



# Stronica Proboszcza

## The Pastor's Page

December 1<sup>st</sup>, MMXIX  
First Sunday of Advent

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*Month of the Divine Infancy*

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!  
Praised be Jesus Christ!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!** Today we begin a new liturgical year. The season of advent is the beginning of our annual cycle of commemorations of the events of our salvation. It is a time of waiting. It is a time of hope, not necessarily a time of penance though only purple vestments are to be used during this season. We are to excite in our hearts sentiments of joyful expectation at the *advent* or coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is NOT just prep time for Christmas! It is not a countdown to Christmas and most importantly, Advent IS NOT Christmas! No matter how many decorations cover shopping centers and malls! No matter how many Christmas parties you are invited to or how many ads for presents you will see on TV. Advent is not Christmas and we will not have Christmas in church until it is time for it! We will not miss out on this opportunity to spiritually reflect on the coming of Christ. We need to reflect on what His birth 2019 years ago did for us and to consider what His second coming, which might take place at any time, will mean for us. I urge you to resist the temptation to jump the gun and have Christmas now, with all your strength! Happy New Year & Happy Advent to all!!

### Advent Wreath & the Advent Calendar

Advent is a time of waiting. It is also a time of counting. Children count the days until Christmas, hopefully because they are looking forward to joyfully celebrating the birthday of the child Jesus, but undoubtedly they are also counting the days until Santa comes and gifts are received! Both the Advent wreath and the Advent calendars were created to be of help in this counting and waiting. Both have their origins with German Lutherans, but now have been accepted as seasonal elements of many other religions including the Catholic Church.

The Advent wreath uses the symbolism of the circle as a reminder of eternal life. The greens and lights of the candles are symbols of the persistence of life even in winter, when there is greater darkness and little foliage. Advent wreaths have been in use since the 16<sup>th</sup> century to mark the weeks until Christmas.

The Advent Calendar made its first appearance in 1851 in Germany. Until that time the days were often counted down with a chalk mark on a door or a collection of candles lit one by one for each day. Actually, most Advent calendars only countdown the 24 days of December until Christmas, while Advent can begin in November. The first paper calendars with little doors opening to reveal a picture, a message or even a piece of candy were printed in 1902.

## **Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> – Feast of St. Francis Xavier**

Francis Xavier was the son of noble Basque parents born in a castle in Navarra, Spain in 1506. At age 24 he experienced a radical change in life which came about when he was a student at the University of Paris. It was there that he met another student and future saint, Ignatius of Loyola.

At first, Francis thought that Ignatius was a strange person. Ignatius was an ex-soldier. He challenged those around him to take Christianity more seriously than they ever had before. In time he invited Francis and five other young men to form a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, also called the Jesuits.

Shortly after Francis was ordained a priest, he began his life's work of bringing the gospel to the Far East. Even though he often got seasick and had trouble learning foreign languages, he eventually taught and baptized people in India, Ceylon, the Philippines and Japan. In the course of his short life as a missionary he baptized over 30,000 persons.

Francis refused any comforts that weren't available to the people he served. Often he slept on the ground and lived on rice and water. Despite his noble birth, he never allowed himself to be waited on by servants. Wherever he went, he sang to the children and cared for the sick. He spread the gospel by dealing with people in a gentle and courteous way.

For years St. Francis Xavier dreamed of working in China. At age 46 he finally boarded a ship sailing to the city of Canton. But he caught a fever, and the frightened sailors left him on the island of Shangchwan near the mainland. There he died on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1552.

## **Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. Barbara, Virgin & Martyr**

St. Barbara was the daughter of a third-century pagan named Dioscuros of Heliopolis, a city in northern Egypt. This was the city through which our Lady and Saint Joseph carried Our Lord on the Flight into Egypt. There is a legend that all the pagan idols crashed to the ground when the Holy Family walked through the streets. Because Barbara was extremely beautiful, her father imprisoned her in a tower whenever he was away to protect her from harm. Despite her father's over protectiveness, Barbara discovered the Christian faith by means of a Christian who disguised himself as a physician and instructed her in the faith. She decided to convert. When Dioscuros learned that his daughter had been baptized a Christian, he flew into a rage and ordered that she be tortured and beheaded.

