



Polish Profiles

Guardian Angels

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

Christmas is coming and also all the New Year's hoopla celebrations. During the Christmas season I listen to many Carols and even sing some myself. Angels are constantly being mentioned in them. It is not the first time that I ask myself: "Who are those Angels? They surely are not Saints. Are they truly Guardian Angels." There were Angels when Jesus Christ was born and it was Arch Angel Gabriel who announced to Mary that she will bear a child. In other words there must be ordinary Angels and Arch Angels. Sometimes Angels are portrayed as men and sometimes as women or even young girls.

In Slavic Folklore, Angels have a special place on an almost daily basis. We regard them as friends who show us the way in darkness and also who protect us. Many of us from Poland will remember children bedroom walls adorned with pictures of Angels. The first prayer that I learned as a child was to Angels:

<i>Aniele Boży, Stróżu Mój,</i>	<i>Angel of God, my guardian,</i>
<i>Ty zawsze przy mnie stój.</i>	<i>Always be by my side.</i>
<i>Rano, wieczór, w dzień, w noc</i>	<i>Morning, evening, during the day and night,</i>
<i>Bądź mi zawsze ku pomocy.</i>	<i>Be there always to give me aid.</i>

Those of us who are from small towns or villages will never forget the sound of bells ringing out every day at noon. People in the streets or working in the fields stopped for a moment to make the sign of the cross, as the bells were announcing a moment devoted to *God's Angels (Anioł Pański)*.

I was so interested in the subject of Angels that I read a couple of books about them. It didn't clarify many of my questions, but it made up my mind. I learned, among others, that in the Old Testament, Angels appear many times. There were three male Angels who announced the birth of Isaac to Abraham. At another time Moses was told by an Angel how to get people out of Egypt. It seems to me that Angels were the carriers of good news from Heaven.

I also learned that the Catholic hierarchy had at some point different views on Angels. In the year 325 the Catholic Council, which took place in Nice announced that Angels are part of the Christian religion. A few hundred years later the Catholic Church condemned the overzealous cult of Angels. Again, a few hundred years passed and a Church Council in 785 reversed itself a little bit by announcing that the cult of Angels has become a Christian ritual and the roots are deep in the hearts of Christian people. At the fourth Church Council in 1215 it was declared the dogma about Angel's existence as "Spiritual Beings", that were formed by God at the beginning of the world.

Angels were also called "God's Angels" or "God's Entourage". In art and painting of the greatest of artists, Angels were portrayed as fat little Cherubs with sweet smiles and light colored hair.

Many reformers, Calvin among them, attacked the existence of Angels. Calvin even declared that Angels have no place in everyday human life; that they should assist God only on Judgment Day. He also said that people should not put so much faith in Angels, but rather place their life into God's hands. For Martin Luther, another reformer, Angels were heretics. In the protestant faith Angels play no part at all.

Less and less serious books were written about Angels and their role slowly diminished.

Later on Angels were used mainly as an element of ornaments and stylization.

But why do Angels have wings? In mythology we find were often Pagan Gods with wings. Once, long ago, wings also symbolized speed. It was being explained that the wings Angels have are to take them high up...to heaven...to God. I also read that in the Jerusalem Talmud it is mentioned that Jews returning from Babylon brought different

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Ready, Steady CHRISTMAS!

By: *Justyna Ball*

Thanksgiving ... check. Holiday Tree... check. Buy tons of unnecessary items to fill up the space under the tree...check. Line the family up against the Holiday Tree, get the camera...check. Dump the Holiday Tree out the window...check.

Get ready for Valentine's Day, St Patrick's Day...and repeat. As always, it's the retailers who dictate the timing of events.

I know some "believers" who while still simmering their turkey soup are already contemplating getting the tree ready. There is nothing neither religious nor spiritual about it. Practical maybe. But since when is Christmas about practicality?

Black Friday turned bloody when one of the employees of Wal-Mart was stampeded. Early Christmas shopping turned brutal.

1986 A.D. New in the strange world (or strangers in the new world?), we opened the door to The Big Unknown. And it let us in. Straight off of TWA (no, not off the boat, it's a new era of traveling!), we arrived with six suitcases of books, Lego and \$400 in cash. Amongst the luggage stood 3 "year old Karolina, now all sleepy and tired, after a long flight from Frankfurt followed by a shorter one from NYC. Wearing her light-colored sheepskin winter coat and Salamander boots, the best-looking immigrant child. Jacek, equally exhausted, was carrying ALL of our belongings. My excuse? The benefit of being a mother to be... a full eight months of "blessed state." (Dr. Schantz allowed me to fly and... changed the due date on my paper work so the "junge" could be born in the US, a nice gesture of my German doctor.)

