



News of Polonia

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Free or Home Delivery

Christmas cribs...

Polish style

By: *Robert Strybel*,

Polish/Polonian Affairs writer

Christmas crèches, cribs or nativity sets are things we take for granted, but probably few Polish Americans know that it was St. Kinga (1234-1292), the Hungarian-born wife of Poland's Boleslaw the Bashful, who first brought them to Poland. Kinga (also known as Kunegunda) greatly admired the Italian, St. Francis of Assisi, who had set up the first Christmas crib in a church in 1223. The story of Jesus' birth was portrayed by life-size statues or re-enacted by people (usually monks or seminarians) for the benefit of largely illiterate medieval congregations. In time, these portrayals became increasingly elaborate. Eventually, nativity puppet stages emerged, and in the 18th century the mechanized crèche first made its appearance. The well-known 18th-century historian, Rev. Jędrzej Kitowicz, thus described one such nativity scene:

"There was the little person of Lord Jesus, and standing to the side Mary and Joseph, bent over in a sign of great affection and admiration. Above the stable, were angels soaring on wings and seeming to sing 'Gloria in excelsis Deo'. On either side of the stable were peasants and little shepherds, some tending their flocks, others sleeping, still others hastening to the stable with sheep and goats in their arms, and among them characters expressing every human estate: lords riding in carriages, nobles and burghers on foot, peasants carting timber, grain and hay, leading oxen, ploughing fields, selling bread, farmwives milking cows, Jews displaying various goods for sale and similar such human endeavors."

As more and more secular, even humorous elements began creeping in, the

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Celebrate the Season with an Open House and an Open Heart

By: *Joanne Winetzki*

Grandmother Józefa was a devoutly religious woman married to a man dedicated to the study of archaeology and ancient cultures. She good naturedly tolerated his avocation by believing that the Almighty would favorably judge him. "Andrzej's a fine man, generous to a fault and devoted to his family," she would reply to her eldest sister who disapproved of the "tall tales" he persisted in relating to the grandchildren. My favorite recollection is the Christmas holiday when we children would gather in Grandmother's kitchen to decorate cutout cookies with frosting, sugar sprinkles and tiny silver candies. Grandfather would sit on a kitchen chair, his cane dangling precariously on the back of it, and wait for the opportunity to impart fascinating lore about some venerable culture. He always saved the most "controversial" discourse for the moment Grandmother disappeared into the pantry to beat the seven minute frosting to its optimum spreading consistency.

"The Persian God Mithras was born on December 25 just like Our Lord Jesus," he began speaking on one wintery afternoon. "His followers believed Mithras, like Our Lord, helped them to enter heaven, the realm of light. Since prehistoric times people have celebrated the return of the sun or light on the winter solstice. It's a period of hope, renewal and optimism for the future. That is why the early Christians chose this auspicious time to observe the birth of Our Saviour."

Grandfather went on to explain other precepts and rituals related to this period when daylight overtakes darkness once again. He told us how Jewish families observe Hannukah by setting a lighted menorah, a ceremonial candelabrum, in a window of their home. Next, he asked the youngest of us to tell about our Polish custom of placing a candle in a window to light the way for the "uninvited guest" on Wigilia. Then Grandmother chimed in with a description of her youngest sister's Christmas Eve observance. Malina and her husband Mario combined Wigilia and the southern Italian La Vigilia. Observant Catholics in both countries ate no meat on this day. Polish carp joined red snapper and tempura prawns to reach the traditional Italian minimum requirement of seven seafood dishes. Nodding his head in approval, grandfather concluded by saying, "My dears, our grand Polish traditions are more than mere local customs and folklore. Together with people all over the world, we honor the Divine Light that loves, protects and guides us all."

It was trickier to regale us with "unholy" stories when visiting great aunt Annie, grandmother's eldest sister who held strict religious beliefs. However, Andrzej was her favorite, so he could get by with all sorts of mischief, as long as he agreed SHE was the best pierogi maker. I remember the afternoon Grandfather tapped his cane on auntie's back door just as we were beginning the tedious process of preparing several hundred of the tasty little pillows. Aunt Annie pulled a dining room chair up to the kitchen door for him, well out of the way of the pierogi assembly line. Grandfather held tight to his cane thumping

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Church Schedules of the Holiday Season

Our Lady of the Bright Mount Catholic Church (Masses in Polish)
3400 W. Adams Blvd. - Los Angeles (323) 734-5249

Dec. 24 Wed Christmas Eve - Vigil Mass 10:00 p.m., Pasterka - midnight
Dec. 25 Th Christmas Masses at 10:00 a.m., noon, 14:30 (*Pol/Eng. *)
Dec. 26 Fri St. Stephen, First Martyr - Masses at 10:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 31 Wed Solemnity Evening prayer and Mass of Thanksgiving will be held at the end of the old year. 5:00 p.m.

Happy New Year - Jan 1 Th

Feast of the Motherhood of Mary 10:00 a.m., noon, 18:30.

Jan. 4 Sun Epiphany of the Lord - Masses at 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. - noon
After the noon Mass - an Oplatek luncheon in the parish hall.

Pope John Paul II Polish Center

3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda (Orange County) (714) 996-8161

Sundays of Advent will follow the usual schedule...

Christmas Eve

Dec 24 Wed English 4:00
Vigil Mass in English 10:00 p.m.
Midnight - Pasterka in Polish

Christmas Day

Dec. 25 Th Latin Tridentine Mass. 7:00 a.m.
Mass in English, 9:00 a.m.
Mass in Polish 10:30 a.m.
Dec 31 Wed Vigil Mass in English, 4:00 p.m.

Happy New Year - Jan 1 Thursday

Latin Tridentine Mass 7:00 a.m.
Mass in English, 10:00 a.m.
Mass in Polish, 7:30 p.m.

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