

Pastor's Column

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“Oplatki”—Christmas Wafers

The word Bethlehem means “House of Bread.” The breaking of bread is a sign of charity, unity, and friendship.

Religious family traditions and customs bring the truths of Faith into the home.

One of these beautiful Christmas customs is the Christmas Wafer. A Wafer bearing a simple design commemorative of Christ's birth is given to everyone present gathered together for the Christmas meal.

With a simple prayer for God's grace and the welfare of the present and absent members of the family, the designated family member then invites everyone to go to another person, and with a gesture of a hug, kiss, or handshake, ask forgiveness for anything they may have done to hurt that family member in the past year, and to seek God's blessings upon them in the coming year.

Each person, as the words are said, then breaks a piece off of each other's Wafer and consumes the piece that has been broken off.

The spiritual lesson in this age old custom is unity of the family—the main pillar of society. The bond of unity is the Christ-like charity that should exist among the members of the family.

The members of the family are the links in the unbroken chain of One Body, One Bread, One Christ, and the One Church. The family is part of the eternal procession no matter where they are.

For there is a universal longing to be always with one another, with God.

All this brings to mind clearly our charity for one another, to seek salvation together. Family customs remind us that we seek and obtain salvation with the help of others at all times.

These Christmas Wafers, and the home ritual surrounding their use, originated in Poland. This custom and ritual is also popular in Slovakia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and other parts of Catholic Eastern Europe.

Christmas Wafers (Oplatki) are available after Mass at the information Table on the plaza this weekend and in the coming weeks before Christmas.

I encourage you to make this home ritual a part of your Christmas traditions.

We give thanks to Parishioners, Ed and Clarice Bednarz, who have provided us with these Christmas Wafers.

Please take advantage of this gift, and if you haven't already, start a new family Christmas tradition.

F. n. Mike