As we drove from the airport... our first glimpses of the US were from the back window of the van. Highways in the US are extremely wide with the billboards matching their size, I thought. The bearded preacher played "This Land is your Land" all the way from Hartford! What year is it here, anyway??? Who are these strangely behaving people? No time to think, just follow your instincts. We'll survive as long as we are together.

At "home," the crowds (the welcoming squad) slowly disappeared but not before... a short interview for the local paper. Barbarians...

The House of Odds. The living room had five rocking chairs, odd. The bedroom had five windows with plastic on them,

odd and the bullet holes painted over. The kitchen had a huge "igloo" fridge and a sink the size of a small pool, odd. The bathroom sink was tiny with separate hot and cold-water faucets, rather odd. But as I learned later it's all about location, location, location...

I discarded several yogurts because of their terrible taste before realizing that the "fruit was on the bottom." My instincts were in "asleep" mode.

Amongst the donated items, I gathered a collection of flannel nightgowns, which I gave to the church for the needy. What I actually needed were ...earplugs.

The (Very) First Night: In the middle of it, the siren went off. Apparently, we lived walking distance from the fire station.

I believe it was the next day after that, right after dusk, when kids in costumes showed up asking for ... candy. What nerve! It's getting stranger with every day now! Nobody told us to shut off the light outside the house. Saltine crackers were all I had.

Waterbeds, electric blankets, drive through cemeteries, old ladies wearing pastels and white athletic shoes, old ladies asking to be called by first names. Christmas theme attire in Season, singing and dancing Santa dolls, Cadillac(s), Shepherd's pie and Campbell soups, peanut butter, Wonder bread. Sloppy Joe, marshmallow fluff, Dr Pepper, ice cream trucks (Marty will kill me if I go over 6 columns...).

December 16th. The last day of my pregnancy, I woke up in the still unfamiliar country and experienced water leakage comparable to the Hoover Dam (if cracked) with Raggedy Ann & Andy staring at me from the wall!

"The soon to be father's" reaction was rather slow, due to the fact that Jacek was missing some hours of sleep after a visit from Tomaszek, a Polish friend who happened to live in Worcester, Mass and had already discovered the local brewery. Then we did what was instructed by Betty (a woman committed to help us to adjust to the new surroundings). Jacek ran downstairs to tell our neighbor to call Betty (our phone was not hooked up) who called her neighbor, Mrs. White, who woke up her daughter who stayed with sleeping Karolina until the morning. The road to the hospital was rather bumpy (with Betty hitting a deer on the way back). Surprisingly the Honda Accord survived, but the deer wasn't so lucky.

I remember being in the hospital checking my ever present Oxford dictionary for two things: one was "jaundice" and the other... My new friend, Magda, whom I just met and who

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Calendar of Events

To Jan 4, A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People, Exhibition at Getty Gallery, Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049, Info at www.skirball.org

**To Jan 21, 2009, Santa Ana - All The World's a Stage, Modjeska' Arden at Old Courthouse Museum,, 211 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Info: at (714) 973 6605
www.ocparks.com/oldcourthouse**

31, Wed, New Year's Eve Dance, Pope John Paul II Polish Center, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda, CA, Info: (760) 863-5302.

31, Wed, Sylwester 2008 - New Year 2009witht the Gałazka trio from Phoenix. Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church hall in Los Angeles. Income will go towards the church renovation fund. Information and reservations Fitkowska (626) 282-5298, Perzyna (626) 625-2217, Czaplą (818) 772-0553.

Jan 3, 2009, Sat. - Polish Women's Alliance Luncheon. Info: Helen Simmons (818) 360-7707

4, Sun. - After the noon Mass - Traditional Oplatek Luncheon at the Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church Hall in Los Angeles. Adults - \$20.00 per person. Children \$5.00. Info and Reservations parish office (323)734-5249. Income goes towards the church renovation.

10, Sat. 4:00 p.m. Polonia Café with music. Clubhouse six at the Polish Club of Laguna Woods.. Information: Irena (949) 206-9122

10, Sat. 6:00 p.m. Yorba Linda - Kołędowanie (Caroling) by the Polanie dance group and Oplatek sponsored by the PAC's Orange Chapter and the PNA Piast Lodge.

11, Sun. - PAC monthly meeting in Yorba Linda. Info (626) 577-9797

Mar 25 - 27 Loveland, CO Tetry Ski Club's XI International Polish Alpine Ski and Snowboard competition.

May 3 - Yorba Linda, May 3, 1791 Constitution commemoration.

30 - Pasadena Elks Lodge - Poland Forever... Honoring Poland's Constitution of May 3, 1791. Sponsored by the Polish American Congress. For more info: (626)577-9797.

June 10, Sun. Proud to be Polish Festival - Pope John Paul II Center in Yorba Linda.

28 Sun. - PAC Annual Meeting with elections.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbykoopet@aol.com ★