

Hello Again,

It's been over a year since we've had a newsletter published and we apologize to all our members and friends for the delay. We've been having difficulty in finding someone who is knowledgeable and willing to undertake the task of publishing our newsletter. Joe and Sarah Evanko did the newsletter for seven years and felt they could no longer continue to devote the time necessary to publish a newsletter. We all owe them a debt of gratitude. We took them and the fine job they did for granted. They are young folks and have a family to think about and their time is limited. We are grateful for the time they've given to the group—*Dziękuję—Bóg Zapłacić*.

We don't know what the future will bring. We are still looking for someone to do our newsletter. To our members who don't attend meetings (because they live out of town or for whatever reason) and don't realize what's happening, memberships will be extended a full year. We feel that members should at least get their quarterly newsletters for their membership dues. For those who have continued to pay their membership dues without having received their newsletters, we thank them for their generosity and their patience. In the meantime, we will serialize the *History Of St. John Cantius Parish* which appeared in the one hundredth anniversary book about the parish in 1998.

Condolences from the group to member **Judy Freels** of Ketchikan, Alaska whose husband passed away recently.

Get Well Wishes to member **Gene Slusarski** who's been having some health problems recently. It's good to see **Joe Evanko** back at the meetings. He recently underwent angioplasty surgery and says he feels fine. **Dorothy Hudson** has attended our last two meetings and we all hope that she is well on the road to recovery. **Francis Bostocky** had carotid artery surgery recently and all went well. To these and to all our friends and members who have been feeling poorly, we wish them a speedy recovery to good health.

Welcome Back to **Ben Kman** who has been studying in Europe. He did some travelling while over there and had a chance to do some genealogical research.

Thank You to **Sonia Chapnick, Clemmie Zakarowsky, Francis Bostocky, John and Sophia Talkowski** and to all who have donated "stuff" to make our group more knowledgeable and enjoyable. A special thank you to **Lawrence Bender** for having a video tape reformatted so that we might be able to view it. And a reminder to all our friends and members, we are happy to accept anything of genealogical significance which you might no longer want. Please send it to us and we will reimburse you for the postage.

And finally—member **Lawrence Bender** is planning a family reunion for sometime in August this year. He's shaking the whole family tree and there will be people coming in from all parts of the country. The pierogis, kielbasa, gołumbki are ordered; the orchestra has been booked as has the place. After the party, Larry intends to publish a book about the family. A worthwhile project we might all consider. Good Luck!

History of St. John Cantius Parish

PROLOGUE

Sto Lat. In Polish, the phrase literally means one hundred years. But there is so much more meaning to this expression. There is a song in Polish by the same name which is sung at birthday parties, anniversary celebrations, galas and other festive occasions. It is sung with the intention of wishing the guest(s) of honor God's blessings, health, good fortune and long life. It is meant to convey the love that is felt for the individual, couple or group. We wish them to live one hundred years.

In this year of our Lord 1998, the St. John Kanty (Cantius) Community celebrates its one hundredth anniversary. How many times in the past have our ancestors sang *Sto Lat* at parish anniversary celebrations, wishing only that the parish continue what they had begun? And indeed, it has come to pass, a century of being.

The century from 1898 to 1998 has been like no other one in history. The changes that have taken place during this period of time are mind-boggling. In any field of human endeavor that one would care to mention, the changes have been awesome. Just to exercise the imagination a bit, let us for a moment consider what the world was like in 1898.

We take everything that we have for granted. Can we even imagine anymore a world without the computer, television, VCR, telephone, refrigerator, freezer, air-conditioner, automobile and a thousand other marvels that we have grown accustomed to? Few people had electricity in 1898, and certainly not in the Tremont neighborhood. Most home chores were done laboriously by hand.

In the medical field for example, there were no antibiotics, tranquilizers, antidepressants that doctors could prescribe. One didn't worry about cholesterol but one did worry about putting enough food on the table for the family. There was no talk about open-heart surgery, or bypasses, or transplants, or any of the modern day surgical procedures. Babies were born at home with the aid of a midwife and the infant needed to be strong in order

to survive. In virtually any field that we can think of, the changes have been enormous.

In the world at large, the Czar ruled in Russia, the Kaiser held sway in Germany, Franz-Joseph was the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the sun never set on the British Empire. Poland was not even on the map of Europe. What was once the largest country in Central Europe, now was occupied by her three neighbors, the last partition having taken place in 1795.

