



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

March 1st, MMXX
First Sunday of Lent

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Month of Saint Joseph

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus! Praised be Jesus Christ!

We have now officially begun the holy season of Lent as of last Wednesday. This is an intense time of year for all of us. The Lord expects spiritual growth from each one of us and that will require work! On the first day of this holy season, before receiving the blessed ashes, we were all instructed by the Lord Himself in the gospel as to what must be done: **PRAY! FAST! & GIVE ALMS!**

Your parish church is here to help you do these things! **PRAY** – In addition to the Sunday Mass, which of course is the greatest prayer known to humanity, why not consider coming to a daily Mass. The 6:30 AM Mass on Monday, Wednesday and Friday might be a bit much for most folks, but the Tuesday and Thursday night Masses at 7:00 PM and even the Saturday morning Mass at 8:00 AM surely are do-able for most people. The Tuesday night Mass is preceded by the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, these devotions conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a perfect way to prepare for the Mass and Holy Communion that follow.

There will also be three full days of opportunity to pray and adore Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist during our annual Forty Hours Devotion in March. Or...you could work on fulfilling Our Lord's command to pray, in a beautiful way by attending the Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings at 7:00 PM.

The Stations of the Cross in our church are fine works of art. I hope you've taken a good look at them lately! Recently they were painstakingly and lovingly restored by two of our good parishioners. The stations are original to the church and date back to 1916. They are like big picture windows looking in on the Holy City of Jerusalem on that fateful day when our salvation was won. Consider coming to this devotion for the good of your soul! The devotion culminates with the distribution of Holy Communion for those who are unable to attend Mass that day.

FAST (& abstinence) once again your church is there to help you! On the Friday's of Lent your fellow parishioners will be conducting a Fish Fry in our parish hall. If you are over fourteen years of age you cannot eat meat on the Friday's of Lent. Our chefs will have delicious baked fish, deep fried fish, fried shrimp dinners, and Polish pierogi and placki kartoflane/potato pancakes ready to feed you. There will also be a fine salad bar available from which you could make an entire meal! I must point out however that the dear Lord had more in mind than food when he spoke of fasting in the gospel. It is even more important for us to fast or give up behaviors that do not exhibit Christian charity. Fasting is to be understood as doing penance for the sins we have committed. It is an outward sign that we really are sorry for what we've done wrong.

GIVING ALMS – this means generously and joyfully sharing the material blessings we have received with others who are in need. Donating food for the poor and hungry is an excellent way of practicing almsgiving. Every Lent hundreds of Easter baskets for needy children are prepared in our parish.

On Holy Saturday they are delivered by our volunteers. Please consider sponsoring a child and also please continue bringing your non perishable food items for the poor and hungry to the church or rectory. Special large wicker baskets have been provided in the vestibules of the church and gymnasium. Sharing our food with the poor and hungry is especially pleasing to the Lord Jesus who reminded us that we feed Him when we feed the hungry. We all can help the many people who are in need of something as basic as food with your generosity and commitment to almsgiving.

Just as in fasting however, giving alms is not just about money! It's about charity and care for others. And so we must examine the way we treat others. Being patient, kind, understanding and compassionate to others, especially those who just get on our nerves is a form of giving alms! During Lent a beautiful penance, pleasing to the Lord, would be to be kind to someone you just don't like. WE ALL HAVE SUCH A PERSON IN OUR LIVES! The person of whom we say, "I just don't like that guy! I can't stand listening to him/her or being around him/her! Having a good Lent means hard work, even a little sweat and blood but we have all the spiritual strength we need available to us. So...let's roll up our sleeves and get to the task at hand! Have a great Lent!

Every Friday of Lent is a day of Abstinence.

Everyone over 14 years of age must abstain from eating meat

Why not come to our Fish Fry and support your parish and save yourself the trouble of cooking? In the school building from 3PM until 7PM

Sunday, March 1st – St. David's Day

St. David was born in about the year 500 in a place called Caerfai in Pembrokeshire, Wales. When he grew up he lived a very simple life of prayer as a hermit. He ate only bread, water and vegetables, such as the leeks that grew wild in Wales.

