

ST. FRANCIS POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace! —St. Francis

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Sunday, December 19, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Niech Bedze pochwalony Jezus Chrystus. R/. Na wieki, wiekow.

Praised be the Lord, Jesus Christ. R/. Now and forever.

9:00 AM - "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord"

OPENING PRAYER: (please say with Celebrant) O Father, as we approach the yearly remembrance of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, may we sense within ourselves His coming, may there be restored within us the image and likeness of our Creator, who gave us the Christ of Christmas. Amen

PRAYER: (celebrant) O God, as we look upon this wreath, the symbol of eternity, and as we light a fourth candle, may we be prepared more thoroughly in making the way for your son, especially in the depths of our joyful hearts. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH CANDLE: (Reader): O Lord, we beg you, incline your ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Your visitation. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

CONTEMPORARY RITE - Mass Book pg. 63
(please note: No "Gloria" during Advent)

READING I - 1 Mi 5:1-4a

Thus says the LORD: You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19.

R. Lord, make us turn to you;

let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. Rouse your power, and come to save us.

R. Lord, make us turn to you;

let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. Lord, make us turn to you;

let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

R. Lord, make us turn to you;

let us see your face and we shall be saved.

READING II - Hebrews 10:5-10

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God.'"

First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Priest/Lector: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

R./ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Priest/Lector: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word.

R./ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL - Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." This is the Gospel of the Lord.

R./ Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

OFFERTORY HYMN - "A Voice Cries Out"

COMMUNION HYMN - "Patience, People"

RECESSIONAL HYMN - "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"

St. Francis Weekly "Faith Renewed"

Christmas in Poland

Celebrating a Polish Christmas in South Bethlehem (PA) was always simple. In Polish tradition, the first star seen in the sky on Christmas Eve indicated the time for Christmas festivities to begin. The family was seated at the table for the vigil dinner (*Wigilia*) and bread of love (*Oplatek*). The father or eldest family member broke the *Oplatek* in half and gave it to the mother. Each member of the family broke a small part of each other's piece, and after an embrace, wished one another long life, health and happiness. The white almost transparent communion wafer symbolized love, friendship and forgiveness.

Family members did not approach the table on Christmas Eve without forgiving and forgetting, and wished everyone well in a wholehearted manner. The *Oplatek* was sent to family members who could not be present at the *Wigilia*. It was customary to set an extra place at the table, ready and waiting for any lonely traveler who might knock on the door—or for any family members from great distances, that they may spiritually join in the meal.

After dinner, Polish Christmas carols (*Koledy*) were sung and gifts were given. Later, the family attended Midnight Mass, the "*Pasterka*" or "Shepherds Watch." Christmas Day was very peaceful. People rested or visited relatives and friends. Not much cooking was done—meals were served cold or reheated. On the second day of Christmas, a "Hunter's Stew" was prepared from sausage and leftover meats.

In Poland, Christmas was celebrated from December 25th to the feast of the Epiphany (*Święta Trzech Króli*) on January 6th. During this time, the faithful received an envelope that contained gold leaf, incense and juniper berries—symbolic gifts the Three Kings had given to the Infant Jesus. Parties were held in churches throughout January and *Koledy* were sung until Candlemas Day, February 2nd.

"Wesolych Świąt Bozego Narodzenia"
(Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year)

Bread of Life

Chosen city, Bethlehem, House of Bread,
At whose grace-filled table we have been fed,
Here where the stable's manger holds new birth,
Here where the Son of God is seen on earth!
It's here we look upon our newborn King,
And are filled with the peace His presence brings,
Standing in the light of His Star above,
We are drawn to His tender heart of love.
We come, as did He, in simplicity,
And still we see the realm of majesty,
For now we hold within our being's core,
The Bread of Life, forevermore.
~Angela T. Skwarski

"Oplatek" Symbolizes Brotherhood and Family

The word "oplatek" is derived from the Latin word "dolatus" which means "to give". This wafer which looks much like unconsecrated communion bread is traditionally broken at grace before the Christmas meal. The symbolism of this tradition is 3-fold: 1) Breaking of bread reminds us of the bread we share at the Eucharist, Jesus comes to feed us with his body and blood; 2) Breaking bread with one another - we forgive each other for past hurts; 3) The taste, texture and color reminds us of the sweetness, gentle love and purity of God. Traditionally the oldest in the family breaks the wafer with the youngest. They in turn break with the others. This continues until everyone breaks bread with one another.

Who is Saint Nicholas?

Saint Nicholas was the bishop of Myra in Turkey in the 4th century. He was a martyr and must have been a loving man, which is why we still know his name and why he is always remembered at Christmas time. Many stories about his life were told and retold, how he was so kind and generous to the poor, to children and to this unjustly imprisoned.

In the spirit of the Child Jesus, we remember Nicholas because he brings our joy in giving and our gratitude in receiving. The legends tell us that Saint Nicholas gave anonymously. He did not seek praise, but wanted good things to be done and the hearts of children to be delighted.

While Nicholas remains a very popular saint in eastern Europe, particularly in Russia, he became known in a different way further West, in places such as Holland -- as "Sinterklass," the secret bringer of gifts to children on the eve of his feast day, December 6th. It is easy to see how the Sinterklaas of Amsterdam became the Santa Claus of New Amsterdam (now New York).

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 25th
Christmas Day
9:00 a.m. Mass

Sunday, December 26th
Feast of the Holy Family
of Jesus, Mary & Joseph
9:00 a.m. Mass