In the United States, McKinley was president and the country was engaged in war with Spain over Cuban independence. Teddy Roosevelt led his Rough Riders up San Juan Hill. The war ended with the signing of the peace treaty in Paris on Dec. 10, 1898, with Spain relinquishing Cuba and ceding to the US the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

In Cleveland, industrial growth and expansion were proceeding at a phenomenal rate, mostly along the Cuyahoga River in the area known as the Flats. John D. Rockefeller had located his Standard Oil Co. down in the Flats and proceeded to dominate the oil industry. Grasselli had built his first chemical plant next to the Standard Oil refinery and his chemical business grew in direct proportion to the oil business. But above all else, the steel mills dominated the Flats area. Due to Cleveland's location, it was a natural site for the mills. The iron ore from the Mesabi Range in the Upper Great Lakes Region was shipped down to meet the coal coming up from the coal fields of Southern Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. All of these industries were labor intensive and the immigrants flocked to this area seeking jobs.

In the Tremont area, the influx of immigrants was causing serious problems. There was a shortage of available housing and there was concern about health and sanitary conditions. Single family houses were home to several families and boarders were taken in to supplement the family income. If one looks at the Federal Census of 1910, practically every house

on the South Side had boarders living with them. The immigrants arriving were of all nationalities and invariably poor. They needed to live near their jobs so that they could walk to work. And Tremont was the favored location, even if it was overcrowded.

In 1898 the Diocese of Cleveland extended over the entire northern half of the State of Ohio. The Diocese had been created in 1847 from what was then the Diocese of Cincinnati. It was not until 1910 that the Diocese of Toledo was established. And it was not until 1943 that the Diocese of Youngstown was created. Both Dioceses were created from the original Cleveland Diocese. In 1898 the third bishop of Cleveland, the Rt. Rev. Ignatius Frederick Horstmann was the spiritual leader of the Cleveland Diocese. One can imagine what it must have been like to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in all his parishes under the primitive means of transportation available at the time. It certainly was no easy task and all of the religious leaders, be they bishops or priests, had to be strong, healthy and dedicated in order to endure the hardships of their chosen vocation.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century with the flood of immigrants arriving in Cleveland, many new churches were being established. Each group wished to have their own church where they could worship in their own native language and be among their own. The Poles were no exception. St. Stanislaus was founded in 1873, Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1888, St. Casimir in 1891 and Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1894. All of these parishes however, were on the east side of the Cuyahoga River. There were Catholic churches in the Tremont area, such as St. Augustine which was founded in 1860 and located on the corner of Tremont and Jefferson Streets. St. Michael's Church, located on the corner of Clark and Scranton Avenues and established in 1883 was also available for worship. At these churches the masses were said in Latin, of course, but the homilies were in languages other than Polish. The Poles of the Tremont area longed for their own church in their own neighborhood. In 1898 there were a sufficient number of immigrant Poles on the west side of the river, situated in the Tremont area, to petition the bishop to build their own church and the

petition was granted.

The territorial limits of the "Polish Parish of St. John Cantius" as set forth by Bishop Horstmann in a memo dated, July 16, 1898 is as follows:

"All that part of the City of Cleveland lying east of the Cuyahoga River and between the following named avenues and streets:--Beginning at the north end of Willson Avenue (E. 55th St.) thence south on said Willson Avenue to Woodland Avenue; thence to Forest Street (E. 37th St.) thence to Broadway; thence to the end of Dille Street; also all that part of Cleveland lying west of the Cuyahoga River. The middle of each of the above named avenues and streets is the dividing line between said parish and the parishes of St. Stanislaus and St. Casimir, Cleveland."

Quite some territory. Part of the near East Side was included and this did not sit too well with the pastor of St. Stanislaus, Father Rosinski. The beautiful, brick Gothic church of St. Stanislaus had been finished and dedicated in 1891 and the parish was

Rev. H. Orlowski's Pastorate 1898-1908



*The first pastor of St. John Cantius (Cantius) Parish,
Rev. Hipolit Orlowski*

carrying a heavy debt burden. Father Rosinski complained in a letter to Bishop Horstmann dated July 14, 1898 that the territorial boundaries would result in a loss of 200 families to his parish. This loss would impact his parish income. But he goes on to say, "I shall not fight about the boundary proposed by Father Orlowski and if he persists in the line given by him, I am satisfied". Father Rosinski's complaint didn't come to anything as far as St. John Cantius was concerned since two, new, Polish parishes were created on the near East Side, St. Hyacinth in 1906 and St. Josaphat in 1908. So that made the Cuyahoga River the easterly boundary of the parish.

