



# Stronica Proboszcza

## The Pastor's Page

December 8<sup>th</sup>, MMXIX  
Second Sunday of Advent

Rev. Mark A. Borkowski

*Month of the Divine Infancy*

FmarkB@aol.com

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!  
Praised be Jesus Christ!

**T**oday we light the “Bethlehem” candle on the Advent wreath. You may not be aware that the four candles on the Advent wreath have names. Not only do they stand for the four weeks of the Holy Season of Advent, which themselves stand for the four-thousand years Israel waited in darkness for the Messiah, but also the four candles are reminders of integral parts of the story of the Savior’s birth. Last week’s candle was the “Prophets” candle. The prophets were those wise men and women who kept constantly reminding God’s People that their God would be faithful and keep His promise to send a Redeemer. Frequently they were ignored and sometimes even hated but they kept shouting out *‘Our God is faithful! He will keep His promises!’*.

Today’s candle, the “Bethlehem” candle is a reminder of that humble, almost forgotten little town, where God became Man! The Prophet Micah foretold that the Christ Child would be born in the “House of Bread” which is the literal translation of the name Bethlehem. When we think of Bethlehem this weekend we cannot help but remember how inhospitable its residents were toward Mary & Joseph and the most holy life carried into their town boundaries in the womb of the Virgin. We must not be so inhospitable to Christ when he comes to us unrecognizably today.

Next Sunday, “Rose Sunday” we will light the “Shepherds” candle and be inspired to think that the Christ showed Himself to the poorest of the poor first after His humble birth. And finally, the last candle to be lit will be the “Angels” candle. Angels are heavenly messengers who communicate good news from God our Heavenly Father wherever they go. The Good News of Christmas was some of the best news the angels ever brought down to us from heaven. Even though we don’t sport a pair of fluffy white wings or wear a halo on our heads there’s no reason we shouldn’t be repeating this joyful message ourselves wherever we go!

### *Oplátky – Christmas Wafers Available!*

*Polish Christmas wafers called oplátky are available from the ushers before or after Mass or at the Rectory during office hours. It is unthinkable to begin the Annual Christmas celebration without the breaking and sharing of these sacred wafers.*

# Welcome St. Nicholas!

This weekend here at Our Lady of the Scapular we honor the holy Saint Nicholas, patron of children. His actual feast day was on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, but he is such an important character in the advent season that it is not inappropriate for us to think of him often during these days and celebrate his excellent example of true Christian charity!

St. Nicholas is possibly one of the most popular saints in Christendom, venerated for centuries by Protestants and Catholics alike. This holy, 4<sup>th</sup> century bishop of the diocese of Myrna in Asia Minor was a man whose deeds became legendary and around whom developed many of our popular Christmas traditions.

Our current concept of gift-giving is directly connected to the charity of St. Nicholas. A man who inherited great wealth, he spent it all to help the needy. Once, in order to save an impoverished family, he threw three bags of gold down the chimney of their home. Legend has it that the money landed in stockings hung by the fireplace to dry. Attributed to him are many miracles involving children, including restoring life to three murdered boys. He became the patron saint of children, and gifts were given them on December 6<sup>th</sup>, the feast day of his death.

In the Polish tradition, *Święty Mikołaj* comes down from heaven on his feast day. He travels the countryside on a white horse or in a horse drawn sleigh. In many areas he leaves treats under children's pillows, or in a shoe next to their bed. In other areas he meets the children face to face and asks questions concerning their faith, their school lessons or their behavior.

In still other areas he is joined by an angel who helps with passing out the treats and/or a little devil, who passes out switches to be used on the children who have misbehaved. In place of the switch their reward may be a lump of coal! As his fame spread across western Europe, he began to develop into the person of Santa Claus (from the Dutch for Saint Nicholas, *Sinte Klaas*), who rides the sky on a white horse, landing on rooftops to descend chimneys and leave treats in the stockings of good children and switches in those of bad children to show his displeasure. Some even believe that he placed the *tannenbaum* (Christmas tree) in each home.

He was brought to America by the Dutch settlers of New York, and his final transformation from bishop saint to folk figure took place in 1823 with the publication of Clement C. Moore's poem *The Night Before Christmas*. Although the name has changed, the white horse exchanged for reindeer and sleigh, and the bishop's robes for a fur-trimmed suit, one thing remains the same: Saint Nicholas, and our present Santa Claus, is the continuing symbol of selfless giving – the true meaning of Christmas!

