

Blessed John Paul II's home parish spotlights First Communion in unique way



Fish figures announce First Holy Communicants inside the Basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wadowice, Poland. (CR/George P. Matysek Jr.)

WADOWICE, Poland - Blessed John Paul II's home parish in Wadowice has an interesting way of spotlighting children receiving their First Holy Communion.



Names of first communicants are shown on fish figures inside the Basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wadowice, Poland. (CR/George P. Matysek Jr.)

Inside the Basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - the same church where the future pope received his own First Holy Communion - dozens of fish-shaped figures stand near the sanctuary. Each yellow or white marker bears the name of a child who is receiving the Blessed Sacrament for the first time. Ornate calligraphy spells out names such as "Michal," "Filip," "Norbert," Natalia" and "Marcelina."

All the fish "swim" alongside a boat whose sail is stamped with a red symbol for Christ. The boat's course is set firmly on the altar, the place where bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The display is rich in meaning, with the fish serving as an early symbol of Christianity, and the boat - the "Bark of St. Peter" - representing the Church that can sometimes be tossed on a sea of disbelief, yet remains fixed on Christ.

It's a pretty cool idea - and one that I suspect a lot of American parishes might like to imitate.