



# Stronica Proboszcza

## The Pastor's Page

January 12<sup>th</sup>, MMXX

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

*Month of the Holy Name of Jesus*

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### Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus! Praised be Jesus Christ!

When Advent began, back in December, we heard the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" Today God answers this prayer. Jesus goes into the Jordan River to be baptized by St. John. Suddenly the skies do open! God's Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove. Then God speaks for everyone to hear: "This is my beloved Son."

In the fifth century, Bishop Maximus of Turin wrote that we have every reason to celebrate this day with the joy of Christmas: "At Jesus' birth His mother Mary held her child close to her heart. So, today the Father holds His beloved Son for all people to adore. Jesus is baptized so all Christians may follow Him with confidence."

In Hebrew the name of Jesus is Joshua. This name means Savior. A thousand years before the time of Jesus, in the days of the Exodus, after Moses died a man named Joshua became the leader of the Hebrew people. Joshua led the people through the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. Our Savior Jesus is a new Joshua. Jesus leads us into the *Jordan of Baptism*. We pass through the holy waters of the baptismal font to enter a new life. In the holy Sacrament of Baptism we become the Children of God.

The baptism of Jesus was a dramatic turning point in his life. Jesus was about 30 years old, and had spent his whole life in the obscurity of a small hill town up north called Nazareth. He worked as a carpenter; in the eyes of the townspeople he was just like everybody else. After his baptism, Jesus put aside whatever dreams he might have had of a quiet life as a carpenter. He would show us a new way to live. He would show us a new way to die – with trust in God. His decision was not without struggle. Right after his baptism he faced the temptation to take a different path, but he fought it off and lived the life he was called to live.

Tomorrow we begin ordinary time and from a liturgical perspective we close the Christmas season. But as we close one door we open another door to the rest of the liturgical year still lying before us filled with encounters with our Lord Jesus. This Jesus calls to us once again today, "Come, follow me."

In our church there is a beautiful stained glass window on the south or street side, second from the vestibule, depicting the baptism of the Lord. In it, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, can be seen hovering of St. John and Jesus as water is poured over our Lord's head. St. John holds a staff that has a banner attached to it reading: *Ecce Agnus Dei – Behold the Lamb of God*. The Window is inscribed "ofiarował Jan Tomczak" or offered by John Tomczak.

## The Beauty of Baptism

*As the sick man comes out of the bath newly strengthened, so does the soul come forth from Baptism not only purified from sin, but strengthened in grace and endowed with the sonship of God. Every one who is born again in holy Baptism, is as it were, cut off from Adam, the sinful vine-stock, and grafted as a new branch to the living tree, who is Christ Jesus, that he may bloom and bear fruit for eternal life. It is for the soldier a most sacred duty to observe faithfully and bravely the oath of allegiance. Remember! You too, in Baptism have made a vow to God, the just and eternal. How will it fare for you, if you become a liar before God, the Lord, and forget about and break your vow?*

As we think of the Lord Jesus' baptism on this feast day, it would be good to consider our own baptism for a moment. To recall that day, which for the greater number of us, took place when we were just a baby. How our parents lovingly carried us in their arms to the parish church. How our family gathered around the font of that church, as in our name, our godparents made our baptismal promises for us and the waters of baptism were gently poured over our infant heads by the parish priest. How we were anointed with the chrism or oil of salvation and clothed in a pure white garment. And a candle was lit in our name from the Easter candle, symbolizing the faith that was now present in our hearts, always to remain there! It is true that Jesus' baptism was different from ours in so much as He had no original sin upon His soul to be forgiven, but these baptisms are the same in so far as being a moment when God the Father proclaims us to be His child as He proclaimed Jesus that day at the Jordan River to be His Son.

Every year we are asked to renew our baptismal promises at Easter. Think on them for a moment today: Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God? Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you? Do you renounce Satan, the author and prince of sin? Are we living a life faithful to these vows, spoken long ago in our lives, that were ratified when we received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and are renewed each year at the joy of Easter? It is good to take a moment and think about these things. "Where was I baptized and when? Who was the priest who did this great thing for me? Perhaps to say a prayer for that priest. To also whisper a prayer of thanksgiving for my parents who loved me enough to make certain I was baptized and for my godparents who made themselves available for this important task. And most of all give thanks to God for making me His child in the Sacrament of Baptism!

