



HOLY SATURDAY

In every house, from the richest to the poorest, the table is spread with food that is blessed on Holy Saturday. All food is cold. There must always be a roasted pig's head, decked with flowers, ham, veal and the famous Polish sausage, strongly flavored with garlic. In the middle of the table is a lamb, holding a cross, which is made of sugar. The chief feature of the Easter table, however, are the eggs, which are all very colorful. The entire table is beautifully trimmed with garlands of greens.

On the Polish Easter table there is also a great number of cakes, made in special shapes that are only seen on this day: tall iced "baby" and "babki," flat and thin "kołacz," and "pierogi" with cheese and raisins, and the most delicious of all – "mazurki," flavored with orange, lemon or dried fruits. Bottles of red and white wine are opened, ready for the blessing by the parish priest.

As through the centuries in Poland, to this day, everywhere in Polish communities throughout the world on Saturday afternoon before Easter, baskets of these foods are brought to the parish churches to be blessed by the priest. All food which the Poles eat on Easter is blessed. The egg, the symbol of life, is broken and shared with an exchange of good wishes. There is no special menu, but food is plentiful.

When an Easter basket is used, it is customary to use the "family cloth" cover the food in it. The family cloth may be white, but often may also have embroidered regional motifs on it, along with a cross in the center and the words, "Christ is risen" (Chrystus zmartwychwstał!), written on it.

Holy Saturday evening is celebrated with Vigil Services of the Lord's Resurrection. Holy water and fire are blessed in the church courtyard and taken home on this day. The blessed flame from church is used to light the hearth and the "eternal votive lamp" found in God's corner, both of which are kept constantly burning until Holy Saturday of next year. Baptismal vows are also renewed. The solemn Resurrection Mass is said after the Vigil services. After the Gloria all the church organs and bells, which were silenced since Holy Thursday, begin sounding, and holy images are uncovered from their purple drapes. After Mass, there is a short procession.