

Hello Again,

This month we celebrate our tenth anniversary. How sweet it is! We hope that we have been helpful in finding some of the ancestors of our members. There are more to find and there is much more to find out about them; how they lived, the history of the period in which they lived, how this history impacted on their lives and how they died. And so, with this in mind, we will continue to meet every first Tuesday of the month from September thru June at 7:30 PM at St. Mary's PNC Church, 5375 Broadview Rd. in Parma, Ohio.

We have completed our move to our new meeting place. Two used storage lockers for our library have been purchased and the books have been transported. **John and Sophia Talkowski** donated the cost of the storage lockers (\$100.00) to the group and we are grateful to them for their generosity. Our September and October meetings were held at our new location and we had a nice turnout, everyone seemed pleased with our new "home".

At our September meeting, **Larry & Mary Bender** along with his cousin **Clemmie Zakarowsky** gave the group a presentation of how to plan and execute a family reunion party for close to four hundred people. This is truly a remarkable story. Larry got interested in genealogy about three years ago. He began researching his mother's side of the family (surname Grabiec) and it became for him what he calls a "great adventure". It led him to a small village in Poland named Niwiska where he met some of his family which he did not know even existed up until this time. He had a priest-friend, Fr. Bender, travelling with him who acted as his guide and interpreter and it surely must have opened many rectory doors for him to peruse old parish records. Here in the USA, there were trips to Chicago and Boston to meet family members and to exchange genealogical information. Slowly an idea of a family reunion party began to grow in the minds of our "family sleuths" and it was decided to **do it**.

The culmination of all their efforts took place last August 5th at the German Central Organization grounds in Parma, Ohio. Close to four hundred people attended, many who were complete strangers to each other except for the fact that there were blood ties and they were extended family. For the party, Larry and his merry group of chefs prepared five hundred golumbki, de-boned and trimmed 150 lbs. of pork butts for kielbasa which they made themselves, bought 65 dozen of potato pierogis, prepared sauerkraut and spettles. They wanted everything to be authentic and Polish to the core. Several days before the event **The Cleveland Plain Dealer** ran a front page article (Metro Section) about the reunion party as did the **The News Sun**. People came from all over the country and one family member came from Saudi Arabia and another from Belgium. What a party it must have been! Larry and his group also published a book about the Michael Grabiec family and his descendents which was available for purchase, at cost, to whoever wished to buy one. Kudos to those folks who were involved in this once in a lifetime labor of love.

At our October meeting, our president John Szuch, gave a presentation on outstanding Polish Americans and their contributions to our American culture. It was a timely topic since October is Polish American Heritage month. John was kind enough to share with us his fine collection of

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History of St. John Cantius Parish

Continued from the last newsletter—

As the years went by, there was little mention of Helen Pelczar. Having gone to elementary school at St. John Cantius from 1939-1944, one cannot remember an instance when her name was mentioned. Joe Filkowski was certainly mentioned and made out to be a modern day "Robin Hood". Still, the case of Helen Pelczar refuses to go away. In 1992, a lady from Pennsylvania wrote to the chancellery in Cleveland seeking information about a Helen Pelczar. In another instance, while attending Sunday Mass in 1996, a prayer card was found in the pew. The prayer on the card was for the beatification of Helen Pelczar. Seventy years after her death, she is still remembered.

What transpired between Monsignor Orzechowski and Bishop Schrembs over the Helen Pelczar case is not known. What is known, is that the bishop held the pastor in high regard. When St. John Cantius Parish was experiencing its "time of troubles", he appointed this kind, patient but firm, man-of-the-cloth to be its pastor. Even the Vatican recognized this priest and conferred upon him the title of Domestic Prelate. All the medals and distinctions however did not prevent the bishop from calling upon the pastor to explain "an item of publicity about your parish which was a source of scandal". The pastor was called "on the carpet" in a letter dated January 23rd, 1937. The letter goes on further:

"His Excellency requests an explanation of your Basketball Carnival held last Friday night, January 15th, featuring a game between young men and young women, one of the teams representing a billiard parlor and the other representing a laundry".