The southerly and westerly boundaries were settled also for all practical purposes. Originally, the good bishop declared the boundary to be "all that part of Cleveland lying west of the Cuyahoga River." But the large number of Polish, Catholic families in this area could not possibly be handled by a single parish. And so, in 1905 two, new, Polish parishes were established, St. Barbara and St. Hedwig.

The choice of Rev. Hippolit Orlowski to be the first pastor of St. John Cantius seems like something of a surprise. He had been born in Gosocin (Plock) in what was then Russian Poland in 1853. After completing his seminary studies in 1876, he spent the next seventeen years assigned to the Diocese of Plock. For whatever reason, in 1893 he immigrated to the USA and was assigned, of all places, to the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas. One usually thinks that the more likely places for a Polish priest to immigrate would be one of the larger cities in the Northeast or the Midwest. This was not the case however with Father Orlowski. He spent nearly five years in Little Rock before he came to Cleveland on April 13, 1898 and was designated pastor pro tem on April 28, 1898 of St. John Cantius Parish. He was forty five years old at that time.

The bishop's charge to Father Orlowski was to build a church-school for the Poles "in a place close to where they live near the Central Viaduct". And the place that was designated was the "broad corner of Professor and College". Father Orlowski is grateful to the bishop for allowing him to build a church for these immigrant Poles and promises that the Poles

will "work hard and give what they save" for the support of the church.

According to *A Guide to Cleveland's Sacred Landmarks* on page 234, the broad corner of Professor and College in 1898 was occupied by a car barn. In the Archives of the Diocese of Cleveland, the parish report for St. John Cantius for the year 1899 contains this passage,

"At the end of January was bought a lot and old buildings, corner of Professor and College Avenues, for \$4000. The old buildings remodeled and on Palm Sunday I blessed the place and tower bell and the same day I held first services. On 22nd October Right Rev. Bishop dedicated the church".

This entry was signed by Father Orlowski. So the remodeled car barn became the first church. Father Orlowski's quarters and a school were located at the rear of the remodeled structure. In the same report, the question is asked whether any taxes had been paid. The answer is no but they had to pay for "street paving and water".

In 1898, the first year of Father Orlowski's pastorate; there were thirty children baptized, six marriages performed and seventeen deaths. In 1908, the last year Father's pastorate; there were one hundred sixty five baptisms, thirty eight marriages, and sixty four deaths. Starting from scratch without a school, by 1908 there were two hundred seventy nine students and four teachers. Confirmations also give a good indication of the growth of the parish; in 1899 thirty eight, in 1903 two hundred forty five and in 1907 three hundred seventy nine. How can one even imagine what it must have been like. Each person confirmed had to have a sponsor and along with family and friends, the converted car barn had to be packed to capacity. Forty Hours Devotion was held for the first time in the fledgling parish on the 18th, 19th and 20th of September, 1900. By 1902, four church societies had been organized (though not yet approved by the bishop) and an adjoining lot with two houses along Professor Ave. had been bought. In 1903, a reed organ was purchased for seventy nine dollars. In 1904, another adjoining lot with a house on it was purchased. The house was enlarged and remodeled for the pastor's residence

and the church was enlarged by adding the former pastor's residence into the church.

By 1908, the church had grown at an amazing rate. Some indication of this is given by the number of church societies and the number of their members: St. John Cantius Society-76 members, St. Joseph Society-95 members, St. Adalbert-94 members, Holy Rosary Society-54 members, Young Ladies Society-52 members and the Children of Mary Society-24 members. Father Orłowski was fifty five years old by this time and although his work had been productive, it was strenuous. Perhaps with this thought in mind, he was reassigned to an established parish, St. Adalbert in Berea and the pastor there, Father Doppke, became the second pastor of St. John Cantius Parish. Father Orłowski served St. Adalbert for three years until August 19, 1911. On that day he had said Mass and heard confessions. Later in the day he died. The cause of death was apoplexy (stroke). He is buried at St. Adalbert's Cemetery on Bagley Rd.. There is a nice monument over his grave. The biographical sketch about Father Orłowski given out by the Diocese ends with two words, "Good priest".

