

# Did You Know...

✠ *News and trivia from our parish and the Catholic Church* ✠  
- - contributed by the Christ Child Church Women's Club - -

## **Christ Child Catholic Church**

*Dedicated to Growth in Christ and to the Challenges of Loving Service*

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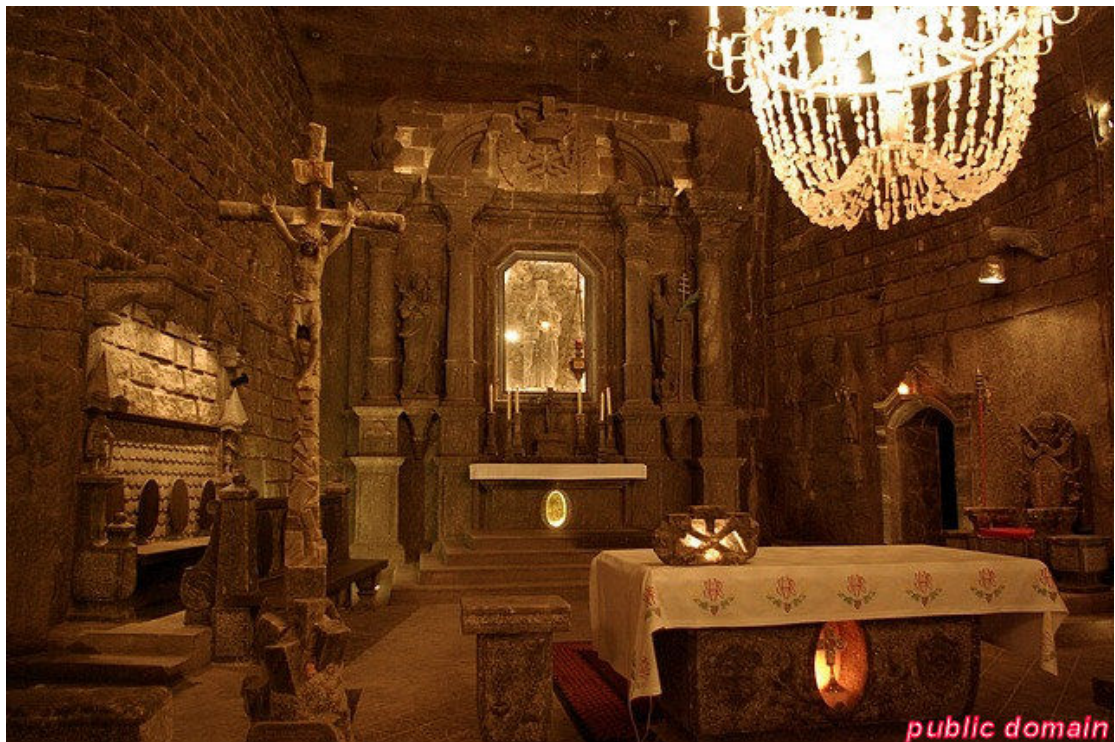
### **Would you like some Salt with that blessing?**

It all started with a world-wide need for salt. Until the invention of refrigeration, salt was sometimes worth more than coinage of equal weight. Salt was a spice, a food preservative, a cure and preservative for fish, meat and hides. It was at times used instead of money; wars were fought, and kingdoms built and lost, over salt.

Thus, when a large deposit of salt was found, it was guarded jealously and exploited carefully. For briny seas, evaporation ponds were used; for underground deposits, salt mines were created.

In Poland, one such mine was the Wieliczka salt mine near Krakow. It was opened in the 13th century, and would become one of Europe's major sources of the precious mineral.

Working in the mine was dangerous, rugged duty. The people of Poland were devout; religion was as important as life itself, and miners of the day wanted access to churches for services and prayers. But travel was a huge problem, and, in vast dark caverns of the mine, "local" chapels began to be built.





The chapels were carved from the mine walls, and were built entirely of -- salt. Carvings, statues, even furniture were all gracefully chiseled out of the simple NaCl-laden rock, sometimes hundreds of feet below the surface.



*wikimedia / Alessandro Caproni*

The wealth of the Wieliczka mine made Poland a major world presence, which was eventually undercut by German sea-salt (reputedly of better quality than rock salt). Later, the German army occupied the tunnels during WWII. Through it all, the mine still remained in continuous production until 2007 -- one of the longest-running mines in history.



*Johannes Phillipp, wikipedia*



The standard 2-mile tour (of over 100 miles of tunnels) goes past chapels, carvings, statues, and even an underground lake, all down about 400+ feet below the surface. Oh, but don't worry -- we're in the 21st century now, and there's an elevator. But if you want to tough it out a bit like the ancient miners, there are also sets of wooden steps that go down about halfway. Breathe, breathe.

**Still Curious? See these links ---**

- [History of salt](#)
- [Story of Wieliczka](#)
- [Wieliczka at wikipedia](#)

--- Karin and Greg Illes

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<http://christchild.org/did-you-know-articles>