Alas, we all must answer to someone, even monsignors with medals and titles. And our good pastor did, in a letter dated January 26th. He states:

"In the first place they were not so young. Their age was from 35 up. Most of them were wives and husbands, maybe the ladies were formerly workers of some laundry and may some are still working, but that does not mean that the women are of questionable character. The men were not representing any kind of Billard Parlor. They are prominent citizens, lawyers and businessmen in our district. The game



A group of women praying at Helen Pelczar's grave after it had been cordoned off.

was played in presence of few of players friends. They have play one game and went home. There was no dance after the game. I could not see anything wrong in allowing them to use our auditorium for such a private game between gentlemen and ladies--played for fun not for funds. I did not hear any kind of comment nor criticism on the game so far. Father F. Szudarek was watching the game and he told me that the game was very clean, that men very kind to ladies and that was the reason why ladies won the game. This is my opinion of the game and explanation of such. In order to avoid in future any such explanations I assure Your Excellency that I will not allow such a game to be played at St. John Auditorium, although they are played all over. Your humble and obedient servant in Christ, M J Orzechowski."

There is no better example than the letter above to show in what regard the ladies were held in the thirties. Such a patronizing attitude toward the ladies today could very well mean a whole lot of trouble. They might put on their karati black belts and proceed to throttle the culprits. How times have changed!

Monsignor Marion J. Orzechowski died May 1, 1939. According to *The Catholic Universe Bulletin* (May 5, 1939):

"Monsignor Orzechowski had been suffering from a heart ailment for some time. Monday evening he had a sudden seizure just as he was nearing the top of the basement steps in the parish house. He fell to the bottom of the stairs, sustaining a fractured skull. Death followed very shortly but not before the

stricken priest was anointed.'

On the Editorial Page of the paper was an article about the Monsignor, praising him for his thirty seven years of faithful service to his church and his flock. The article ended with the words, "---that God will have mercy on his soul. May he rest in peace."

Monsignor F. Duda's Pastorate, 1939-1955

The fifth pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish was Francis B. Duda, the son of Joseph and Sophia (nee Wozny) Duda. He was born on July 15, 1876 in Zarnouska (Diocese of Krakow), Poland. He attended schools in Zarnouska and Lublin. From 1898-1912, he served as a teacher and director of orphanages in Krakow, Warsaw and Lublin, before beginning his seminary studies at the University of Krakow. In 1913, he immigrated to the United States and completed his priestly studies at Orchard Lake. He was ordained at St. Mary's Seminary by Bishop John Farrelly on December 24, 1916. His first assignment was as an assistant at St. John Cantius. He was forty years old at the time. Twenty three years later, on June 28, 1939, he would return to St. John Cantius as its pastor. In 1947, he was named Domestic Prelate with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor.

Monsignor Duda's pastorate can be very easily divided into two time frames, the war years, from 1939 to 1945, and the postwar period, from 1945 to 1955. Each period would be remarkable in its own way.

In the early part of 1939, Pope Pius XI died and he was replaced by Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli who became Pope Pius XII. On March 25th of that year Bishop Schrembs was made Archbishop and sixty five thousand Catholics acclaimed him at the Stadium on June 12th. Fifty years earlier he had been ordained a priest. And in that fateful year of 1939, on September 1st, the Second World War began. The war would effect everyone in one way or another. Some were called to the colors and would never return. The bloodletting on the European Continent had no comparison to previous wars. It was not until 1945 when the Allies were liberating the concentration camps that the full horror of what had been happening began to be realized. With the ending of the war in 1945, the world was entering a new age. As a result of

the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Atomic Age had arrived, for better or for worse.