For most of Father Orłowski's pastorate, Cleveland had as its mayor Tom Johnson (1901-1908). Lincoln Steffens, the great advocate for reform during this period, called him, "the best mayor of the best governed city in America". Although Johnson was a very wealthy man, he was concerned for the welfare of the "common man". During this period, from 1898-1908, other events were taking place which would effect the city and the Polish community. Two brothers by the name of Van Sweringen were busy establishing themselves in the local real estate market. They would later go on to build the Terminal Tower Complex. In 1901, a self-proclaimed anarchist by the name of Leon Czolgosz assassinated President McKinley in Buffalo. Leon had been born in Detroit of Polish immigrant parents. The family moved to Cleveland in 1891. The assassination sent a shiver through the city. The immigrant Poles were ashamed and embarrassed by what Czolgosz had done. Congress was pondering the wisdom of allowing all these immigrants into the country. Perhaps there were more anarchists coming into the country and they would cause civil strife

and disorder. This would lead to the *Anarchist Act of 1918* forbidding anarchists from entering the country. And so, if an immigrant wanted to become a naturalized citizen, they had to declare on their *Declaration of Intention* that they were not anarchists. Leon was electrocuted for his crime at the State Prison at Auburn, NY and buried in an unmarked grave on the prison grounds.

There were other occasions however when the Poles of Cleveland, and indeed, the whole world could take great pride. In 1903, a Polish woman, Marie Skłodowska and her French husband, Pierre Curie were awarded the Nobel Prize for their work with radioactive elements. Marie was the first woman ever to be so honored. She would go on to win another Nobel Prize, this time in Chemistry in 1911. It remains to this day a truly remarkable feat in the realm of scientific research. In 1905, the great Polish novelist, Henryk Sienkiewicz, won a Nobel Prize for Literature for his body of work. His best known work is probably *Quo Vadis*. And so, there were occasions when Poles the world over took pride in the accomplishments of their fellow countryman.

There was a changing of the guard in 1908, not only

Rev. F. Doppke's Pastorate 1908-1917



*The second pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish,
Rev. Francis F. Doppke*

for St. John Cantius but also for the diocese. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Horstmann had died on May 13, 1908 and the fourth Bishop of Cleveland, the Rt. Rev. John P. Farrelly would assume his office in 1909.

At St. John Cantius, the second pastor was a forty one year old priest who had been born in Gnewan, Germany. He immigrated to the USA and studied for the priesthood at the Polish Seminary in Detroit, Michigan, the forerunner of today's Orchard Lake Seminary. He was ordained April 4, 1897. After a number of assignments, he was named Pastor of St. John Cantius on the 1st of September 1908.

There was much going on in the Polish-American Community in Cleveland in 1908. Across the river at St. Hyacinth's, a new school and chapel were dedicated by the Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, the Rt. Rev. Paul Rhode, the first Polish bishop in America. The dedication attracted the entire Polish Community and an estimated crowd of six thousand took part in the dedication. Times were difficult and by the end of the year, the Annual Parish Report for St. Hyacinth's states "we felt the financial panic and industrial inertia most severely. One half of the congregation left, some going back to Europe but most searching all over the US in quest of work". At St. Stanislaus, six hundred and forty five children were baptized and over sixteen hundred children were attending school. Overall, the Polish Community in Cleveland continued to grow, even when times were difficult.

Father Doppke had much to do at his new post. The converted car barn that had served as the church was no longer able to function as such, due to the continual growth of the parish community. On March 23, 1909, Father writes to the Diocesan Consultor seeking permission to borrow seventy five thousand dollars for erection of a new church-school, erection of a pastoral parsonage and enlarging and remodeling the Sisters house. He claims that the present "school and church, which are only old barns, are altogether inconvenient and unfit for further use". At the time, the parish numbered four hundred families and was still growing. Father goes on to say, "(the parish) is composed of poor, hard-working people, but well disposed towards supporting the church, but as the times are hard, they cannot do much, but

will contribute towards the new school and church, according to their means". There were three hundred students attending the school and Father claims that there should be four hundred but some had to be turned away due to inadequate facilities. Evidently asking for permission to build was something of a formality since building was already taking place. The Diocesan Consultor states, "Rev. F. F. Doppke states that the permission to build was given to him and that the building is being erected, I vote therefore in favor of this loan". So, the cornerstone was laid on May 16, 1909 and building continued until 1913 when the school opened its doors to its students. Services were held however in the building while it was under construction, the first services on December 12, 1909 and a new bell was blessed at Vesper Service on December 19th.