St. Barbara is the patron saint for miners and all those who work with fire and explosives. Because legend says that Dioscuros was struck by lightning after he himself killed his daughter by cutting off her head, people began to think that Barbara could control thunder. Soon they began to pray to her to protect them during thunder and lightning storms.

When gunpowder was invented, the noise reminded people of thunder, and miners began to ask St. Barbara for protection against accidents from the use of explosives.

In Europe, a statue of St. Barbara is often found at the entrances of mines or tunnels, and some mining companies incorporate her name in their company's title. Australia also holds an annual St. Barbara's Mining and Community Festival in December. In the Czech Republic, St. Barbara's Cathedral was built by rich mine owners, and many of its interior decorations reflect mining life.

## **First Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

Mass is offered in our church on the first Friday of every month at 6:30 AM, 8:00 AM and at 7:00 PM. On First Friday we should try to take time out of our busy schedules to adore Our Lord present in the Holy Eucharist and to receive Him in Holy Communion. When we do this we begin to show our appreciation to Almighty God for this wonderful Sacrament and all the other blessings God regularly bestows upon us. Are you thankful? Another month of your life has quickly passed. This week you have that special opportunity once again to show your thankfulness to God by honoring His Son and taking refuge in His Sacred Heart!

# Christmas Cards

The custom of sending Christmas cards was started by Sir Henry Cole in England in 1843. At the time he was a civil servant who wondered how ordinary people could be encouraged to use the new Public Post Office. He conceived the idea of Christmas cards, and with his friend John Callcott Horsley, an artist, they designed the first card. It had three panels. The outer two showed people caring for the poor and the center panel was a family having a large Christmas dinner. By the 1900's, the idea had spread throughout Europe and was especially popular in Germany.

The first cards usually had pictures of the Nativity scene on them. In late Victorian times, robins and snow-scenes became popular. Christmas cards appeared in the United States in the late 1840's, but they were so expensive that most people couldn't afford them. Then in 1875, printer Louis Prang began mass producing cards to make them more affordable. Mr. Prang's first cards featured flowers, plants and children.

In spite of the technology of the day, the sending of Christmas cards remains popular, with well over a billion being sent in the United States every year. Of course it is much easier and cheaper these days to send an e-card, or to offer "Holiday" wishes on Facebook or to Tweet or text, but somehow these just do not convey the same feeling as a printed card, that at the very least, contains a hand written signature. Then there is the question of the theme of a Christmas card. Many cards today only remotely acknowledge the "reason for the season," so as to not offend the religious sentiments, or lack thereof of the receiver. In a world that is continuously moving away from God and the Christ the Father has sent into it, sending a Christmas cards that somehow acknowledge the presence of the Divine in our world has the potential of becoming a kind of small Gospel announcing the Good News that God continues to dwell among us.

# 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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*.



# POINSETTIAS



## In Loving Memory of Our Beloved Deceased

Once again this year we are offering the Parishioners and friends of Our Lady of the Scapular the opportunity to buy a poinsettia for our sanctuary in memory of a deceased member of their family. The cost is \$25 per poinsettia.

On Christmas a special insert will be included in the bulletin listing the names of the deceased and those who remembered them in this special way.

At the end of the Christmas Season those who purchased a poinsettia are welcome to take it home as a lovely houseplant. Many poinsettias will be purchased to decorate our sanctuary. \* Note: Money that is contributed toward the church flowers in the envelope provided will be used to purchase any other necessary Christmas decorations.

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I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_ poinsettia (poinsettias) in memory of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Enclosed is a check for \$25 for each poinsettia I want to offer.  
My Name & phone number: \_\_\_\_\_