Living through the war on the homefront was an unforgettable time. The entire country was mobilized for action. There were no protest marches, no burning of draft cards. Unemployment was a thing of the past. Young men went into the service and their jobs were filled by women of all ages. Everything was rationed; meat, canned goods, gasoline, liquor. If a serviceman came home on furlough and wished to get married, parents on both sides had their hands full trying to get enough ration coupons together in order to provide some kind of a reception for the young couple. Virtually every family had someone in the service, be it husband, father, brother, son or friend. And everyone pulled together in this common cause.

The St. John Cantius community was no exception. Most of the young men from the Tremont area went into the service. Little white flags with blue or gold stars began appearing in the windows of the houses along the streets of the neighborhood. If a family had one of its members in the armed forces, they displayed a flag with one blue star. Two members of the family in the service meant a flag with two blue stars and so on. A window with a flag with a gold star meant that someone from that household had been killed serving his country. Nearly every house in the Tremont area had a small flag with one or more stars in its window. The children were also mobilized for war. In 1944, the children of St. John Cantius School were presented a *Treasury Minute Man Flag*, awarded for their purchases of War Bonds and Stamps. The young ladies of the parish printed up a newsletter and sent them out to the boys overseas. Masses and novenas were offered for the safe return of loved ones and the church was filled to capacity. Everyone was involved.

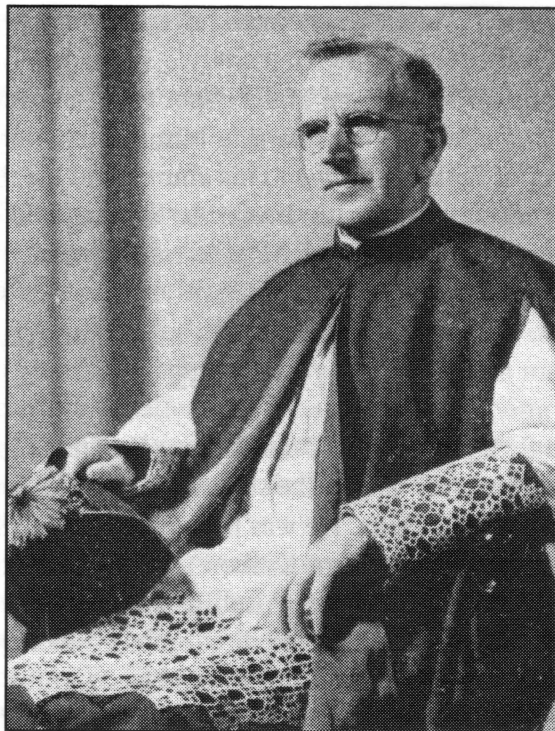
During Monsignor Duda's pastorate, the growth of the parish finally reached its peak. In 1939, there were eighteen hundred families. During the war years, the number would vary between nineteen hundred in 1940 to sixteen hundred in 1945. The peak year was 1949 when two thousand families were enrolled on the parish registers, according to the Annual Parish Report filed with the diocese. From this point on, the number of parishioners would decline. For the year 1955, there is a figure of two thousand families but

this may be a mistake when other figures for the year are taken into account.

From 1939 to 1945, the parish maintained itself as best as it could. In 1940, Father Duda had the interior of the church painted and decorated. There were three assistants assigned to the parish. There were six Masses said on Sundays. The grade school enrollment varied from seven hundred fifty in 1939 to six hundred eighteen in 1945. There were fifteen Sisters teaching in 1939 and fourteen in 1945. The life of the parish continued, war or no war.

