

# 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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That first sip of coffee in the morning is sometimes the best part of our day. Coffee is so ubiquitous in our society that it's totally taken for granted -- but it wasn't always so. Coffee (as a drink) did not exist until almost 1,000 years after the time of Jesus.



One legend has it that Kaldi, a 9th-century Ethiopian goatherd, noticed that his goats stayed awake all night after eating certain berries. A local abbot tried brewing the berries into a drink, and it helped him stay alert through evening prayers.

There are other stories of coffee's origins, equally entertaining (and unverifiable). Suffice it to say that by the 1500's, coffee usage was spreading throughout the civilized world.

And not always without debate. By 1615, the dark beverage had become quite controversial, with many fearing its stimulant properties. It was commonly condemned as Satan's drink, despite (or because of?) its widespread popularity. Adding to the negativity about coffee was the Muslim world's preference for it; how could a Christian Europe embrace a drink so loved by its arch-enemies? So divisive was the ideological battle that Pope

Clement VIII received a request to intervene in the argument, and ban the trade and consumption of coffee.



But the Pope decided he needed to do a subjective test before making a decision. When he tried a cup for himself, he was surprised and delighted -- so much so that he elected to bless the bean and formally accept it. It is thought that he may have done so, not only for the merits of coffee itself, but also because it was clearly a better choice than the alternative (alcoholic) beverages of the day. Regardless of his motivations, the Pope is quoted as saying:

***"This Satan's drink is so delicious that it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it."***

There are differing quotes, but the idea is identical. The Pope loved it. And, as they say, the rest is history. Coffee houses sprang up all over Europe, and became a center of social interaction,

*[Author's comment: I recall my own first sip of coffee 'way back when -- I hated it. I wonder how differently world events would have played out if the Pope had reacted similarly?]*

So be thankful each morning as you take that first sip -- thankful for the tasty brew, thankful for the Pope's approval, and most of all, thankful for the day ahead and all its blessings.

*--- Karin and Greg Illes*