



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

July 29th, 2018

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Most Precious Blood

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Sunday, July 29th – Feast of St. Martha

Martha, her sister Mary and their brother Lazarus lived in the town of Bethany, near Jerusalem. The Gospel of John records that Jesus loved all three of them. They were important to him. In that time and culture, women were treated as inferior to men. But Jesus treated women as equals. He called Martha, Mary and Lazarus his friends. The gospel tells us that he laughed and cried with them.

Martha's conversations with Jesus show that she was able to say just what she thought without any pious nonsense. When she gave a dinner in Jesus' honor, Martha asked his support in getting her sister to pitch in and help. In reply, Jesus gave both sisters permission to sit at his feet as disciples. Women weren't permitted to study with a rabbi, so Jesus was taking a bold stand in treating his two friends that way.

Even when her brother Lazarus died, Martha did not give up her faith. She told Jesus, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. And then Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Martha developed a reputation over the centuries as the practical and active Christian, so she is often pictured with a cooking ladle or a set of household keys. She is a patron saint of cooks and hospitality. Today we celebrate that we, like Martha and Mary and Lazarus, can be ourselves with Jesus. We can say what we really think. We can welcome Christ into our homes through hospitality to family, friends and strangers alike.

Tuesday, July 31st – Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Ignatius was born in 1491 in Guipuzcoa in the Basque region of Spain. He was the youngest of eleven children. As a boy he had little interest in schooling. He wanted only to be a military officer like his father and grandfather. In 1521, when he was thirty years old, he reached a turning point in his life. While defending the Spanish castle of Pamplona against a French siege, he was struck by a cannonball. Both his legs were injured.

Knowing he would be unable to move around for a long time, Ignatius asked for some entertaining novels about romance, knights and soldiers. But all that could be found for him were books about Christ and the lives of the saints. In reading them, he began to believe that the saints showed greater courage than soldiers.

The next year, when Ignatius had recovered, he visited a nearby shrine at the Benedictine Monastery at Montserrat. There he hung his sword before the miraculous statue of Mary, gave away his uniform to a

beggar, and promised to dedicate his life to God's service. He spent almost a year in prayer, living in a cave at Manresa near the shrine. The former warrior then went to school with children for the next two years until he was ready to enter a university.

At the University of Paris, Ignatius was still much older than his classmates. But he met six talented young men who wanted to share his new way of life, a way of prayer and service. One was the future St. Francis Xavier. They studied theology, served the poor and gathered often for prayer. To help them, Ignatius wrote his *Spiritual Exercises*, a guidebook for closer union with God, which is still in wide use today. They learned to do all, as Ignatius said, "*Ad majorem Dei gloriam* - for the greater glory of God."

Ignatius hoped that these young people would become a kind of army of God's servants. He challenged them to live as the poorest of the poor, teaching children and uneducated adults, working in hospitals and prisons.

As more and more people came to share in this vision, Ignatius showed a gift for organization. He combined this talent with his love of deep prayer. By the time he died at age 65 in 1556, over a thousand people had committed their lives to this new kind of service. They were called the Society of Jesus, or the "Jesuits" for short. Some of them became missionaries. Others began schools. St. Ignatius was canonized in 1622.

In inspiring others to work for God all over the world, Ignatius's own youthful love for adventure was satisfied. Today he is considered the patron saint of the Basque people.

Wednesday, August 1st – Feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church

In modern times we would call Alphonsus Liguori a "child prodigy." He was born at Marianella, near Naples in 1696. He earned a doctoral degree in both civil and canon law when he was sixteen years old. At his graduation ceremony, the audience chuckled when they saw him in his doctoral robes, which were much too big for him. But by the time he was twenty, he was already the leading lawyer in his home town of Naples in Italy. He had many highborn friends and a fine social life. He was known for his talent at playing the harpsichord.

Things continued to go well for Alphonsus until he was 27. It was said that he never lost a case. Then one day in court, he made a serious error. His reputation as a lawyer was damaged. At first he felt so ashamed that he refused to eat or to leave his house. But then he realized that God was speaking to him through this blunder, telling him to take himself less seriously and to change his life. He studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1726 at age thirty.

Alphonsus became a preacher, and for the next several years he gave retreats for the poor in the slums of Naples. Although he was a brilliant and sophisticated man, his homilies were written so that the least educated person in the assembly could enjoy and understand them. In 1748 Alphonsus published his first book on moral theology, to be followed by others that were translated into many different languages. Because of his extensive writing he has been named a Doctor of the Church and patron of moral theologians. He spent a lot of time counseling people, and he encouraged them to form small groups for prayer. In 1732 he founded an order of priests and brothers to work with laborers. The order is called the Redemptorists.

After thirteen years of administration of the Congregation of the Redemptorists, Alphonsus was named a bishop at the age of 66, much against his will. He resigned from his episcopal duties at the age of 79 and after a period of deep interior suffering he died in 1787 at the age of 91 in Campagna, Italy. He was canonized in 1839 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1871.

Alphonsus wrote many books and hymns. He worked toward correcting a mistaken idea called "Jansenism." Jansenists thought people were so sinful that almost no one would be saved. Because of this attitude, people thought no one was worthy to receive communion. But Alphonsus said that celebrating the Eucharist was a way to become holy, not a reward for being holy.

First Friday of the Month, August 3rd

Are you committed to growing in holiness? Do you really love Christ who has ALWAYS loved you in spite of your many sins against Him? Do you realize that you can NEVER get closer to Christ in this world than to meet Him in the Blessed Sacrament and receive Him devoutly in Holy Communion? If you understand all of this, then why not take advantage of the great spiritual opportunity that is offered to you every First Friday of the Month in your own parish church, by attending Mass at 6:30 AM, 8:00 AM or 7:00 PM and spending some time adoring the Holy Eucharist exposed on our altar from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM or from 5:00 PM until 6:30 PM. Why not try to please His Most Sacred Heart by welcoming Him into your own humble heart and receive Holy Communion on that day which He, Himself has said is so special and helpful to our salvation?

Friends, life is short. No one knows just how many days he or she will have on this earth. The goal of this life is to prepare for the next. Are you ready? Are you at least trying to get ready? PLEASE! Come to Mass this Friday. Please don't leave your Lord abandoned in the monstrance on the altar of our church this First Friday. Commit some of your precious time to adoration before or after Mass and fervent prayer during Mass!

Saturday, August 4th – 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 4th, 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 5th 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.

Saturday – August 5th – 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 5th and 6th. 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 5th. 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 4th, 1916. The date of dedication of the original church was July 8th, 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.