In the Tremont community during the years 1941-1944, an extraordinary happening was taking place. The one and only High School in the Tremont area, Lincoln High, was enjoying its "Golden Era" in football. The newspapers only mentioned Tremont when there was something negative to say about the South Side. In 1941, when the Lincoln Presidents under the coach, Glen Fraser, defeated all comers and found themselves bound for the Charity Game for the first time in the school's history, the newspapers had to report it and put a positive spin on the story. One can only imagine what the reporters must have endured trying to spell some of the surnames of the players. The stories included such names as: Romanowski, Zylowski, Piorkowski, Bania and others. The team played the Collinwood Railroaders in the Charity Game and found themselves to be the underdogs. On the average, they were considerably lighter than the Collinwood team. The prognosticators said that the chances of the Presidents winning were slim to none. So it came as something of a surprise when Lincoln scored two touchdowns on long runs by Romankowski to go ahead 12-0. The Railroaders had to play catch up, which they did. The game ended in a tie, 12-12, but the team and the neighborhood considered it a victory for our side, seeing as the team was given such little chance for success. And everyone was proud of "our boys", as indeed they should have been. Lincoln did not have the enrollment of some of the schools on the West Side, such as West Tech, Rhodes, West High and others.

In 1942, Lincoln once again was the best on the West Side of town and once again faced Collinwood in the Charity Game. Once again the reporters had to wrestle with names like Szymanski, Babicz, Dudzinski, Kozianski, Kowalczyk and the other Polish names.



The fifth pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish, Monsignor Francis B. Duda.

This time, a transfer student from West Tech by the name of Gene Slusarski ran for three touchdowns (one was called back) and for the one and only time in Lincoln's history, the team won the Charity Game by a score of 26-0. This was the first time that a West Side team had won the Charity Game in its twelve year history. How sweet it was! And many of the players were from St. John Cantius parish. One of the members of that team, Joe Messuri, would join the Rangers after graduation and would be killed in action.

In 1943 and 1944, the Lincoln Presidents again made it to the Charity Game. Their opponent both years was Cathedral Latin. In 1943 the team lost by the score of 18-12 and in 1944, they lost by a score of 33-0. Still, the neighborhood was proud of what their boys had accomplished, appearing four times in the Charity Game. It was good for the image and the morale of the South Side.

When the war ended in 1945, the veterans began returning home and things began to change. They were grateful for having survived the war and wanted to get on with their lives. Many would get married and begin their own families. In 1946, a record number of one hundred nineteen marriages took place at St. John Cantius. If one considers that marriages were not supposed to take place during the six weeks of

Lent and four weeks of Advent, that would leave forty two weeks of the year in which the marriages took place or practically three every Saturday. In each of the years from 1946 to 1952 there were over two hundred baptisms a year, the most being in 1948 when two hundred thirty received the Sacrament. This averages out to over four baptisms every Sunday. The assistants were indeed kept busy.

Many of the returning veterans took advantage of the GI Bill and returned to school. It was the best investment the government could have made in their young people. What they gave to the veterans in school aid was returned tenfold in income taxes when the veteran graduated from school with a good job or a profession.

Above all, the returning veteran wanted to better himself and his condition. He was not content any longer to live in the crowded environment he had lived in before the war. And little by little, the young families began to leave the Tremont area for the suburbs. They wanted their own space. Nearly all of them had cars and they could afford to live further away from their jobs and commute to work. They did not have to live within walking distance of their jobs like their fathers did. Consequently, the parish found that they were losing families to suburban churches.

The war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945 with the surrender of Germany. Eleven days later, Father Duda is writing to Bishop Hoban asking permission to renovate the school buildings and begin a High School. He is requesting permission to spend one hundred fifty thousand dollars for this project. There was no grass growing under the good father's feet. He saw what the need was and felt that after the war was over, he could proceed with his plans.

The reason that Father Duda is writing to Bishop Hoban is because Archbishop Schrembs was in very poor health and Bishop Hoban had been appointed Coadjutor of the diocese with the Right of Succession. He was installed as Coadjutor and effective head of the diocese on January 21, 1943. Archbishop Schrembs died on November 2, 1945 and Bishop Edward Francis Hoban became the sixth Bishop of Cleveland.

