic trained his priests to use only kindness and tact, not harsh judgment, when debating. He sent them to great

universities. Many of them received doctorates and became famous teachers themselves.

Dominic traveled through Europe to organize the Order of Preachers. He died in 1221 when he was only about 51 years old in Bologna, Italy. But by that time the order had spread as far as Britain, Poland, Scandinavia and Palestine. Nowadays, the Order of Preachers also is known as the Dominican Order. Like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic helped to revolutionize the thirteenth century.

Both the Dominican Fathers and Sisters have a great devotion to the Holy Rosary. In fact pious legend says that the first rosary was given to St. Dominic by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself with the child Jesus in her arms looking on.

In our church an image of St. Dominic can be seen in the mural above the side altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is seen kneeling at the right of Our Lady while receiving the holy rosary from the Christ Child, while at the same time the Virgin presents a wreath of roses to the Dominican Saint, Catherine of Siena kneeling at her left.

## **Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. Teresa Benedict of the Cross**

Edith Stein was born in Breslau/Wrocław, Poland in 1891, the eleventh child of a Jewish family. She was as a practicing Jew but by her teenage years she had become a convinced atheist. She studied philosophy under Husserl, the leading phenomenologist of his day. Her reading of the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila caused her to rethink her atheism.

After being received into the Catholic Church in 1922 at age 31, she taught in Speyer and Munster. In 1933, at age 42, she entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany where she received the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. At the end of 1939, she moved to the convent at Echt, Holland, on account of the Nazi persecution of Jews, but in 1942, during the German occupation of Holland, she was arrested, transported to Poland, and killed at the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz at age 50.

She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1998 and then declared co-patroness of Europe along with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget of Sweden.

## **Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. Lawrence**

The word “deacon” means “servant.” The word was first used to describe someone who waited on tables. St. Stephen, the first martyr, was a deacon of the early Church. Christian deacons in the early days of the Church were men and women who helped the needy. They distributed the community’s goods. Because of their work, deacons were especially visible in times of persecution when many other Christians would go into hiding.

Two centuries after the death of St. Stephen, the emperor Valerian was in power in Rome. He forbid the Christians to assemble. Valerian’s henchmen had murdered Pope Sixtus II in 258. The deacons of the diocese of Rome had all been beheaded. Lawrence was the only deacon left alive. He was a Spaniard, called to Rome from Toledo by the pope. Finally, he too was found and arrested.

Legends about St. Lawrence say that he spent the last days of his life selling the possessions of the community and giving the money to the poor. When a Roman official demanded that he produce the Church’s wealth, St. Lawrence brought blind, lame and needy people to this official. The official was so enraged that he ordered Lawrence roasted to death over a fire. To encourage the poor, who were forced to watch, Lawrence was said to have joked, “Turn me over. I’m done on this side.” His martyrdom took place in the year 258. When the legends about St. Lawrence first appeared many years after his death, he became famous. Many churches were named after him, and he has become one of the patron saints of Rome. Outdoor barbecues are a custom to celebrate his feast. That may seem like a grisly way to remember the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. But it is also a way to laugh at Valerian and all dictators.