



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

December 15th, MMXIX

Third Sunday of Advent – Gaudete Sunday

Rev. Mark A. Borkowski

Month of the Divine Infancy

FrmarkB@aol.com

Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Gaudete in Domino semper! RADUJCIE SIĘ ZAWSZE W PANUI

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS!

Today is the third Sunday of Advent also known as *Gaudete* Sunday or Rose Sunday from the prayers of the Mass and the color of the vestments and altar decorations and appointments. Advent is supposed to be a rather somber and quiet liturgical season. It is not a sad or penitential time of year, but rather a time to be quiet and reflective. It is undoubtedly a season of hope-filled anticipation, but really should not be a time of celebrations and festivity. This *Gaudete* Sunday, however is different.

The Church actually encourages us to let loose with A LITTLE rejoicing and public manifestation of our joy at the upcoming birth of our Redeemer. We are recommended to decorate the altar with flowers so as to create a contrast from the empty spaces we have been looking at for the last two weeks. The organist is encouraged to lift our spirits with joyful hymns and grand preludes and postludes. The rose color is much happier and lighter than the striking and somber violet of the rest of the season.

Today the Church says Rejoice! You know you want to! Go for it! But this is a one-day only affair. Monday morning we go right back to the quiet of Advent, and it will be more of a challenge to keep the spirit because Christmas will be only ten days away! The final preparation for Christmas that I would recommend to you, is to use these last days of Advent to pray the Christmas Novena. Tuesday, December 17th would be the day to begin. The prayers included in this week's bulletin are to the Infant of Prague. The prayers of this novena should help all of us get in touch with the real spirituality of the Christmas Season. I hope you will use them to your advantage.

I want to remind all of our parishioners that advent is a fine time to go to confession, especially if you have not been in a while. Confessions are heard every Saturday afternoon at 3 PM. You may also go to confession on Thursday, December 19th at 1 PM or 6 PM or on Friday, December 20th at 1 PM or 6 PM. You may also attend a vicariate penance service, on Monday, December 16th at 7:00 PM at Christ the Good Shepherd in Lincoln Park or on Saturday afternoon, December 21st at 12:00 noon at Sacred Heart on Grosse Ile. Of course you may always ask me to hear your confession at any reasonable time.

A Fascinating Look at the Infant of Prague Devotion

Though devotions to the Infant Jesus have been a longstanding tradition in the Church, they took on even stronger meaning in the 17th century after several miracles were associated with an Infant Jesus statue in the city of Prague.

Carved of wood, covered with wax, and 18 inches high, the statue was a wedding gift to the Princess Polyxenia of Lobkowitz. In 1628, when war broke out in the region and brought poverty to the Carmelite monastery in Prague, Polyxenia gave her cherished statue to the Carmelites. Honor and respect the Child Jesus, she told them, and you shall never be in want.

Indeed, the Carmelites prospered as they maintained their devotion to the Child Jesus. Then, when the Saxons plundered Prague in 1631 during the Thirty Years' War, the Carmelites were forced to flee, and the statue was left behind. The statue ended up being damaged. Then it was thrown in the garbage.

A devotee to the Infant of Prague, Father Cyril, a Carmelite Monk, retrieved the statue in 1637. It was in poor condition, and its hands were missing.

One day, while praying before the statue, Fr. Cyril heard Jesus say, "Have mercy on Me, and I will have mercy on you. Return My hands to Me, and I shall give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I shall bless you."

With the help of generous benefactors, the statue was soon restored and placed back in the monastery where it became the center of devotion for the monks. Up until that time, the monastery had been impoverished. But, when the devotion was reestablished, the financial crisis of the monastery was resolved, sick people were cured, and peace was restored.

Jesus' directive to "honor Me," the devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague has spread throughout the world. To this day, many have received special favors while praying to the Infant of Prague. Today the statue is in the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Prague. The Infant's left hand grasps a miniature globe capped by a cross, and His right hand is extended in blessing. Atop His head is a special crown called a tiara. The statue symbolizes the Kingship of Christ and His Holy Childhood. It reminds us that Jesus embraces the whole world in His loving hands.

Novena to the Infant of Prague

To be recited daily from December 17th to the 25th

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, You who so lovingly said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you," have mercy on me now, and through the intercession of your most holy Mother, I humbly ask you to grant me the grace I need.

(Mention your request.)

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, you who so compassionately taught, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes," have pity on me now. I do believe; help me. Increase my weak faith through the Blessed Mother's intercession; I humbly ask you to answer my request.

(Mention your request.)

Divine Infant of Prague, dearest Jesus, You who once said to the Apostles: "If you have faith even like a mustard seed, you will say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it will obey you," hear my prayer, I humbly ask. Through the intercession of Mary most holy, I feel certain that my prayer will be answered.

(Mention your request.)

The “Second Part” of Advent

On the 17th of December we begin the second part of the season of Advent. The intensity of the hopeful and joyful waiting is increased and the prayers at Mass are intended to serve to prepare more directly for the Lord’s birth.