When people learned of David's holiness, they came to him for guidance. Eventually, other young Welshmen joined with David in more than a dozen monasteries he founded in Wales, Dumnonia and Brittany. Like him, they lived a stearn life. According to the Rule of Life written by St. David, the monks pulled plows themselves instead of using oxen. They drank only water and ate only bread with salt and herbs. They hoped that they'd become as prayerful as David. St. David is always portrayed with a white dove on his shoulder. It is said that once while preaching against the heresy of Pelagianism, a dove settled on his shoulder. He was considered such a good teacher that in time he was made a Bishop of Mynyw.

A legend about David says that he assisted his homeland when the Anglo-Saxons invaded Wales. David told each Welsh warrior to wear a leek in his hat so they would know friends from foes. The Welsh won the battle and the leek has been the emblem of Wales ever since.

St. David is the Patron Saint of Wales, of vegetarians and poets. He died in 589, and was canonized by Pope Callixtus II in 1120.

People from Wales have settled all over the world. Because many men had worked as miners in Wales, large colonies of Welsh can be found in the mining areas of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin and Tennessee. The Welsh are noted for their love of song and poetry and for their many beautiful hymn tunes.

It is the custom to wear a leek on St. David's Day. In this country, the daffodil often replaces the leek as the symbol of the saint, still worn with great pride.

Tuesday, March 3rd – Memorial of St. Katherine Drexel

Katherine Drexel was from a wealthy and well known Philadelphia family. Her parents were good to the poor. Her father made large donations to charity and her mother helped poor families to pay their rent every month. As a child, Katherine reflected on this. She wanted to help the poor when she grew up but

wasn't sure how to do so.

Katherine and her family traveled all over the United States and Europe. On one unforgettable trip, the Drexels traveled to the state of Washington on a private train. Katherine was shocked by the poverty she saw on Indian reservations there. Later, while visiting Rome, the family spoke with Pope Leo XIII. Katherine begged him to send missionaries to help neglected Native American communities like the ones she had seen. To her shock, he said, "My child, why don't you become a missionary yourself?"

Eventually Katherine Drexel did just that. Then as always, talented and committed workers were more urgently needed than donations. In 1891, with 13 other women, she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. They worked to provide for the needy, and over time Katherine donated 12 million dollars of the fortune she had inherited.

Katherine and her sisters first opened a boarding school for Pueblo Indian students in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In time they founded missions for Indians in 16 states. They began a secondary school for African American students in New Orleans. This school was the forerunner of Xavier University. Other universities in the South were not open to black students in those days because of segregation laws.

In the years after the First World War, when African American people moved from the South to work in northern cities like Detroit, the sisters also started schools in Chicago, Boston and New York City.

It wouldn't have been easy to recognize Reverend Mother Katherine as the same person who had once toured the West on a private train. As she traveled across the country spending her fortune on schools, she tried to live as simply as she could. Her clothing was threadbare. She bought the least expensive railroad tickets and carried her lunch in a brown paper bag. Katherine Drexel died on March 3rd in 1955 at the age of 96. People of all races from across the United States journeyed to Philadelphia for her funeral. She was canonized on October 1st, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Wednesday, March 4th – Feast of St. Casimir – Patron of Poland & Lithuania

This saintly Polish prince, who died in his twenty-sixth year from tuberculosis on March 4th, 1484, after a life lived according to the gospel and in virginal chastity, is an official patron saint for both Poland and Lithuania. His name, Casimir, *Kazimierz* in Polish, means "the Maker of Peace." He was born on October 3rd, 1458 at the Wawel Castle in Kraków. He received his religious education from his mother, Elizabeth of Austria, and his education from Fr. Jan Długosz. After an adolescence of great piety and austerity, he was elected king of Hungary at the age of thirteen as a rival to the monarch Matthias Corvino. But after the Hungarians were reconciled to their own king, Casimir renounced the throne and accepted the office of regent of Poland while his father, King Casimir Jagiellończyk was in Lithuania. In that office, in spite of his youthfulness, he exemplified great prudence and virtue. In the midst of the corruption of the royal court he practiced a life of charity and chastity. Every day Casimir recited the lengthy hymn composed perhaps by St. Bernard in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Omni die dic Mariae*, of which the English version is entitled "Daily, daily sing to Mary." There is another legend that says Casimir himself composed this beautiful and well known hymn! He had made a copy of this hymn and it was found under his head when his tomb was opened in 1604. He refused marriage with the daughter of the emperor of Germany, Henry III, and in 1483 became vice-chancellor in Lithuania, but shortly thereafter he died of tuberculosis and was buried under the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the castle at Wilno. There was a popular devotion to him and he was canonized in 1521 by Pope Leo X. To this day the Lithuanians and Poles honor him. After the Reform of 1602 Pope Clement VIII reissued the bull of canonization of Pope Leo X, which had never reached Poland. In 1948 Pope Pius XII named St. Casimir the special patron of all youth.