Another momentous event took place in 1909. The Polish Sisters of St. Joseph of The Third Order of St. Francis began teaching at St. John Cantius. Their Mother House was located at Steven's Point, Wisconsin. Five Sisters began teaching in the school which had an enrollment of four hundred and fifty eight students. They have continued their association with the parish over the years. Words cannot express the dedication and commitment of these "Brides of Christ". Their life was a difficult one, full of sacrifice and toil. Their purpose was to serve Christ, His church, and Polonia. And this they did admirably. The love and devotion of these Sisters is embedded in the hearts and minds of the students they taught and the most one can say in appreciation is *Thank You and God Bless*.

By 1910 the parish had grown to five hundred families. Father Doppke desperately needed an assistant and he writes to the bishop asking that a certain Andrew Radecki be ordained and assigned to the parish. And so it came about that the Rev. Andrew Radecki became the first assistant at St. John Cantius on June 9, 1910. Father Radecki would later become pastor at St. Casimir's and serve that parish in that capacity for forty three years before retiring in 1967.

As the year went on, Father Doppke was not at all satisfied with the way the construction of the church-school building was going. The architect,

William C. Jansen, was also unhappy and complained to the builder, Phillip Kirschner & Co., to get on with the job and finish the building per specifications. The builder in turn, writes to the bishop seeking money he claims have been withheld by the architect and Father Doppke. Amid complaints and counter-complaints, somehow work on the building continued.

By 1916, Father Doppke is again without an assistant and writing to the bishop asking that a certain Mr. F. Duda be promptly ordained and assigned to St. John Cantius. Rev. Francis Duda was ordained on December 24, 1916 and took up his post on January 1, 1917. This was his first assignment as a priest and he would return, later in his life, as pastor to this same parish. Father Doppke needed help desperately for his health was deteriorating. His efforts in ministering to his growing congregation, overseeing the construction of the church-school building, serving on the diocesan Board of Charities since 1911, all these duties were beginning to take their toll on his health. In the spring of 1917, Father Doppke went to New Mexico for a vacation and it was there that he died on March 18th. He was fifty years old.

The life expectancy of priests in those days could not have been very long. One could imagine what it must have been like to try to minister to a congregation of four hundred families by oneself. There undoubtedly were calls during the middle of the night to come to the bedside of a dying parishioner to administer the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Two Masses were said daily, at seven and at eight o'clock. On Sunday there were two Masses, at eight and nine-thirty and Vespers at three o'clock. Baptisms needed to be performed as well as marriages and funerals. Confessions had to be heard and a host of other things had to be attended to. Advice was asked for and given, for who else could the poor immigrant come to if not to his parish priest. His schedule had to be absolutely brutal and so, it is no wonder that in time, the priest's health would suffer, as was the case with Father Doppke. He gave his all for his church.

Father Doppke's accomplishments were many. Before coming to St. John Cantius he had built a

school at St. Hedwig's in Toledo. When he arrived at St. John Cantius, the congregation was worshipping in a converted car barn. There were two hundred seventy nine students attending classes in the rear of the church. When he died in 1917, the parish had a new church-school building, and the school had an enrollment of over eleven hundred students. Eleven teaching Sisters were living in the newly built convent on Professor Ave. and a new pastoral residence had been built on College Ave. The parish community had practically doubled with seven hundred families registered in 1917, and the parish was still growing.

The one dominant happening in worldly events during Father Doppke's pastorate was The Great War raging in Europe. One wouldn't think that a war being fought an ocean away on another continent would have much of an effect on a neighborhood community such as Tremont. This was not the case however. After a couple of years of war and the bloody slaughter taking place, all the powers of Europe were seeking manpower to fill their depleted ranks. They all were promising the Poles some form of self-rule. The Allies sent out a call to all the immigrant Poles to join a newly founded Polish military organization that was being formed in France under the command of General Haller. Ever after, the group would be called Haller's Army or The Blue Army, that name being given to them because of their blue uniforms supplied by the French.