## Kolędowanie, Caroling and Pastoral Home Visits

In previous articles it has been mentioned that the cultural life of Poland and other Catholic countries differs somewhat from the culture and customs of the United States especially in the observance of Christmas. In those cultures Advent is Advent and is not a time of indulging in the delights that belong by right to the joyful season of Christmas. And so things like Christmas parties and caroling just don't take place before the 25<sup>th</sup> day of December. Rather Christmas Day is the first day of a more authentic Christmas Season which lasts for forty days until February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Actually this is the same amount of time practically speaking that Americans begin getting in the Christmas mood, as forty days before Christmas day is mid November.

And so, it all begins on the second day of Christmas, as Christmas Day itself is a stay at home with family day. Carolers set out on St. Stephen's Day, December 26<sup>th</sup> to bring the joy of the season to their neighbors and friends in song. Kolędowanie is the Polish word for caroling just as

kolęda is the word for a carol. When a group of carolers show up at your door the fun begins, as they always expect a reward for their singing. This is the time of year when delicious foods are plentiful and “warming drinks” are also most willingly accepted! You can imagine after visiting all the homes in one’s neighborhood how caroling could become a very joyful time for all involved!

There is however a more official and serious kind of kolędowanie that also takes place at this time of year. On the feast of the Three Kings or Epiphany, the priests at the end of Mass bless chalk and holy water to be used during pastoral home visits that take place annually at this time of year. Every home and family in the parish is visited by the priests of the parish once a year at Christmas time.

Actually the blessing of water on the feast of the Epiphany is a very old tradition coming from the Eastern Church. There the Church has long emphasized in her celebration of the Epiphany the mystery of our Lord’s baptism; and by analogy our baptism. Although the Western Church concentrates on the visit of the Magi on the Epiphany it has long blessed special water on the day. This water is taken home by the faithful and used throughout the year, especially when the priest comes to bless the house.

When the priest visits a home in the parish, he begins with the greeting, “Peace be to this house. And to all that dwell here in.” Prayers are then said including always the Our Father. The house is then sprinkled with holy water and all present kiss the crucifix which has been placed on a table covered with a white cloth and on which are two lighted candles. Then, if he has not already done so, the father of the family inscribes the door with the chalk blessed in church. Finally the priest takes some time to gather and update family information and to speak with the family about any of their concerns.

From a logical perspective it does make more sense to celebrate the birthday of a baby after he is born than before. Of course doing things in this logical way requires a Christian to go against the prevailing culture so as to cultivate something that is more in line with our faith both liturgically and spiritually. January becomes a very cold and dull month without the joy that Christmas brings. Everything ends on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February when the Church celebrates the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, which is the last mention in the Sacred Scriptures of Our Savior as a little baby. In Poland Christmas trees, and nativity scenes remain in churches and homes until this day and the beautiful carols of Christmas can also be heard.

## **The Holy Name of Jesus**

*The entire month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name.*

Devotion to the Holy Name dates back to the very early Church and was cultivated by the Apostles and the early disciples. At this time devotion to the name of Christ or Jesus as the Christ or to the Lord or to the actual Name, Jesus was practiced. Later in the middle ages devotion was focused specifically on the Name of Jesus. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the hierarchy of the Church initiated a call of the Universal Church to this special devotion. The Dominicans began preaching on the virtues of the Holy Name and built many churches where the Holy Name was especially revered. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries St. Bernadine of Siena made the object of devotion the Monogram of the Holy Name - IHS. He printed a special wooden tablet with the Monogram of the Name of Jesus surrounded by rays of the sun and popularized this devotion and made it so widespread that the Monogram of the Name of Jesus – IHS, today stands together with the Cross as a sign of Christianity.