In the Archdiocese of Detroit, the second Polish parish to be established was under the Patronage of St. Casimir. *Parafia świętego Kazimierza* was founded on November 8th, 1882. It was the first parish to break off from the first Polish parish in Detroit, St. Albertus or *Świętego Wojciecha*, and became the "mother church" of all Polish parishes on the west side of Detroit. The founding pastor of St. Casimir Parish was Fr. Paul Gutowski. The parish was located at the corner of 23rd Street and Myrtle.

The parish began with seventy families who were members of St. Albertus but found it too much of a burden for their children to make the long trip to attend St. Albertus Parish School, which at the time was the only Polish speaking grammar school in Detroit. And so, with the permission of Bishop Borgess, in 1883 a combination church and school building was built. The Felician sisters who taught in the school were also forced to live in this building until a convent could be built for them much later. In one year the parish grew from seventy families to 340, with 182 children in the parochial school. In 1889 a new and much bigger church building was begun. When it was completed in 1890 it was a grand sight with two beautiful bell towers and a magnificent dome! It was built in a Romanesque style, popular in that era.

As the parish grew in size, eventually a high school was added. Many Westside Catholics of Polish descent graduated from St. Casimir's High School. Unfortunately in 1961 St. Casimir's Church was demolished due to structural difficulties that could not be repaired. A new smaller and humbler church was built in 1962. Eventually due to population shifts the High School closed in 1969 and later in 1990 the parish was closed. However the spirit of St. Casimir parish still lives strongly in the hearts of all who were educated and who worshipped in Detroit's second Polish Parish, *Świętego Kazimierza!*

Saturday, March 7th - Feast of Ss. Perpetua & Felicity, martyrs

Perpetua and Felicity were two of a small group of Christians who were arrested in Carthage in northern Africa. As catechumens they encouraged each other and prayed together in prison together with three other companion catechumens, Revocatus, Secundulus and Saturninus. Finally their teacher Saturus was imprisoned with them and there in the prison cell he baptized them before they were martyred. All the prisoners were lead out into the amphitheater. First they were flogged by gladiators and then they were thrown to a wild cow and were tossed on the horns of the savage beast. Finally Perpetua and Felicity were beheaded.

In that part of the Roman Empire, the authorities were no longer trying to eliminate all the Christians. But every so often, a few Christians were killed to discourage anyone else from becoming Christian.

Perpetua, who was only 22, and the mother of an infant son, was probably arrested because her family was wealthy. However, her mother and brother – who were Christians – were spared. Her father was a pagan and begged her to deny Christianity, but she explained to him that she couldn't tell a lie and renounce her faith. Perpetua's name means "eternal."

Felicity, whose name means "happy," was the wife of a slave, and she may have been from Perpetua's household. She was pregnant at the time they were arrested, and she gave birth to her baby girl during their imprisonment.

Both women were treated cruelly in prison, but they showed so much courage and patience through their hardships that the jailer, Pudens, became Christian too. They were martyred for their faith in the year 203.

March 6th – First Friday of the Month

First Friday during Lent is a very important one and a very busy one! During Lent we focus on our sins. The more we think about those sins the more we realize the damage they do. They hurt others, they hurt ourselves and they hurt the Heart of Christ, in fact they break His Sacred Heart. On the First Friday of every month we are called to think about the Heart of Christ. It is a loving heart and a forgiving heart, but we must ask for that forgiveness. This we do at the special Masses that are said in our church on First Fridays at 6:30 AM, & 8:00 AM. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for adoration after the 8:00 AM until 10:00 AM and then again at 5:00 PM until Benediction will take place at 6:30 PM. Stations of the Cross will be then be prayed at 7 PM. Lent is a time to work on the soul. I cannot think of a better way to do this than to observe First Friday!