Many from the Polish immigrant group in Tremont joined Haller's Army. It certainly was not an easy decision for them to make. They had left the Old Country seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Indeed, some had left Europe to avoid military service. Now they were being asked to return to Europe and fight along side the Allies. The volunteers believed their efforts would be rewarded with a free and independent Poland after the war. The restoration of such a Poland seems to have been a vital part of their very being. They put their lives "on hold" and signed up to fight "For Your Freedom and Ours". According to an article in the *Polish Genealogical Newsletter* (Spring, 1987; Vol. X; No. 1), by October, 1918, thirteen thousand three hundred and eight volunteers had arrived in

Rev. J. Kocinski's Pastorate 1917-1932



*The third pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish,
Rev. Joseph P. Kocinski*

France to join the original complement of the army. These were volunteers from all parts of the USA, and some of that number were from the Tremont area of Cleveland.

The third pastor of St. John Cantius Parish was the Rev. Joseph P. Kocinski. When he assumed the post of pastor, he was thirty eight years old. He had been born in Radziejewo (Warsaw) in 1879. He immigrated to the USA and received his education at St. Ignatius College and St. Mary Seminary here in Cleveland. He was ordained at St. John Cathedral on June 9, 1906. After a number of assignments, he was posted to St. John Cantius as pastor on April 26, 1917. His was to be a long and stormy pastorate.

Right from the very outset, the newly-named pastor and a certain faction of his congregation were at odds. Father Doppke had died on March 18, 1917 and in a letter to the bishop, dated March 24th, requesting the appointment of a new pastor, the following passage appears:

“appoint as pastor for our parish any of the Polish priests with the exception of --Rev. Kocinski---

The appointment of any of the above three to succeed our late pastor, Rev. Doppke, will be injurious to our parish as the above priests in the opinion of the parish would not be able to cope with the independent church now existing within the limits of our parish”.

The letter was signed by officers of several of the church groups. The letter did not effect the bishop's decision however, and Rev. Kocinski was named as pastor.

The “independent church” mentioned in the letter referred to the Polish National Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart which had recently been established and was located on W. 14th St. It was the only Polish National Catholic Church in Cleveland at the time and some in the Cantius congregation felt the presence of this church in their neighborhood would cause many families in the parish to defect to the newly established church. Indeed, some families did join the new church and there was a certain bitterness that developed between the two groups.

The parish accepted the decision of the bishop but there would always remain an undercurrent of uneasiness, like an armed truce, between the pastor and certain elements of his congregation. By 1918 however, there were other matters of greater import taking place. There was an outbreak of Spanish Influenza and it seemed to reach its height in the summer and fall of that year. Two hundred thousand cases of the flu were reported in Ohio alone by October 25th. Nationally, twenty million people were effected by the flu, four hundred thousand died as a result. In Cleveland on October 17th, all churches, schools, public places of assembly and theaters, were closed by the Commissioner of Public Health. During the year there were one hundred and forty two deaths in the parish, eighty of these being children. How many were due to the flu is not known but in the Annual Parish Report there is the mention that the flu had taken many “worthy parishioners”. The year 1918 did however have its joyous moments as on November 11th, the day the war in Europe ended.

As Father Kocinski took over the control of the growing parish, he felt that his first priority was the

building of a new church. Under his direction the church of St. Josephat's had been built on the East Side so he was familiar with what had to be done. This church however, had to be bigger and built on a grander scale. The converted car barn that had been the first church had been torn down and the site was ready for the building of a new church. A building fund was established and money was set aside for this purpose. By 1924, it was determined that there was enough money to begin building and having received the approval of the diocese, building commenced and the cornerstone was laid on July 6, 1924 with the Bishop of Cleveland, the Rt. Rev. Joseph Schrembs, blessing the cornerstone. Several thousand people were in attendance and "His Lordship addressed the gathering in Polish". The new church was to be of Romanesque architecture and able to accommodate twelve hundred people.

Indeed, it was imperative that a new church be built. The parish now numbered over nine hundred families, and there were fourteen hundred children attending school. There were fourteen classrooms for eight grades, and fifteen Sisters doing all the teaching. The Confirmation Class of 1920 numbered five hundred and forty two. There seemed to be no end to the growth of the parish.

With the dawning of the New Year (1925), the disaffected elements of the parish became more strident and critical of Father Kocinski. On February 2nd, a letter was written to the bishop asking that Father Kocinski be removed as pastor. The reasons given for requesting his removal were, "extortions for weddings, funerals", losing families to the Polish National Catholic Church within the boundaries of the parish, the youth is spoiled and making remarks with "sneering allusions to seminaries and priests". And the bishop had better remove the pastor quickly, "before some of the violent natures of the parish commit violence and bring shame not only on our nationality but also be a reflection on Our Holy Mother, The Church".