*Good St. Nick, Help us to keep  
CHRIST in Christmas!*

*Święty Mikołaju,  
módl się za nami!*



## **Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> – The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

What does the Immaculate Conception mean? Surprisingly and unfortunately many Catholics today haven't a clue! Frequently Mary's Immaculate Conception is confused with Jesus' Virgin Birth. This phrase, Immaculate Conception, means that Mary, from the first moment of her conception, was free from all stain of sin by a special act of God in virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ. By a most extraordinary privilege, the soul of Our Lady was from the first instant of her existence in the womb of Anna her mother, preserved from all stain of original sin, the consequence of Adam's sin in no way tainted her immaculate being, she was in the state of grace from the very beginning of her life.

Mary Immaculate watches over us in a special way, for in 1846, at the first meeting of the bishops of the United States in Baltimore, our nation was officially and solemnly dedicated to Mary, immaculately conceived. Since that time this feast day has been a very special one for all Americans! Mary loves us with a mother's love. She feels for us, desires to help us that we may love God and neighbor with our whole heart and thus save our immortal souls. Please be certain to come and honor Our Blessed Mother, Mary Immaculate at one of the Holy Day Masses that will be celebrated on in our church.

### **Masses are at 6:30 AM and 7:00 PM**

☉ **Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee!**

## **Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> – Feast of Our Lady of Loreto**

The Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto is one of the most famous Marian shrines in the world, for, according to legend, inside is Mary's actual home, transported miraculously from Nazareth to this spot.

As the story relates, on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1291, angels carried the house to the area of Trsat, Croatia, to preserve it from desecration when the Christian forces were defeated in the last Crusade. The house remained there until December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1294, when some shepherds near Recanati, Italy, observed a structure moving across the sea and marked its resting spot nearby. There it remained for a short time before angels moved it twice more, to Lecanati, Italy, and then to Loreto, on the eastern coast.

The house that appeared on the hill in Loreto had a single door and one small window. Inside were an altar, a hearth and a statue of the Blessed Mother. There was no foundation. Immediately, large numbers of pilgrims came to venerate the house and offer prayers of intercession to Mary, who in 1296, as the story goes, identified the home as hers to a nearby hermit. That same year local officials dispatched to Palestine sixteen reputable citizens, who returned with the news that the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth contained only a foundation: the home itself was missing. Further, the dimensions of the foundation were said to match exactly the size of the house in Loreto; the stones of the house appeared to be the same type as found in the foundation; and crosses carved into the foundation were described as identical to those marked in the house. The conclusion was that the house was indeed Mary's home, miraculously transported across the sea.

Thus identified, the Holy House of Loreto became one of Christianity's most sacred sanctuaries, venerated because Mary would have been conceived and born within its walls. She would have accepted God's invitation to become Mother of God in this house and would have raised Jesus here, too. Whether the legend is true or not, over the centuries Our Lady of Loreto has provided both physical cures and spiritual assistance. Among those who have sought her aid are forty popes and two hundred saints and blessed, including Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Alphonsus de'Ligouri and Therese of Lisieux.

The Litany of Loreto, a long prayer of entreaty to several dozen of Mary's titles, first appeared in 1578. In 1587 Pope Sixtus V granted an indulgence for its recitation. Pope Paul V in 1613 ordered the litany

sung on Saturdays and on our Lady's feasts and feast eves. A church was constructed to enclose the Holy House in 1468; it was made a cathedral in 1586 and a basilica in 1728. A fire in 1921 destroyed the original statue of our Lady; Pope Pius XI crowned the new statue himself.

Modern research into contemporaneous documents has cast doubt upon the veracity of the stories recounting the house's origins. Many scholars now suspect that a miracle-working statue might have been brought from Trsat and housed in a chapel that already existed at Loreto and that confusion of facts gave rise to the legend about the miraculous transportation. Yet even if the Holy House of Loreto is not actually the home of the Blessed Mother, pilgrims can still meditate upon her spirit of *fiat* there, for Our Lady of Loreto continues to inspire people to heed the Lord's call to holiness.

## **Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup> – Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe**

Every year pilgrims stream to a great church near Mexico City. There, over the altar, is a simple tilma (a cloak) made from two pieces of cactus cloth. Though that kind of cloth seldom lasts 20 years, this tilma has survived intact for centuries.

