



RORATY

Throughout advent many people in Poland participate in an early morning Mass called Roraty. It begins just before sunrise in almost complete darkness in the church. The name roraty comes from the ancient Latin chant that is sung to begin the service: *Rorate Coeli, de super; et nubes pluant justum* – O Heavens, drop down your dew from on high and may the Just One be rained by the clouds. The words of the ancient hymn are a plea for God's gift of His Son. As the hymn is sung candles are gradually lit in the dark church. Roraty is a kind of daily Advent vigil ceremony. The people wait in darkness not only for the rising of the sun but ultimately for the return of the Son of God, so beautifully symbolized by dawn's first light.

The roraty service has a definite Marian dimension to it as does the entire season of Advent. In the sanctuary is found one special candle that is more predominate than the others used in the ceremony. It is traditionally decorated with greenery and white ribbon in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who plays an important role in the raining down of the Just One.

The Advent roraty ceremony originated in the 13th century during the reign of King Boleslaw Wstydlivy (the Bashful) who was the husband of St Kinga. According to historical documents, a representative of every social state lit one candle of a specially prepared seven-branch candelabrum in the cathedral at the early morning service, starting with the king. As each man lit his candle he proclaimed: *Paratus sum ad adventum Domini/Gotow jestem na przyjscie Pana* – I am ready for the coming of the Lord! After the king lit his candle he was followed by the cardinal primate, then a senator, a nobleman, a knight, a townsman and finally the seventh candle was lit by a peasant farmer.

Preparation for the Lord's coming, both interior and spiritual as well as exterior and temporal is an integral part of a truly Catholic observance of the holy season of Advent.