Another letter was written on March 4th, this one from "Members of the Parish of St. John Cantius". It seeks the removal of Father Kocinski on the grounds that:

"(he) takes only care of his own pockets. He is building a church without our knowledge and consent at the cost of half a million dollars. We do not want him and if Your Excellency does not recall him, we shall stop our payments and our contributions toward the church and shall cease to attend church services, but will pray in our own homes and God will hear us".

The criticisms leveled at the good pastor were unfair and not quite accurate. He did not act alone when contracting for the building of the new church but in unison with distinguished members of the parish who had signed the contracts along with him. He also did not have any control over the families who wished to join Sacred Heart Polish National Catholic Church. If they wished to join that church, it was their prerogative. The youth of the parish was more the responsibility of the parents rather than the pastor. It is hard to determine why such strong criticisms were leveled at Father Kocinski. Certainly, in good conscience, people can disagree with one another but this seemed to go beyond the bounds of reason and fair play.

Father Kocinski had to defend himself against these charges and he writes to the bishop on March 26th:

"I find not a word of truth but continuous lie. Outside of a few foolish women, and some socialists who were stirred up by my former assistant, there is no dissatisfaction in my parish. With regard to the affidavits that were made against me---that the affidavits were signed by physical force and threats of bodily injury and even death on the part of the complainers".

No one can say that the Poles did not take their religion seriously. Sounds as though the "complainers" had hired a gang of thugs to do their persuading for them. Father Kocinski goes on:

"another notorious lie is, with regard to the cost of building St. John Cantius Church---that it will cost half a million dollars---contract with the Hebing Co. for the erection and completion of a brick and stone church building is two hundred and forty five thousand dollars".

The complainers wrote to the bishop that Sunday collections had dropped. Father Kocinski submits his own figures and counters:

“these figures show how maliciously and abominably false are these complaints against me. Finally, the last complaint is made that my sermons are not to the standard---I could not have converted three hundred families, who use to belong to the Independent Church. These are my answers to the base charges of disgruntled radicals who are angry because they cannot run the parish and the priest according to their socialistic ideas”.

By this time, the battle lines had been drawn. The faction seeking to remove the pastor felt their grievances would not be addressed by the bishop. Indeed, the bishop had investigated their grievances and had sided with the pastor. This in no way deterred the faction however. If they could get no satisfaction from their bishop, they would go to a higher authority. And this they did. They wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington and informed him of their complaints. In turn, the Apostolic Delegate's Office writes to the bishop asking what is going on at St. John Cantius Parish in Cleveland. And the good bishop has to write to present his own views on what is happening. He is not at all happy with this unruly Polish congregation on Cleveland's South Side. In the meantime, sworn, notarized statements from some of Father Kocinski's supporters were being collected to present to the bishop. The bishop sides with the pastor and an unspoken truce is in place for the next seven years. The bad feelings would erupt again in 1932, causing much embarrassment to the parish and the Polish community in Tremont.

Meanwhile, the church building was nearing completion. On September 26, 1926, four new bells were blessed for the new church. Dedication ceremonies were set for November 14th. Special invitations were printed and sent out;

The Honor of your presence is requested at the Dedication of St. John Cantius Church, Cleveland, Ohio, Sunday the Fourteenth day of November 1926 at Ten o'clock A. M.

The Rt. Rev. Joseph Schrembs, D.D.
Bishop of Cleveland will officiate.

Joseph P. Kocinski, Pastor.

An article in the *Cleveland Press* on November 13th described the new church to its readers. It states,

“The building design is Romanesque and the exterior material cream brick and Indiana limestone. Potter and Gabelle and the Hebing Co., both of Cleveland, were architects and builders.

Seven columns of single-piece Indiana limestone rise from the floor to the curved ceiling on each side of the interior. Seating capacity is 1,000. The pews and confessionals are oak. Three altars are wood, painted in imitation of marble. At the top of the main altar is an oil painting of St. John Cantius.

Many of the furnishings of the church are gifts from individuals or societies. These include the tabernacle, candelabra, sanctuary lamp, windows and stations of the cross.

Above the entrance are large mosaic windows representing St. Stanislaus Kostki, St. John Cantius and St. Joseph.

Sunday will be the first formal services in the new edifice. It has not been used except several weeks ago when a set of four bells were blessed”.

