



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

January 27th, MMXIX

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Holy Name

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Saturday, February 2nd is the 40th day after Christmas day. For people of Polish descent who faithfully observe their ethnic customs, it is the last day of the Christmas Season. This holy time of year always comes to an end with a very important Church Feast, The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. On this special day we commemorate Mary and Joseph bringing the child Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem for the first time, 40 days after His birth. According to the ancient Law of Moses, every Jewish mother was excluded from attendance at public worship for 40 days after giving birth to a boy child. Mary fulfilled this command of the law by presenting two pigeons as a sin offering and through the prayers of a priest was purified from the ritual uncleanness associated with childbirth. This feast day, therefore, was formerly called the Purification of Mary.

Today the feast is commonly known as Candlemas Day because of the blessing of candles which takes place at the beginning of Mass. The lighted candles are carried in procession in church to remind us that it is Jesus Christ who is the true Light of the World, a Revelation to all the nations and the glory of the People of Israel.

In Poland this day is called *Matki Boskiej Gromnicznej* which is translated literally as *Mother of God of the Thunder Candle*. The candles blessed this day are called *gromnicy* or *thunder candles* because they are kept in the home for use especially in time of thunderstorms to protect the house from being hit by lightning. They are also a protection against other natural calamities such as floods, fire and drought. The blessed candles are also lit at the bedside of the dying to protect the individual from Satan, and to light the way to heaven. It was believed by many that at the time of death there was a contest for the soul of the dying between angels and the devil.

At the Seminary in Orchard Lake there is a beautiful painting hanging in one of the halls which depicts Mary walking at night through the snows of the Polish countryside, carrying a large candle in her hands as if it was a sword. At her feet wolves can be seen running fearfully away from her and from the small cottages of the townsfolk she is protecting. Polish legend says she walks across Poland with her *gromnica* aglow, protecting homes and farm animals from many packs of hungry wolves, that prowl about looking for prey during the harsh Polish winters.

Even though we do not live in rural Poland but rather in the modern city of Wyandotte, on this occasion I encourage us all to invoke the Blessed Virgin for her help and protection on one of her special feast days. May Mary continue to protect each one of us from the dangers that roam the dark streets or our city at night during the remainder of this winter.

Monday, January 28th – the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas

The classmates of St. Thomas Aquinas had a nick-name for him. They called him “the dumb Sicilian ox” because he was big, slow-moving and shy. They didn’t realize until later that their classmate was fantastically intelligent.

Thomas’s family was related to emperors. He was born in 1225 in the family castle at Rocca Secca in Italy. His parents prepared him for a life of importance. At age five he was sent to the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino in his parent’s hopes that he would choose that way of life and later become Abbot. Instead, humble Thomas joined the Dominicans, an order whose friars took a vow of poverty.

His family felt angry that Thomas would be begging for his living. His six older brothers, who were soldiers like their father, held him captive for more than a year while his mother and sisters tried to talk him into changing his mind. During this time, Thomas calmly read and studied. He also learned a great deal of the Bible by heart. Finally his family gave in and allowed him to return to the Dominicans.

Thomas kept quiet in his university classes because he did not like to show off his intellect. However, he was so brilliant that he became a professor at the University of Paris. He was also known as a great preacher.

In those years, just about everyone talked about religion. They got into big arguments over small matters. Some people insisted that the truth of spiritual things is different from the truth of material things and that only spiritual truths really mattered. But Thomas said to look in a mirror. Ask yourself, where does the body stop and the soul begin? How is it possible to separate spirit and matter? In future years the ideas of Thomas Aquinas became the way that theology was taught in much of the Church.

Thomas’s writings fill twenty volumes. Perhaps he was able to produce so much in the midst of a busy life because of his deep prayer life. The Summa Theologica, his last and unfortunately, uncompleted work, deals with the whole of Catholic theology. He stopped work on it after celebrating Mass on December 6th, 1273. When asked why he stopped writing, he replied, “I cannot go on... All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me.” Celebrating the Eucharist often moved him to tears. He treated everyone with patience and kindness. During his whole life he was never known to lose his temper or speak sarcastically about another person.

Thomas died at age fifty on March 7th in 1274. Because of his writings, St. Thomas has been honored with the title “Angelic Doctor” (doctor here means “teacher”). By universal consent St. Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church.

Thursday, January 31st – the Feast of St. John Bosco

To call others to Christ, John Bosco used everything he could think of, even acrobatic tricks and tightrope walking. His cleverness stood him in good stead. Many young people learned about God because of the care they received from John.

“Giovanni” Bosco was born in 1815 in a small village of the Piedmont region of Italy. His father, a peasant farmer, died when John was only two years old, leaving the family very poor. It was his mother Margaret who provided him with a good humanistic and Christian education. When young John went away to the seminary at age 18, even the clothes on his back had been donated by people from his village. John decided that his ministry would be in Turin, the closest city to his village. Turin was becoming an industrial town. Teenage boys would leave their poor families in the countryside and come into town searching for work. In the city these teenagers lived in terrible conditions.

Even before his ordination, John began taking a group of boys out to the country every Sunday for sports, a picnic, song and prayer. For their amusement he performed magic tricks. No one else cared about them. After John became a priest in 1846, he housed boys who had nowhere else to live. This home was called the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales. Then he began programs to train them as shoe makers, tailors and printers. The training protected them from a harsh world they were too young to face.

