



# Stronica Proboszcza



## The Pastor's Page

February 16<sup>th</sup>, MMXX

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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*Month of the Holy Passion of Our Lord*

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Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!  
Praised be Jesus Christ!

There are now only ten days left of Ordinary time before we begin the Holy Season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. It would seem as if this is a fine time for some remote preparation for the season we are about to begin. In times gone by the, three Sundays before Lent made up a kind of pre-Lenten season and each Sunday had its own special name. Last Sunday was called **Septuagesima Sunday**. *Septuagesima* means the seventieth, as it was the seventieth day before Easter, well not exactly. If you count it was the 65<sup>th</sup> day before Easter Sunday, but this was the custom! This Sunday is called **Sexagesima Sunday**, the sixtieth day, the next Sunday was **Quinquagesima Sunday**, the fiftieth day and finally Lent was and still is in Latin called **Quadragesima** which is the fortieth day. In times gone by, the vestment color already had turned to purple as of last Sunday! Times are of course different now, but the idea is still a good one! Now is a good time to start getting ourselves ready for Lent, as I say remotely, in the back of your mind so to speak. Because it will be here before you know it! And anything that is worth doing is worth doing right, don't you think? And whenever we undertake something big we make a plan for ourselves. So.....let's start making our plans NOW! When you put these things off to the last minute sometimes other things can overtake us and the day comes and we haven't a clue as to what we really want and need to do.

In the meantime! These last days call for some festivities before we go into the rigors of Lent with its fasting and abstaining and denying ourselves. This time of year is called *Carnivale*. It is a time to really live it up! The name comes from the Latin words *carne*, which means flesh or meat and *vale* which means good-bye! So one of the themes of the *Carnivale* season is to enjoy great food, with plenty of meat dishes, in preparation for that day, Ash Wednesday and the Friday's of Lent when we must abstain from eating meat. Actually in ancient times many of the earlier Christians did not eat meat for the entirety of the season of Lent! Wow!

The early Christians thought that by not eating meat or any animal products during Lent, they could better resemble Noah and his family aboard the ark. By going without for the forty days of Lent they could help prepare the world for a new creation at the great feast of Easter. So at *Carnivale* time all meat, butter, cheese and eggs got used up in a final feast before the Lenten fast. This custom of using up the eggs and fat in a household is the origin for our *paćzki* day.

## **Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup> – the Feast of the Flight into Egypt**

There is an ancient tradition in the Church that on the seventeenth day of February, that is precisely fifty-five days after the birth of Jesus, when King Herod's soldiers, sent to slaughter all little boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old or under, in order to get rid of Jesus, were getting perilously near the cave at Bethlehem, where at first they little expected Our Lord to be, that Saint Joseph and Our Lady set off with their Divine Child, left the land of the Jews and went off to a land of the Gentiles.

While we can't be certain it was fifty-five days after Jesus' birth, we do know that this flight into Egypt did take place as it is related in the Gospel of St. Matthew. St. Joseph was warned and instructed by an angel. Egypt was a logical place to find refuge as it was outside the dominion of King Herod, but both Egypt and Palestine were part of the Roman Empire, linked by a coastal road know as "the way of the sea," making travel easy between them and relatively safe.

The tradition says they took no one with them, by way of servants or friends, as Saint Peter Chrysologus tells us. The town to which the Holy Family fled was called Fostat. It was three hundred miles from Bethlehem. A church has been erected there on the site of the house where the Holy Family lived during their exile.

The little town where the Holy Family stayed in Egypt was not far from Heliopolis, a city in which, when Jesus, Mary and Joseph passed through it, statues of pagan gods crashed to the ground. Both Fostat and Heliopolis are not far from Cairo in Egypt. Other pious legends say that palm trees along the road bowed to the Holy Family as they passed by and even wild beasts of the desert paid homage to the Christ Child. One legend says the Holy Family was about to be robbed by two thieves on the road but for some miraculous reason the robbers changed their minds at the last moment and let the travelers pass unharmed. The story says that those thieves encountered Jesus years later when they were crucified on his right and his left on Calvary. Of course there is no surety of any of this.

King Herod died in 4 A.D., supposedly by way of a particularly gory death. Originally it is to Judah that the Holy Family is described as returning, although upon discovering that Archelaus had become the new king of Judah, they fled to Galilee. Historically, Archelaus was such a violent and aggressive king that in the year 6 A.D. he was deposed by the Romans in response to complaints from the population. Galilee was ruled by a much calmer king, Herod Antipas, and there is historical evidence that Galilee had become a refuge for those fleeing the iron rule of Archelaus.

***“Remember that nothing important ever happens until someone takes a chance.”***

## **Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> – the Feast of the Chair of Peter**

The theology and history behind the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter is most interesting. In pagan times in Rome this day was called *Parentalia* or "Ancestors' Day." From February 13<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup> people remembered the dead, especially their parents. At this celebration a chair was left empty for particular deceased persons. The Christians of Rome began to celebrate this day in memory of St. Peter, their "founding father," their first bishop. Peter had come to Rome because Rome was the center of the empire and a center of the new Christian faith.

Why is this day's feast called the *Chair* of St. Peter? It commemorates Christ's choosing Peter to sit in his place as the servant-authority of the whole Church. St. Peter was the first Pope and first among the original "bishops/apostles" of the Christ's Church. Every bishop has a chair from

which he presides and preaches. In Rome, in the basilica of St. Peter, an ancient wooden chair is preserved because it is thought to have been St. Peter's. The Latin word for a bishop's chair is *cathedra*. From this word comes our word "cathedral" which is the home church of the bishop of each diocese. In the Archdiocese of Detroit the bishop's home church or Cathedral is the Church of the Blessed Sacrament on Woodward Avenue. It is there that our archbishop's *cathedra* or chair, sometimes called a throne can be found. From this chair he officially and liturgically presides over the Church of Detroit. The feast of the Chair of Peter honors the unity of the church. Peter's chair has served as a symbol of his role as pastor of the whole church. This role has given popes great influence to speak for human needs and to condemn injustice.

*If someone says something unkind about me,  
I must live so that no one will believe it.*

### From Life's Little Instruction Book

Back in 1993, when I was a seminarian intern at St. Ladislaus Church in Hamtramck, I receive a gift from a good friend there. It was a small book entitled "Life's Little Instruction Book," by H. Jackson Brown, Jr. Every so often when I need a lift, I pull out that book and read a few of the instructions that are written there. They are all numbered. So to fill a little bit of space here let me share with you a few that caught my eye this week and I think are classic and very helpful to me and perhaps also to you!

#669. Be original. If that means being a little eccentric, so be it!

#672. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.

#649. Don't confuse comfort with happiness.

#650. Don't confuse wealth with success.

#651. Be the first to forgive.

#633. Do the right thing, regardless of what others think.

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

#573. Don't overlook life's small joys while searching for the big ones.

#563. Remember that just the moment you say, "I give up," someone else seeing the same situation is saying, "My, what a great opportunity."

#552. Remember that everyone you meet is afraid of something, loves something, and has lost something

# 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.