In 1531, the tilma belonged to Blessed Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian. Juan had been baptized a Christian after the Spanish invaded Mexico. One December morning he was walking past an old shrine of the Aztec goddess of the corn harvest. The Spanish had smashed the shrine and renamed the place Guadalupe. There Juan saw a vision of Mary, the Mother of God. She was dressed as an Aztec princess. She had olive skin and black hair like an Aztec. She was clothed in magnificent colors. Around her waist was a sash, which women wore when they were pregnant.

Mary spoke to Juan with affection. She gave him a message for the local bishop. Mary wanted the bishop to build a church where she stood. She promised to grant help to all who would call on her there.

When Juan Diego delivered the message, the bishop didn't believe him. Mary provided John with a sign to take to the bishop. She guided Juan to a spot where wild roses were blooming. He was amazed to see roses in winter.

Juan Diego gathered an armful of the flowers into his cloak and hurried off to show them to the bishop. But when he opened his tilma in the bishop's house, an even more amazing sign had been provided. Somehow the image of Mary, just as she looked when she appeared to Juan, filled the tilma.

Only 12 years before, the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés had first made contact with the Aztecs. He and his soldiers were Christian, but the Aztecs didn't want to be like them. The Christians were brutal and greedy. They had brought great suffering to the native people and had shown particular cruelty toward Aztec women.

The Mother of God brought a much brighter message, one of hope and compassion. Her appearance was a rebuke to the Spanish and a consolation to the poor. She brought new dignity to the Aztec people, especially to the women. In the seven years following her appearances, eight million Aztecs were baptized.

Since then many miracles have been credited to her. Peace treaties have been signed in the church built in her honor. She is the patron of Mexico. She is honored throughout the Americas and all over the world.

## **Did you pick up your Advent Prayer Book in Church?**

*In it you have prayers and meditations for every day of the Holy Season. Everyone is called to grow spiritually during Advent. This will help you if you use it every day, but first you must pick up your copy. Everyone who attended Mass last Sunday and took a bulletin should have received a master schedule of everything going on in our cluster for the seasons of Advent & Christmastide. Please keep this schedule handy for reference. There are additional copies in the back of church*

## **A Polish Advent Custom – Roraty**

A traditional Polish observance of the season of Advent differs greatly from the heavily commercialized time before Christmas in this country. It is a time of reflection and spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas. The word advent comes from the Latin *adventus* which means *the coming*. We await the coming of the Messiah not only in the flesh but also for His second coming as Judge at the end of the world. Hope is the dominant characteristic of the season of Advent. There is a focus during the season on our longing for God's grace and His friendship. It is understood that parties, weddings, and other boisterous events would be an obstacle to the search for God's grace and building that friendship, and so they are avoided. Advent is also a time for reconciliation with God through the Sacrament of Penance.

Throughout advent many people in Poland participate in an early morning Mass called Roraty. It begins just before sunrise in almost complete darkness in the church. The name roraty comes from the ancient Latin chant that is sung to begin the service: *Rorate Coeli, de super; et nubes pluant justum* – O Heavens, drop down your dew from on high and may the Just One be rained by the clouds. The words of the ancient hymn are a plea for God's gift of His Son. As the hymn is sung candles are gradually lit in the dark church. Roraty is a kind of daily Advent vigil ceremony. The people wait in darkness not only for the rising of the sun but ultimately for the return of the Son of God, so beautifully symbolized by dawn's first light.

The roraty service has a definite Marian dimension to it as does the entire season of Advent. In the sanctuary is found one special candle that is more predominate than the others used in the ceremony. It is traditionally decorated with greenery and white ribbon in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who plays an important role in the raining down of the Just One.

The Advent roraty ceremony originated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Bolesław Wstydlivy (the Bashful), who was the husband of St. Kinga. According to historical documents, a representative of every social state lit one candle of a specially prepared seven-branch candelabrum in the cathedral at the early morning service, starting with the King. As each man lit his candle he proclaimed: *Paratus sum ad adventum Domini/ Gotów jestem na przyjście Pana* – I am ready for the coming of the Lord! After the king lit his candle he was followed by the cardinal primate, then a senator, a nobleman, a knight, a townsman and finally the seventh candle was lit by a peasant farmer.

Preparation for the Lord's coming, both interior and spiritual, as well as exterior and temporal, is an integral part of a truly Catholic observance of the holy season of Advent.

## **Rorate Masses in our Church**

Saturday morning December 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM

Tuesday morning, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM

Thursday morning, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM

Saturday morning, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 AM (Latin Tridentine Mass)