Many of the boys and young men John assisted were troubled. Often they had experienced abuse or neglect. Somehow, "Don Bosco" as he was known, called forth the best in them by affirming them and treating them kindly. This was considered a very unusual approach to teaching. "Reason, religion and kindness," was his motto. Most teachers in those days thought that children must be forced to learn and punished severely when they didn't. The number of young people in John's care grew even larger. By 1856 he had 150 boys under his care, by 1868, 800! He had trouble finding assistants who understood his gentle teaching methods. In 1859 he began an order of priests called the Salesians and an order of sisters called the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix. He also started a group of laypeople called Cooperators. All were trained especially for this work. Today these orders serve in schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals and missions all over the world.

Friday, February 1st – Feast of St. Brigid of Ireland

Many incredible and some unbelievable legends are told about St. Brigid. One of the loveliest is that she helps chase away the winter and usher in the spring. Another story tells that, when she was only ten, she would give food and clothing from her household to poor people. She worked as a dairymaid and would give milk, butter and cheese from her master's cows to the needy. Her generosity made her much loved.

Brigid was born near Kildare in Ireland in 453. Her mother, Brocca, a sickly woman, was a Christian and a slave. She had been baptized by St. Patrick, himself. Brigid's father, Dubhthach, was a pagan chieftan or king of Leinster, and Brocca and Brigid's master. When Brigid was young, she persuaded her Druid master to set her mother free. Brigid felt she could then follow her heart's desire and give her life to God.

Brigid made her profession as a nun to the bishop St. Mel. At this time there were no convents in Ireland, so Brigid founded one, near Kildare. Actually she founded a convent for women and a monastery for men there. She became the Abbess of these religious houses. Here, and at the other communities she would begin throughout her life, providing for the poor was the most important work. "What is mine is theirs," she said.

St. Brigid's simple life of prayer and penance influenced the growth of the church all over Ireland. During her lifetime, her reputation for holiness spread through Europe. When she died in 524, she was buried in Downpatrick, very close to the graves of St. Patrick and St. Columba. This was considered a great honor.

St. Brigid is one of the patron saints of Ireland. Irish farmers pray to the former dairy worker to protect their cattle from harm. Many Irish cottages and barns display St. Brigid's crosses, made of straw. In Ireland she is sometimes called St. Bride, or Mary of the Gael.

FIRST FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, A DAY OF SPECIAL DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Once again, all are offered the spiritual opportunity to grow in holiness by attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion on the First Friday of the month. This monthly day is set aside by the Church to publicly practice devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Have you ever taken advantage of this opportunity in our parish? Does there always seem to be something else more important to do on First Friday? Please think again! Reconsider your priorities! Some day in the next life EVERYTHING that seemed so important in this life will have no value at all UNLESS it leads us to God! Mass is offered at 6:30 AM and at 8:00 AM in English and at 7:00 PM in Latin.

The Holy Eucharist is exposed for adoration after the 8:00 AM Mass until 10:00 AM when a simple reposition takes place and the church is closed. The sacrament is then exposed again at 5:00 PM. Benediction takes place at 6:30 PM followed by Mass in Latin at 7:00 PM.

February 2nd is also Ground Hog Day!

So many folks who are not Catholic or who are not up on Catholic spirituality and liturgy think that the big event of the second day of February is Groundhog's day and they forget all about, or worse have never even heard of the presentation of the Lord in the temple or the purification of his holy mother Mary. So...here is a bit of background information on the origins of this observance, since the whole nation will be mistakenly focusing its attention on this furry little creature!

The ancient Celtic people divided the year differently than we do now. For them, February 1st was the first day of spring. The first day of May, August and November marked the beginnings of the other seasons. That way of dividing the year makes a lot of sense in Northern Europe, where the change in the length of days is dramatic.

February 1st, the Feast of St. Brigid in Ireland and February 2nd, Candlemas Day are associated with folklore about the arrival of spring, or at least the arrival of lengthening of days.

German farmers say that on Candlemas the badger interrupts its winter nap to check the weather. If the day is sunny, the badger sees its shadow and gets scared, and then goes back to hibernate for six more weeks. The bright, cold days of winter aren't over yet. But...if the day is cloudy, the badger cannot see its shadow. That means hibernation is over and the cloudy, warmer weather of spring is about to arrive. Good news for the farmers! German farmers who immigrated to Pennsylvania did not find badgers. They decided that groundhogs would provide the spring forecast instead. So on Candlemas Day we wonder if the groundhog will see its shadow or if spring is coming soon.

I don't know about you, but my hope is that "Punxsutawney Phil," the name given to the official groundhog used in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania each year to formally observe this custom, will be met by a cloudy day on Friday and that a beautiful springtime here in the city of Wyandotte will not be so desperately far away as it seems today!

A Prayerful Thought on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Those who have grown old in wisdom and age and grace must be very dear to the Good Lord. The aged were among the first to whom he revealed his Son. Mary brought him to the elderly Zechariah and Elizabeth and now he who is the light of revelation to the gentiles casts the warmth and radiance of his light into the lives of the elderly Simeon and Anna. Old age is a special time of blessing from the Lord. It is a time of slowing down in order that we might: "Be still! And know that I am God..." Psalm 46:11. Who says "starość nie jest radość?"

Lumen ad revelationem
gentium: et gloriam
plebes tuae Israel.

Światło na oświecenie
pogan i chwałę
ludu Twego Izraela.



A Light of revelation
to the Gentiles, and
the glory for Your people Israel.

