

Wednesday, August 15th

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

*A Holy Day of Obligation – Masses at 12 noon (St. Joseph & St. Josaphat),
6PM (Sweetest Heart of Mary) & 7PM Latin Tridentine (St. Josaphat)*

August 15th is celebrated in the Catholic Church as the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is the day we commemorate Mary the Mother of Jesus being taken up to Heaven, body and soul, at the time of her death. Although only declared a dogma of the Church as recently as 1950 by Pope Pius XII, it is a tradition which can be traced back to the early Church.

This day in Poland is known as *Matki Boskiej Zielnej* or *Mother of God of the Herbs*, as it is the day flowers and herbs are brought to the church by the faithful for blessing by the priest. This feast is the most important day for gathering from gardens, fields and forests in Poland. The Polish people have been closely bound to the earth for over a thousand years, and the Pole's close communion with the earth; trees, flowers and herbs are reflected in his life.

Flowers and herbs are gathered from gardens, meadows and forests the afternoon before the feast by Polish housewives. They are taken to the church the next day for special blessing by the priest in honor of Our Lady. Favorite flowers of the Poles for this feast are the poppy (*mak*), and the peony (*piwonia*). Favorite herbs grown in the typical Polish garden and taken for blessing are sage (*szalwia*), thyme (*macierzanka*), dill (*koper*) and caraway (*kminek*). Polish tradition says that as the housewife enters the garden to make her selections to take to church: *Każdy kwiat woła – weź mnie do kościoła!* That is: *Every plant calls this day – take ME to the church.*

Herbs are very important in the Polish household. Before doctor's offices were common every Polish mother was also expected to be a sort of doctor herself. Homemade recipes were passed down for hundreds of years. Herbs were also a staple for Polish cooking and baking. Some herbs and dried flowers were also woven into small wreathes and used to decorate holy pictures in the old Polish homes.

Flowers are vital to a Polish home. They are well-loved and the pride of every Polish gardener. They are an important theme found represented in all Polish Folk Art and decorations. The Pole loves to surround him or herself with the beauty of God which brings joy to the Polish heart. The Church blesses this day these natural and God-made symbols of health and joy as She rejoices in Mary's victory over death through her glorious Assumption into Heaven, to sit at her divine Son's right hand. At her entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom, Mary is crowned this day by the Holy Trinity with virtues as if with so many flowers. The flowers and plants we bless today serve as a reminder to us of the beauty of Mary's virtues that we must imitate.

Don't forget to bring flowers and herbs from your own garden to Mass at 6:00 PM on Wednesday, August 15th for the special Assumption Day Blessing!

SAINT BERNARD'S PRAYER TO MARY ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN

Q Glorious Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, with loving hearts we accompany you this day to your Son, and we follow you from afar, O Happy Virgin! Give your gentleness to the world, give to us from the grace you have found with God. Through your blessed intercession, obtain grace for the weak-hearted and help for those in trouble! On this your glorious feast Day, give to us your children who invoke your sweetest name, O gentlest of Queens, the grace of Jesus Christ, your Son, Our Lord and God, to whom be glory forever. Amen.