



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

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The Infant of Prague

The devotion to the Infant of Prague evolved from the gift of an 18 inch statue of the child Jesus. The figure's left hand holds a globe with a cross on top, and its right hand is held out in blessing. It represents both Christ's kingship and childhood.

The origin of the original Infant of Prague statue is unknown. It is speculated that it came from a monastery in Spain and from there it was obtained by Dona Isabella Manrique who gave it as a wedding gift to her daughter Marie Manrique who married a noble of the Czech kingdom. Later, the Holy Infant statue was given to Marie's daughter, Polyxena, as a wedding gift in 1587. In 1628, after her husband's death, Lady Polyxena

presented the statue to the Carmelites at the Church of the Virgin Mary the Victorious, in Prague Mala Strana, saying, "I am giving you what I most esteem of my possessions. Keep the sculpture in reverence and you will be well off." This statue then became known as the Infant Jesus of Prague. It stands 47 cm high (includes a 2cm base) and has a long gown around the wax body.

Shortly after 1628, the Saxons and the Swedes took turns invading Prague, and the Carmelites had to flee and the veneration of the Holy Infant ceased. It was not until 1638 that a young priest named Fr. P. Cyril returned to Prague and found the Holy Infant statue buried in the ruins of the Lady of Victory church. Fr. Cyril cleaned the broken

statue and placed it in the oratory for worship. While he was praying before the Infant Jesus, he heard the Infant Jesus say, "Have pity on Me and I will have pity on you. Give Me My hands and I will give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you".

The repairing of the statue's hand is thought a miracle since Fr. Cyril and his peers did not have the financial resources nor the know-how to repair it.

Through prayer, Fr. Cyril asked the Blessed Virgin Mary on several occasions to provide the necessary funds for fixing the Infant statue. The Divine Infant spoke to him again, "Place Me near the entrance of the sacristy and you will receive aid". Fr. Cyril then did what he was told and in a few days time, the statue was fixed by a man who came to the sacristy to offer help.

Since the statue was fixed, a number of miracles occurred and word began to spread, resulting in a large increase in veneration to the Holy Child.

In 1641, an altar was built for the Infant Jesus in the church, and in 1644 a chapel was built, but was not completed until 1654. It is interesting to note that the crown over the Divine Infant's head came from Bernard Ignatius of the Lords of Martinic, who presented the Infant statue with a little gold crown set with precious stones and jewels on January 14, 1651, during a procession that carried the Infant Jesus statue from the Lady of Victory church to other Prague churches. The Infant Jesus was solemnly coroneted on April 4, 1655, by the Archbishop Josef Corta, acting for Cardinal Harrach III, who was sick.

After that period, Prague went through more wars and unrest but the church and the Infant Jesus chapel was miraculously protected. In 1776, the altar

was rebuilt using marble. Two sculptures of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph were placed to the left and right sides of the altar. The Holy Infant was kept in a glass case standing on a pedestal engraved with crystals, and surrounding the Infant were twenty angels in gold.

Since then, copies of the Infant Jesus have been made and distributed throughout European churches. The Spanish colonial efforts later brought the Infant Jesus to the Philippines and to central America. Subsequently the devotion has spread to all parts of the world.

Today, thousands of pilgrims pay homage to the Infant of Prague each year. The tradition of the Infant Jesus procession and the coronation continues to this day. On May 27, 1995, a solemn procession of the Infant Jesus took place in the streets of Prague with Cardinal Sin of Manila (Philippines) and Cardinal Vlk of Prague leading the procession. This ceremony was the closing highlight of the annual Feast of the Infant Jesus in Prague. In Ireland some brides will place a child of Prague statue outside their house the night before their wedding. This is meant to ensure that there will be good weather for the wedding day.





Saint of the Day: St. Scholastica (480-542?)

Tuesday, February 10, is the Feast of St Scholastica.

Twins often share the same interests and ideas with an equal intensity. Therefore, it is no surprise that Scholastica and her twin brother, Benedict, both established religious communities within a few miles from each other.

Born in 480 of wealthy parents, Scholastica and Benedict were brought up together until he left for Rome to continue his studies.

Little is known of Scholastica's early life. She founded a religious community for women near Monte Cassino at Plombariola, five miles from where her brother governed a monastery.

The twins visited each other once a year in a farmhouse because Scholastica was not permitted inside the monastery. They spent these times discussing spiritual matters.

According to the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, the brother and sister spent their last day together in prayer and conversation. Scholastica sensed

her death was close at hand and she begged Benedict to stay with her until the next day.

He refused her request because he did not want to spend a night outside the monastery, thus breaking his own Rule. Scholastica asked God to let her brother remain and a severe thunderstorm broke out, preventing Benedict and his monks from returning to the abbey.

Benedict cried out, "God forgive you, Sister. What have you done?" Scholastica replied, "I asked a favor of you and you refused. I asked it of God and he granted it."

Brother and sister parted the next morning after their long discussion. Three days later, Benedict was praying in his monastery and saw the soul of his sister rising heavenward in the form of a white dove. Benedict then announced the death of his sister to the monks and later buried her in the tomb he had prepared for himself.

Comment: Scholastica and Benedict

gave themselves totally to God and gave top priority to deepening their friendship with him through prayer. They sacrificed some of the opportunities they would have had to be together as brother and sister in order better to fulfill their vocation to the religious life. In coming closer to Christ, however, they found they were also closer to each other. In joining a religious community, they did not forget or forsake their family but rather found more brothers and sisters.

Quote: "All religious are under an obligation, in accordance with the particular vocation of each, to work zealously and diligently for the building up and growth of the whole mystical body of Christ and for the good of the particular churches. It is their duty to foster these objectives primarily by means of prayer, works of penance, and by the example of their own lives" (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, 33, Austin Flannery translation).

From www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay/

PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO FATHER CYRIL, TO THE INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE

JESUS, unto Thee I flee,
Through Thy mother praying Thee
in my need to succor me.

Truly, I believe of Thee
God Thou art with strength to shield me;
Full of trust, I hope of Thee
Thou Thy grace wilt give to me.

All my heart I give to Thee,
Therefore, do my sins repent me;
From them breaking, I beseech Thee,
Jesus, from their bonds to free me.

Firm my purpose is to mend me;
Never more will I offend Thee.

Wholly unto Thee I give me,
Patiently to suffer for Thee,
Thee to serve eternally.
And my neighbor like to me
I will love for love of Thee.

Little Jesus, I beseech Thee,
In my need to succor me,
That with Joseph and Mary
And the Angels, I may Thee
Once enjoy eternally. Amen.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.