



The Pastor's Page

January 19th, MMXX

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Month of the Holy Name of Jesus

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

Liturgically speaking Christmas is officially over. But culturally and ethnically speaking we continue to celebrate this joyful time of year. The continual Christmas beauty of our church reflects the happiness we feel at this *party-oriented, pre-Lent, Carnival* time of year! The visitors continue to come and find an oasis of *Holiday* in our lovely church!

I do hope many people will come by during these joy-filled days and see our church at its best! Don't forget to invite your family, friends, neighbors and relatives to this purpose! On Sunday, January 27th, at the 12:00 noon Mass, we will observe our final Christmas-oriented celebration as we remember the Presentation of the Lord, with the blessing of candles and a special procession. This will be the last chance to sing our beloved Polish kolędy in church as we gaze on the Christ child in His manger bed. Don't miss it!

Tuesday, January 21st, Feast of St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr

Almost nothing is known of this saint except that she was very young, twelve or thirteen, when she was martyred in the last half of the third century. Various modes of death have been suggested, beheading, burning or strangling.

Legend has it she was a beautiful girl whom many young men wanted to marry. Among those she refused was Eutropius the governor's son. She spurned him and his costly gifts and declared, "I have chosen a spouse who cannot be seen with mortal eyes, whose mouth drips with milk and honey." In his jealousy, Eutropius reported her to his father as being a Christian. The governor summoned the maiden before him, offering her honors and estates if she would marry his pagan son. When she refused he threatened her, but Agnes was unmoved even when exposed to the sight of cruel instruments of torture.

The governor arrested her and ordered her stripped naked and lead through the streets to be confined to a house of prostitution. Miraculously, her rich golden hair suddenly grew in great profusion and entirely concealed her shame. The legend continues that the only customer bold enough to approach her and look upon her lustfully was Eutropius. In doing so he lost his sight but then had it restored by Agnes' prayer.

She was condemned, executed and buried near Rome in a catacomb. That eventually was named after her. The daughter of Constantine built a basilica to in her honor. The name Agnes

means “pure” in Greek. It sounds like the Latin word *agnus*, which means “lamb.” Every year on this day, two lambs from a special flock are blessed in the Roman church that bears her name. At Eastertime, the soft wool from these lambs is sheared and made into special vestments called *palliums* reserved for archbishops of the church.

A statue of St. Agnes can be found in our church just above the side entrance to the church from the parking lot. She can be seen holding a lamb in her arms.

Thursday, January 23rd – Feast of the Betrothal of Mary & Joseph

When the Gospel mentions Mary and Joseph as being betrothed or espoused, it would be in, American terms, something more than an engagement, yet less than a marriage. An espousal or betrothal is a formal agreement to marry. In the Jewish culture of New Testament times, a young woman became marriageable at the age of twelve and a half. At a ceremony of betrothal, the bride and groom would exchange marital consent, but normally the bride would remain in the house of her father for somewhere between three months and a year. Marriage had the aspect of a man acquiring title to his bride, only later did he acquire actual possession.

We know that Mary and Joseph had completed the contract of betrothal from the testimony given by St. Matthew and by St. Luke. What causes some confusion though, is Luke’s reference to “Mary his espoused wife” when Mary and Joseph were already in Bethlehem, seeking a place to give birth to our Infant Lord. For them to be in Bethlehem together, Joseph had obviously taken Mary from her father’s house, and it seems clear that their betrothal had already been converted into a marriage. As he was aware of the circumstances of our Lord’s conception by the Holy Spirit, Luke was probably following the custom of referring to a non-consumated marriage as an espousal.

The Scriptures don’t record exactly when Mary and Joseph were married, but the first chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel describes the circumstances. It speaks of them being “betrothed...before they came together.” Joseph, on learning that she is pregnant with the child Jesus, considers what he ought to do, then the situation is explained to him by an angel. We are then told that he “did as the angel commanded him, and took unto him his wife.” Presumably, this took place in Nazareth, as he would not have brought her to Bethlehem if she was still a member of her father’s household. It obviously has to have followed the Annunciation, and very likely followed the three months Mary spent with Elizabeth. No mention is made of Joseph in the narrative of the Visitation, which has Mary leaving Nazareth “in haste into the hill country, to a town of Judea, (Ain Karim),” and concludes about three months later with Mary “returned to her own house.” That would put the events of Matthew at roughly the fourth month of Mary’s pregnancy; a reasonable guess in that neither account has them immediately hurrying off to Bethlehem, and in that they are likely to have married before Mary publicly appeared to be pregnant. The Church commemorates the espousal of Mary and Joseph on January 23rd, which would put a July or August wedding celebration nicely within the three to twelve months normally observed at home after the espousal.

Friday, January 24th – the Feast of St. Francis de Sales

The noble father of Francis de Sales had planned a brilliant career for him as a lawyer in the senate of Savoy in France. But Francis had other plans. Although he earned a degree in law in his early 20’s, his heart’s desire was to serve the poor and preach the gospel. He struggled gently to persuade his family to allow him to enter the priesthood.

Francis was offered the opportunity to become an official of the diocese of Geneva. His father gave in and allowed him to be ordained. Francis found his work challenging, to say the least.

