



## HOLY FRIDAY

This is a day of strict Fast and mourning. Solemn devotions commemorating Christ's Passion and Death are held from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M. There is adoration of the precious and life-giving Cross. Crowds of faithful approach the Cross to kiss it with veneration and to prostrate themselves before it. The desire for penance and repentance inspires the willingness for lengthy prayers and readings. The bloody, crucified, thorn-crowned image of the Savior brings home to the faithful the persecution, degradation, and humiliation suffered by the Divine Lover or manking, Christ, to cleanse us of the filth of our sins and to bring us to our heavenly homeland.

Finally, the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, covered with a transparent white veil symbolic of Christ's burial shroud, is taken to the Lord's Holy Sepulcher and enshrined there. This is the beginning of the all-night vigil of adoration and meditation on the entombed Christ, which lasts until Holy Saturday evening. Three parts of the *Gorzkie Żale* are sung at this time.

Greek Catholics of eastern Poland mark this day by a solemn funeral procession around the exterior of the church with the Holy Shroud (*Płasczanicja* –Slav.) which has the image of the entombed Christ on it.

According to Polish folklore, on Holy Friday one should bury a small cross in the field in order to secure God's favor for an abundant harvest.

### HOLY SEPULCHERS

According to Polish custom, the faithful spend Good Friday visiting and praying before the lavishly decorated Holy Sepulchers in various churches. The Holy Sepulchers (*Groby Pańskie*) are decorated with great "heart." They usually convey a combination of religious themes, along with patriotic, social, historical, and contemporary ones. This is an expression of the strict bond between love of God and love of country.

A famous Polish ethnographer, Dr. Prof. C. Baudouin De Courtenay–Jedrzejewiczowa described this beautiful custom thus: "On Good Friday Holy Sepulchers are visited in the village at the parish church. In towns, it is customary to go to the Sepulchers, viewing them in different churches. In old Royal Poland, as well as later to the middle of the XIXth century, it was obligatory to wear dark clothes on Good Friday. Larger parish churches had patterned gardens of potted oats, watercress, and box in front of the Sepulcher. Sand was spread out between them. The Sepulcher was surrounded by lemon and orange trees and decorated with flowers and colorful vigil lights. During the previous 150 years of partition, guard duty at the Sepulcher was held by school children, students, boy scouts, and firemen. In independent Poland (1918–1939), all branches of the armed forces also participated," and considered it a great honor.