During the first days of Advent, you may have noticed a kind of theme in the prayers used. They speak of living amid the passing things of this world and judging wisely between the things of earth and the things of heaven. We are encouraged to hold firm and fast to that which endures and to come to truly love and long for the things of heaven. This would seem to be very wise advice at this time of year when consumerism is at its height and we spend a great deal of time, energy and our resources in obtaining material things, so as to celebrate the holiday.

Now the prayers of Advent speak of lamps and torches lit waiting the final arrival of the Savior. There is mention of hearts aflame and going out to meet the Lord in humble adoration. These are the late days of the season which is like night time. These last days are like the hours before dawn. All nature is waiting for the glorious sunrise of the Son of God!

Just Who Started This Christmas Thing?

One day, just before Christmas, a woman was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable, and after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season. Overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don’t forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card.

Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all their bags of stuff. When the doors closed she couldn’t take it anymore and stated, “Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot.”

From the back of the car everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, “Don’t worry we already crucified Him.”

For the rest of the trip down, the elevator was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. Don’t forget this year the One who started this whole Christmas thing, in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we could all do this, just imagine how very different this whole world would be!

The Poinsettia – the Mexican Flower of the Holy Night

Dr. Joel Poinsett was U.S. ambassador to Mexico in the early 1800’s. In 1829 when he returned home, he brought with him a plant called by the Mexicans the *flower of the Holy Night*. We call it the poinsettia, after Joel, and use it as a favorite Christmas plant.

It has a fabled origin: Long ago, on Christmas Eve, a poor child made his way to church in great sadness because he had no gift to offer the Christ child. Not daring to enter the church, he knelt humbly on the ground outside and prayed, tearfully telling the Lord of his great desire to offer a gift. Unwilling to approach with empty hands, he finally rose only to behold springing up at his feet a plant with dazzling red, spectacular blooms. This was the answer to his prayers. These blossoms he took to the feet of the Christ child. Since then, the flower of the Holy Night spread through the whole country, blooming each year at Christmas with such glorious abandon that the very sight of it fills believers with the spirit of this season of the Savior’s birth. In Poland the poinsettia is called *Gwiazda Betlejemska/the Star of Bethlehem*.

Mary's Dream about Christmas

"I had a dream, Joseph. I do not understand it, not really, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our son. I think that is what it was all about. The people had been preparing for it for about four weeks. They decorated the house and bought new clothes. They went shopping many times and bought elaborate gifts. It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our son! They wrapped them in beautiful paper and tied them with lovely bows and stacked them under a tree. Yes, a tree, Joseph, right in their house! They decorated the tree also. The branches were full of glowing lights and sparkling ornaments. There was a figure on the top of the tree. It looked like an angel might look. Oh, it was beautiful! Everyone was happy and laughing. They were all excited about the gifts they gave each other, Joseph, but there were none for our son. I do not think they even knew him. They never mentioned his name.

It seems so odd for people to go through all that trouble to celebrate the birthday of someone they do not even know. I had the strangest feeling that if our son had gone to this celebration he would have been intruding. Everything was so beautiful, Joseph, and everyone so full of cheer, but it made me want to cry. How sad of Jesus not to be invited or wanted at his own birthday celebration. I'm so glad it was only a dream. How terrible it would have been, Joseph, if that was for real!"

The Christmas Pledge

1. To make my Christmas a holy day with Christ – not a Holiday without Him.
2. To observe Christmas as the birthday of Christ – not just a day to give and receive material gifts.
3. To remember that the real symbols of Christmas are the Star, the Stable and the Crib – not Santa Claus and his reindeer.
4. To teach my children that *Santa Claus* is the nickname of Saint Nicholas – who gave to the poor in honor of Christ.
5. To help one poor family – in honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family of Bethlehem.
6. To send Christmas cards remindful of Him, the Infant Savior – not decorated only with candy canes, dogs, ribbons and wreaths.
7. To make room in my home for Him – with a Christmas Crib to remind me that He was born in a stable.
8. During this season, in a special way to honor Mary, His mother – who kept the first Christmas vigil beside the manger.
9. To begin this day by leading my family to His table – to receive the Bread of Life.
10. Today and every day, to give *Glory to God in the highest* – to work and pray for *Peace on earth to men of good will*.

Stajenka, Szopka – The Stable, *Żłódek* – The Manger

St. Francis of Assisi called it a crèche, the French word for cradle. He was the one who created the first crèche using real people, a real manger, a real ox and donkey. And real shepherds! The Incarnation – Christmas – was a key component in the spirituality of St. Francis. He wanted to celebrate the Incarnation in a special way. He wanted to do something that would help people remember the Christ Child and what it was really like when He was born in Bethlehem. St. Francis wanted people to see and to experience how Jesus lay in a manger with an ox and a donkey standing by – how He lay upon the hay where He had been placed.

It was Christmas Eve in the year 1223. At the appointed time, Franciscan Brothers came to the new Bethlehem. Men, women, and children from the area also came to celebrate. The torches they carried lit up the night as they approached the crèche. Once again shepherds were walking in the night to come and adore Him. All were filled with joy over the mystery of the Incarnation. And a great tradition began.

As you look upon your Nativity set, may you remember and celebrate again God's love for His creation. To show His abundant love, mercy, and forgiveness, He became a person like us. This is what the crèche symbolizes.