At that time Geneva was a center for the heretical Calvinists. Francis set out to convert them, especially in the district of Chablais. By preaching and distributing the little pamphlets he wrote to explain true Catholic doctrine he had remarkable success.

People in one province of his large diocese were warring with one another. Francis traveled on foot through the area for several years, preaching and ministering to the people. During this time he endured many dangers. Once he was beaten by a mob. On another occasion he spent a winter night in a tree surrounded by a pack of wolves. Eventually he restored peace and a prayerful spirit to the diocese.

In 1602 at age 35, Francis was appointed bishop of Geneva. He continued to travel constantly and took great joy in preaching and giving spiritual direction. He also loved teaching the children of his diocese, who followed him wherever he went. For his writings, he has been named patron of the Catholic Press.

Francis loved to counsel ordinary people about their prayer lives. He assured them that "saintliness is both desirable and possible." For them, Francis wrote the Introduction to the Devout Life. It was translated into several languages and is still in print today.

In spite of his busy schedule and comparatively short life, he had time to collaborate with another saint, Jane Frances de Chantal, in the work of establishing the Sisters of the Visitation.

Francis's last word before he died was the name of Jesus.

Be open and accessible. The next person you meet could become your best friend!

Saturday, January 25th – the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul

The ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of Paul's conversion to Christ. This story is so important that St. Luke includes it two other times in the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul tells the story in his own words in the first chapter of his Letter to the Galatians.

Before he became known as Paul, his name was Saul. He was a tentmaker from the city of Tarsus. Saul had studied to become a teacher. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was killed, Saul held the coats of those who threw stones.

Saul set out for Damascus. He wanted to arrest any Christians who had escaped from Jerusalem after Stephen's death. Along the way, Saul was struck down to the ground and blinded. He heard the voice of Jesus. Jesus asked him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Saul was in shock. He allowed himself to be led to the home of Christians in Damascus. A holy man named Ananias prayed with him and his sight was restored. Saul went to an isolated spot to reflect on his new faith. Then he returned to Damascus and began preaching the gospel.

Everyone was astounded at the change in him. Now Saul was the one being persecuted. His friends feared for his life. They helped him to escape from Damascus by lowering him over the wall of the city in a basket.

Saul, who began to call himself by the Roman name of Paul, went out on missionary journeys. He crossed the Roman Empire four times to bring the good news of Christ to the world.

Carols, Kolędy & Pastoralki

In English the word carol refers to any type of Christmas song, both those that focus on the birth of Christ and those that simply express the secular delights of the season, like Santa Claus, Reindeer, Snowmen, etc. In Polish it is safe to say that ALL Christmas music has the birth of Jesus

as its theme. Polish Christmas music however is divided into two distinct categories. Kolędy are Christmas hymns that are appropriate for use in church and elsewhere. Pastorałki are Christmas folk songs strictly speaking not appropriate for use in church but rather popular among outdoor carolers and at Christmas parties.

Pastorałki are often associated with shepherds and country folk. They are purely Polish and include country scenes, sad and joyful scenes or even amusing one. The poor, homeless little Jesus surrounded by cattle and animals finds shelter among the simple people.

These folk songs consist of Polish scenery, Polish names, Polish food and Polish dress. Although they are not based on the Holy Land where the Messiah was born, you can feel in them something from the Psalms, the sincerity of a child's prayer, or the wisdom of patriarchs. Many are written to the melodies of the Mazur and Krakowiak.

Kolędy and Pastorałki are small portions of the Polish spirit. They say that prayer is a conversation with God. A carol is also a prayer in simple words. For it is based on the truth of Jesus Christ's birth. Let us sing them frequently, lovingly from our hearts.

“I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year!”
Ebenezer Scrooge

Hej Kołęda! Kołęda!

Polish Christmas Carols are sung until the 2nd of February. The Christmas season, for the Polish people, starts on Christmas Eve. Advent is Advent – a time of preparation and anticipation. Unlike many Western cultures, where Christmas carols and celebrations begin by December 1st, the Polish people spend that time in prayerful waiting. The time after Christmas is the time for celebration.

Unlike the Christmas songs of other countries the Polish carol, called a kolęda, is not only a prayer but it is also a story – a kind of musical drama telling of the miraculous birth of Jesus. These kolędy are a musical expression of genius and profound religious conviction. Many Polish carols date from the early 17th century and reflect, not only the folk culture of the day, but the royal and courtly life of the nobility.

The word kolęda is taken from the Latin word meaning the first day of the month and reflects the ancient custom of pre-Christian feasts in mid-winter. With the coming of Christianity, the theme became the birth of Jesus.

Many of the kolędy are based on the majestic Polonez, a royal and stately dance from the courts of Polish kings. One such kolęda, “W Żłobie Leży” was based on the Polonez played at the coronation of King Władysław IV (1632-1648).

Adam Mickiewicz, in writing about the beauty of Polish Christmas carols, said: “I doubt whether there is another country which can boast of such a collection of carols as Poland has. It would not be easy to find any other nation's poetry with feelings so pure, of such an extreme sweetness and delicacy.”

KTO RANO WSTAJE, TEMU PAN BÓG DAJE!
GOD GRANTS BLESSINGS TO THE ONE WHO RISES EARLY!