In Jesus' time a typical Jew had only one name, sometimes supplemented with the father's name or the individual's hometown. Thus in the New Testament, Jesus is commonly referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth." The name Jesus is derived from the Latin Iesus, a transliteration of the Greek Iesous. The Greek form is a rendering of the Hebrew Yeshua, a variant of the earlier name Yehoshua, in English "Joshua." The meaning of the name Jesus in Hebrew is generally given as "Yahweh is salvation." Since early Christianity, we have commonly referred to Jesus as "Jesus Christ." The word Christ is derived from the Greek Christos, which is a translation of the Hebrew, Meshiakh, meaning the "anointed" and usually transliterated into English as "Messiah." We believe Jesus is the Christ, the long awaited Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament. Today the term Christ has become a part of the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, but originally it was rather a title.

In our parish we are lucky enough to have a Holy Name Society. It was founded way back in 1940. The main goal of the Holy Name Society is to promote reverence for the Sacred Names of God and Jesus. It also encourages obedience and loyalty to the Magisterium of the Church and the personal sanctification and holiness of its members. Members are called to contribute to the evangelization mission of the Church and to make perpetual acts of reverence and love for our Lord and Savior. The apostolate of the society is to assist in parish ministries by performing the Corporal Works of Mercy: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, tend to the sick, visit those in prison, and bury the dead; as well as the Spiritual Works of Mercy: to convert sinners, instruct the ignorant, counsel the wayward, comfort the sorrowing, bear adversity patiently, forgive offenses, and pray for the living and the dead. That's for sure a lot of work but performing these works brings a person who loves Christ so much satisfaction and happiness, and it helps greatly in making this world a better place.

Every month, at the beginning of their meetings, all members present prayerfully recite this pledge:

Blessed be God.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

I believe, O Jesus, - that Thou are the Christ – the Son of the Living God.

I proclaim my love for the Vicar of Christ on Earth.

I believe all the sacred truths – which the holy Catholic Church believes and teaches.

I promise to give good example – by the regular practice of my faith.

In honor of His Divine Name – I pledge myself against perjury – blasphemy – profanity – and obscene speech.

I pledge my loyalty – to the flag of my country – and to the God given principles of freedom, justice, and happiness – for which it stands.

I pledge my support – to all lawful authority – both civil and religious.

I dedicate my manhood – to the honor of the Sacred Name of Jesus – and beg that He will keep me faithful – to these pledges – until death.

The Holy Name Society is always looking for good Catholic men to join their ranks. If you think you might be interested in join the society, feel free to contact their president, Mr. Steve Sajewicz. 734-516-6148.

# **Guidelines for Baptism in the Roman Catholic Church**

The Sacrament of Baptism takes place in the parish church, except in case of grave necessity.

It is necessary that at least one parent consent to the baptism of the child into the Catholic Faith. It is preferable that both parents regardless of their religion consent to the baptism of the child. At least one of the two parents must be a baptized Catholic who actively practices his or her faith.

There must be reasonable hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Faith.

A child being baptized can only have one or two godparents; if two are chosen they must be male and female. In order for someone to be eligible as a godparent they must be chosen by the parents, have the ability and the intention to fulfill the role, be at least 16 years of age, and be a confirmed Roman Catholic, who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist, is leading a life in harmony with the Catholic Faith, including Marriage, and will be a good role model for the one being baptized, and be neither the father nor the mother of the child. A baptized person who belongs to another Christian community may be admitted only as a "Christian witness" not a godparent provided that there is at least one Roman Catholic godparent who fulfills the above criteria. A non-baptized person cannot be a witness nor a godparent.

Parents of a child to be baptized must be registered members of a parish. Children of parents registered in a parish other than the parish where the baptism is to take place must have a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish where they are registered granting permission for this baptism to take place outside their parish church. This letter should also testify that the parents are participating members of their parish and that they have completed required the baptism preparation program of their parish.

**Marital Status.** Ideally the mother and father of a child should be married to each other. This marriage should have taken place in the Catholic Church. If a couple has been divorced both parents should agree to the baptism if they have shared custody of the child. If a couple has not been married in the Catholic Church or is not married at all this is serious state of affairs which must be addressed. At the time of baptism parents solemnly promise to raise their child in the Catholic faith. This promise will be difficult to keep if parents themselves are not living according to the teachings of their faith. Baptism will not be denied but may be postponed until serious matters are set aright. It goes without saying that parents need to be practicing Catholics themselves before asking for the baptism of their child.

These guidelines apply to children under the age of seven years old. Children seven years of age and older will require further preparation before their baptism can take place.