



# Stronica Proboszcza



## The Pastor's Page

May 19<sup>th</sup>, MMXIX  
Fifth Sunday of Easter  
*Month of Our Lady*

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!  
Praised be Jesus Christ!

### Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup> – the Feast of St. Bernadine of Siena

St. Bernadine was born at Massa Marittima, near Siena in Italy in 1380. He lost both parents before he was seven years old. When Bernardine was 20, the plague struck his city of Siena, Italy. As many as two dozen people a day were dying from the disease. Everyone else was terrified of catching the plague, so hospital patients were left to die alone and unattended.

Bernardine not only agreed to run a hospital, but he also brought twelve friends with him. For four months they worked day and night to bring cleanliness and order. They cared for the sick and consoled them. Afterward, Bernardine was worn out and became ill himself. He never completely recovered his health.

Soon after that, Bernardine, at age 22, joined a Franciscan friary, and was ordained a priest two years later. So many friends and relatives came to see him that he moved to a much quieter place with a more severe lifestyle. For the next twelve years, he spent his time praying and preparing for whatever God might want him to do.

In 1417, at age 37, Bernardine began preaching. Before his life was over, he would travel on foot throughout all of Italy. He drew tremendous crowds at each stop. His open-air sermons would last for hours, and he delivered several every day. In one city, Perugia, he was able to work out a peaceful end to civil war. He is still honored there. Especially known for his devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, Bernardine devised a symbol – IHS, the first three letters of the name of Jesus in Greek, in Gothic letters on a blazing sun. The devotion spread, and the symbol began to appear in churches, homes and public buildings.

Bernardine loved preaching so much that he turned down three offers to be named a city's bishop. But he did say yes when asked to serve in a leadership post as General of the Franciscans Friars of the Strict Observance. In that job he improved the education for all the friars in his care. When he started there were 300 friars in the community; when he died there were 4,000. But he missed preaching, so for the last two years of his life, although he was in poor health, he went back to the strenuous life of a traveling preacher. He died at Aquila in Italy in 1444 at age 64, and was canonized six years later.

## Restoration Update

Hopefully parishioners have noticed the varied improvements being made to our venerable old house of worship. If by chance you have not, let me point some of them out. Probably the most noticeable and striking work that has been done is the marbleizing of the columns on the side walls of the church. When preparing for the centennial of the completion of the church building that was observed in 2016, newspaper articles from 1915 were located describing the plans for the “new” church that was to be built. The original plans called for the interior of the church to be finished in marble. Unfortunately this costly detail was not possible to complete and so the plaster walls of the church were simply painted to look like marble. Over the years some of this marble painting was lost due to damaged plaster. Luckily we have now come across an artist from Europe who is skilled in this area. He has completely repainted the south wall of the nave of the church and is at present repainting the north wall. He has also begun with the pillars. The eight pillars of the north and south transept are completed. Together with the freshly gilded capitals that were done last year they are stunning!

When the church was first completed there was a great deal of gold leaf used in the decoration of the building. We have now begun replacing the painted stencil work in the church with gold leaf stencil. Also there is a great deal of architectural detail in the church that has been somewhat lost to the eye over the years by the extensive use of beige paint. You will begin to notice these features more and more as they are repainted with a fresh coat of white paint and then contrast nicely with the beige. Granted there is so much more gold leaf to be replace throughout the church, but little by little you will see the stunning results.

Another repair that is being done which is not quite so obvious but still of extreme importance is the replacing of the floor under the pews. When the church was first built the aisles were made of terrazzo and under the benches wood was used. Later it was decided to cover the wood under the benches with linoleum. This served its purpose but in the long run was not the best idea. As the linoleum got older and brittle many cracks appeared. Then water got into those cracks from snow and rain on peoples shoes and from mopping the floor. This water began to rot the wood under the linoleum and added to the crumbling of that floor. The ideal thing would have been to refinish the wood floor but this was not possible. Last year a fine wood laminate floor was laid under the pews on the far south side of the nave. At present we are doing the same on the corresponding north side. The floor under the center sections of pews will be more of a challenge, but sooner or later it will need to be done.

The holy water fonts at the side doors are being replaced with the standing angel fonts. One more angel has been orderd for the south vestibule doorway. It is amazing that historical statuary once made of heavy plaster is now being reproduced in lightweight and very sturdy fiberglass.

You will also notice that gradually the carpet is being removed from the church. It has already been removed from the sanctuary last year and the aisleways are next. We were advised by our insurance adjuster that the poor condition of the very worn carpet in the church was becoming a tripping hazard. The original terrazzo underneath is ready to be revealed again and polished. This removal of carpet will greatly enhance the acoustics of the church.

Later this summer the murals above the side altars will be cleaned. They were painted in 1942 and have 77 years of dust, dirt and soot from candles on them. They should be vibrant again after being cleaned. After that the side altars will be repaired and repainted. Though not visible from afar, they have many cracks and chips. They date back to 1916 while the high altar was only installed in 1942.

I am also searching for a more fitting pulpit for the church. What we are using now is a lectern left over from the 1974 renovation. It is too small for a church like ours and does not complement the beautiful Italian renaissance style of our church.

All of these improvements are possible because of the generous donations that are being made to our restoration fund. If you would like to help in this work you may use the green restoration envelopes found at the entrances of the church to do so. I want to express my sincere thanks to those who have already given so much. We have the most beautiful church in the entire downriver area. Keeping it beautiful is the best way to honor our ancestors who built it and to give glory to God.

