

# The Pastor's Corner...

## *My Mother is in Heaven*

I was born in Konin on August 26, 1966, on the feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Poland. Since I turn 60 on this day, it is impossible for me to be on that very day in any other place than at the Czestochowa shrine where the Blessed Mother's image, also called the "Black Madonna," is venerated. I want to celebrate Mass there, kneel before Mary's icon, look at her face and the face of Jesus in her arms, and say thank you for 60 years and nine months of my life (including nine months in my mother's womb). I would also like to express my gratitude for supporting and protecting me for 35 years of my priesthood.

There is a custom in Poland and in some European countries to express respect for a woman by kissing her hand. After being ordained a priest, I have been making this gesture only when I met with my mother or aunts. So, if I could, I would like to express my gratitude to the Blessed Mother with a sincere kiss of her hand, as a son kissing his mother. I suspect that this kiss would be very long since kissing the hand of Mary would necessarily require me to bow down my head and ... in this way hide my tears.

On the feast of the "Black Madonna," the famous



Polish conductor Stefan Stuligrosz was also born. I learned this because as a child I attended his concert at my home parish. At that time, he mentioned that since he was born on August 26, he felt obliged from time to time to compose a piece dedicated to Mary. Since I lack even a fraction of his talent, I had to respond in my life to this *divine provocation* in a different way. So, what could I do? I decided to serve the Church as a priest.



Our Lady of Czestochowa is one of many images and statues of the Mother of God that are venerated across the globe. There is the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico; there are statues of the Blessed Mother of Lourdes and La Salette in France, Our Lady of Mariazell in Austria, and Our Lady of Knock in Ireland, to name a few. These places testify to Mary's care for her children, members of the Church created by her Son, Jesus Christ. These places also testify that people recognize Mary's special role in the history of salvation and her special power in interceding for us. Every single image or statue of the Blessed Mother, although created in different time periods and different in artistic expression, depicts the same loving Mother – our mother and Mother of the Church. I have even a theory why there are so many various representations of Mary in the world: her spiritual beauty is of such magnitude that it cannot be expressed in just one statue or painting.

Our Lady of Czestochowa, patron of my priesthood, pray for me and pray for all the faithful of St. Joseph Parish in Bradley, my new home.

Fr. Mark Jurzyk