The dedication of the new church was a great occasion for the parish. Everyone took pride in the fact that such a magnificent edifice had been built and that somehow they had been part of it. Hard feelings, at least for the moment, were set aside and people returned to their daily routines of making a living.

The stock market crashed in 1929 and life became more difficult, as though it was not difficult enough already. Unemployment was prevalent not only in Cleveland but all over the country. Herbert Hoover was President and he was hoping that somehow the system would correct itself. The country had experienced economic downturns before but never of this magnitude. No one seemed to know how to correct

the situation and a kind of paralysis set in. The Great Depression would cause a tremendous amount of suffering that would not be alleviated until the eve of the Second World War.

In 1931, Father Kocinski celebrated the twenty fifth anniversary of his elevation to the priesthood. It was a great milestone in his life and an occasion to celebrate for the congregation. A special Mass of Thanksgiving was said. A picture was taken outside the front entrance of the church after the Mass. It shows little boys dressed as pages, each with a long white plume, little girls in their First Communion finery, the Harcerzy were present, the band was also present, many priests and Sisters were in attendance and of course, a great number of the parishioners. In the evening, a concert by the Polish National Choir was held in the parish hall and this was followed by a play by the school children under the direction of the Sisters. Father Kocinski was the recipient of many gifts. On this day, the good Father was acclaimed and congratulated and wished *Sto Lat*. Within less than a year, the hosannas would turn to jeers and many in the parish would be demanding his ouster.

Many of the complaints against the pastor were the same ones that were heard earlier. A new one existed now, in the way Father Kocinski was treating one of his assistants, Rev. John Foster whose surname was originally Buszek. Father Foster was quite active in the parish organizing the Holy Name Society and it seems that he was popular with the youth of the parish. Differences of opinion arose between pastor and assistant and around these differences, the warring factions gravitated.

On February 21st, Father Kocinski writes to the bishop asking that Father Foster be removed from the parish. He gives as his reasons:

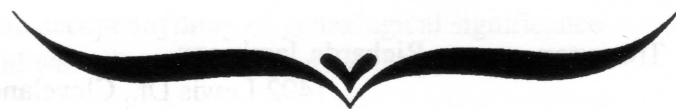
“(he) changed the name of the Holy Name Society to the Holy Name Club---stirs up the parishioners against the pastor---hopes to become pastor himself at St. John Cantius---organizes balls for the church benefit, but doesn't turn in the money--uses the money to buy beer and other beverages for the Holy Name Club members, thereby scandalizing the young boys---tells the congregation the

pastor has no right to elect the councilmen of the church in the church---(Father Foster claims the election should be done in a public hall)---(Father Foster is) a great menace”.

Another letter from some of Father Kocinski's supporters claims that Father Foster is “prompting the people not to give any money to the church” and “feeding them with all sorts of lies so our pastor would be removed”

The pro-Father Foster group complained that Father Foster was being treated shabbily by the pastor, having to live “in a cubby hole” of a room in the rectory in altogether unpleasant conditions. They go on to say that Father Foster organized the Holy Name Society, the Holy Name Clubs, which now had two hundred fifty members, and that should Father Foster be reassigned, the clubs would fold.

Differences between pastor and assistant resulted in the reassignment of Father Foster to Warren. This act was the last straw and galvanized the dissidents into action. On April 12, 1932, a meeting was held at Polonia Hall, 800 College Ave., attended by one thousand parishioners seeking the replacement of the pastor and the return of Father Foster. In an article in the *Cleveland Press* the following day, it states that the pastor had asked Police Chief Matowitz to assign a patrolman to the meeting which Chief Matowitz did. During the course of the meeting the patrolman called for reinforcements and two squads of police had to be dispatched to the hall. The following day of the meeting, five leaders of the dissident faction were called to the Assistant Police Prosecutor's Office and warned to carry out their campaign in an orderly fashion. They agreed to name a committee to carry their protests to the bishop. The following day, April 14th, a petition signed by nine hundred parishioners was presented to the bishop.



In our next newsletter, we will continue the *History of St. John Cantius Parish*.

**THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND**
c/o St. JOHN CANTIUS CHURCH
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Everyone who is interested in Genealogy, and more specifically Polish Genealogy, is welcome to join our group. We meet the first Tuesday of every month at St. John Cantius School, 2357 Tremont Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Parking is available in the school lot and there is an attendant on duty during meeting hours to provide security. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM and usually end at 9:30-10:00 PM.

Membership dues are \$20.00 a year.

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