## **Coming to Mass Late and Leaving Early**

I have begun to notice more and more that people are arriving late for Mass and then leaving early, like as in right after communion. This is a very undesirable state of affairs. Being late for Mass can very quickly become habitual. It is true that a great many people are always late for whatever they plan on doing or whatever appointments they have. Frequently their friends learn to expect this and may even employ the tactic of setting up meeting times fifteen to thirty minutes earlier than necessary with friends who are habitually late, so as not to have to enter parties, theatrical performances or other social functions late and draw attention to themselves. Yes, Jesus is a friend, still I do wonder what he thinks of being friends with a person who consistently shows up late for a pre-planned weekly meeting with him, which is actually of great importance to the relationship.

When you arrive late for the Sunday Mass it is a sad state of affairs for a multitude of people. First you short change yourself and anyone who may be with you of the first prayers of the Mass which we call the Introductory Rites. These are important prayers. Secondly your late entrance draws the attention of the people who are already at Mass away from what is going on at the altar and directs it upon you, even if that is not your goal. It is not so easy to slip into church unnoticed after Mass has begun, even if you take a seat in the back of the church.

I am actually rather amazed by people who are significantly late for Mass and head right down the main aisle for a seat in the front of the church. On the one hand they seem to understand the importance of being close to the altar so as to be able to participate better in the Mass while on the other hand important prayers and the first hymn have already been missed. I have seen people come as late as after the Gospel! Which brings us to the question we priests often here, "How late can I be, before I am considered as having missed Mass?" This question is usually followed by, "How early can I leave and still be considered as having fulfilled my obligation to go to Sunday Mass?" These questions really cause a priest anguish! There was a time when they were answered by Canon Law as: a person must be present for the Gospel and must remain in church until after the priest has received Holy Communion, but really, not only is this the minimal, but it also would seem to indicate that a person has lost the whole idea of the importance and purpose of the Mass in our lives.

Sometimes a person might be late, it is true. And I guess sometimes a person might need to leave early but really for the most part we must plan our lives in such a way that our Sunday participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is one of our greatest priorities. Participating in the Sunday Mass is one of the most important things we do every week in our lives and it should be the highlight of our week. Going to Mass should not be a burden but rather a delight in our week. So when a person regularly goes to Holy Communion and then heads straight out the door, well one would question as to how important church really is to that person. Masses do not exceed one hour. One hour of your time in God's house every week. There are 168 hours in a week to do with as one wills. Spending one of those complete hours in the house of our God to whom we belong does not seem that burdensome. Our parking lot is not that jammed so as to worry about being able to get out. What on earth could be the reason why week after week the same people go to Holy Communion and walk out the door of the church. Some might say well at least they go to church, which is well and good, but my job as a priest is to encourage all to do better than that.

# Our Lady Help of Christians

AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM

FEAST DAY — FRIDAY MAY 24TH

“Spread devotion to Mary, Help of Christians, and you will see miracles.” So advised Saint John Bosco, whose reverence to Mary as Help of Christians, or *Auxilium Christianorum*, led him to construct the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin in 1863 and has helped make this title one of the Blessed Mother’s most popular.

Bosco had two dreams that prompted his devotion. In the first, he faced a menacing crowd of cursing and fighting youths, whom he attempted unsuccessfully to subdue with his bare fists. A “majestic” man pulled him out of the fracas, then ordered Bosco back in to take charge “not with blows but with kindness.”

Bosco objected: “Why do you ask impossible things of me? Who are you, anyway?”

The man replied, “Ask my Mother. I will give her to you as your teacher and guide, and she will make it all possible.”

Suddenly, a woman stood beside Bosco and reassured, “In due time you will understand.”

In the second dream, Bosco saw two pillars arising out of a storm-tossed sea to anchor Peter’s bark (the Church). The taller pillar, surmounted with the host, bore the inscription “The Salvation of Believers.” The shorter pillar had a statue of Mary on top and was inscribed “Help of Christians.”

Bosco was not the first to profess devotion to Mary as Help of Christians. In 1576 Bernardino Cirillo, archpriest of Loreto, published a litany, approved by Pope Clement VIII in 1601, that invoked Mary as *Auxilium Christianorum*. This invocation may have arisen out of the victory at the Battle of Lepanto, which many attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Mother. Because of her aid, Pope Pius V hailed her as Our Lady of Victory, Help of Christians.

Also, when Pope Pius VII was freed from captivity after the Battle of Waterloo, in thanks to God and Mary he instituted the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, to be celebrated on May 24th.

In *The Glories of Mary*, Saint Alphonsus de’Liguori (1696-1787) recalled even earlier references: Saint John Damascene’s (c. 676-eighth century) description of Mary as “the prepared and always ready help of Christians, by which they are all delivered from dangers” and Saint Cosmas of Jerusalem’s (third century) depiction of Mary as “all-powerful to deliver us from sin and hell.” Saint Alphonsus also related how Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) addressed Mary; “Thou art an invincible warrior in defense of thy servants, fighting against the devils who assail them.” Historical writings are replete with references to Mary’s helping her children in times of need, including the *Sub tuum praesidium*, the oldest prayer addressed to Mary. It was found on a papyrus dating from the end of the third century, a time of great danger for Christians, and prizes Mary for her assistance given in time of conflict.

Scripture also speaks of the feminine strength that will conquer evil and protect dependents. Genesis prophesies a woman whose seed will crush the serpent’s head (3:15), and Revelation tells of a woman whose son will “rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (12:5). Mary is held to fulfill these prophecies.

As Help of Christians, Mary becomes for all Christians a model of the active, providing assistance to her children and moving heaven and earth to correct evil and bring about God’s will.