Bishop Hoban writes to Father Duda on May 25th,

granting him permission to execute his plans. Father loses no time in converting the parish hall on the second level of the school building into class rooms. The first freshman high school class begins in September. Four years later, they would graduate, thirteen in all, from St. John Cantius High School.

The physical plant of the parish was still quite inadequate. There was no recreational facility, like a gym, for the students to use. There were no meeting rooms for large, parish groups to meet in. There was no cafeteria available. And so, in 1948, Father Duda again writes to the bishop seeking permission to build a new high school and gym with the expenditure of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Permission is granted. Mr. Ellsworth Potter, a Cleveland architect, is given the job to draw up the plans for the high school and the recreation center. The general contractors for the project will be Woods and Chleva.

Work begins on the new complex and continues on until the Spring of 1950. On April 16th of that year, a great celebration is planned to dedicate the new high school and recreation center. The parish will also celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding on that date. The anniversary should have been celebrated two years previously, in 1948, but for whatever reasons, the celebration was put off. This is what the *Catholic Universe Bulletin*, in its April 14th edition, had to say about the new project:

"The school is a three story building of smooth yellow brick, facing W. 10th St. and Tremont Ave. Besides 16 classrooms, it includes an auditorium, library, science labs, machine shop, home economics department, cafeteria, bowling alleys, and veterans and Boy Scout clubrooms. Features include acoustical ceilings throughout and germicidal lamps in all classrooms. The school offers a complete commercial, academic and industrial arts course. Accredited by the state for the second year, it has accommodations for 500 students."

Quite an addition to the parish, this first Catholic High School in the Tremont area. The cost for this impressive new structure ran well over the initial projected amount. The final tally was over a half a million dollars, five hundred and fifty thousand dollars to be exact. What an investment to make in its young people! This parish, founded by Polish immigrants, knew the values of a higher Christian education. They could be proud of themselves and indeed



Pastor Kocinski and Fr. Duda with a group of altar boys, circa 1917-18. Fr. Duda was the third assistant assigned to St. John Cantius and served in that capacity from Jan. 1, 1917 to Nov. 29, 1918. He would later return as pastor.

they were when Bishop Hoban arrived on April 16th, to offer a Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving.

It was a Sunday like no other in the parish's history. Prior to the dedication of the new high school, a parade took place with all the groups of the church participating. It was estimated that two thousand people took part in the parade, including a CWV (Catholic War Veterans) drum and bugle corps from Pulaski Post 30 and a forty member St. John Cantius Choir, headed by Leonard Matczynski, supplying the choral singing. The dedication was at 11:30, and then it was off to the church for the 12:00 Mass. From the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, on April 17th,

“ The blessing of Pope Pius XII was bestowed on the pastor and parishioners of St. John Cantius yesterday as the golden jubilee of the parish was observed.

Bishop Edward F. Hoban of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese conveyed the blessing to the pastor, Msgr. Francis Duda, and his parishioners at the conclusion of the prelate's celebration of a solemn pontifical mass.

Word of the papal blessing was included in a letter read to the congregation from Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, apostolic delegate to the United States.

To the papal blessing, Bishop Hoban added his own blessing and congratulations to Msgr. Duda, his assistant pastors and the parishioners.

In addition to celebrating the mass of thanksgiving, Bishop Hoban dedicated the new \$550,000 parish high school and confirmed a class of 225 children.

“There can be no greater blessing to a parish,” Bishop Hoban said, “than to have ample school facilities for the Christian education of its children.”

Msgr. Duda expressed his appreciation to the bishop and his gratitude to his parishioners for making the school a reality. Rev. Remigius Steczkowski, O.F.M., of St. Paschal's Monastery, Toledo, and a native of the parish, preached in Polish, paying tribute to the priests who have served the parish. ---

---Last night in the high school auditorium more than 1,000 persons marked the occasion at a banquet at which a congratulatory message was given by Gov. Frank J. Lausche.”

What a day! It started with a parade, dedication of a new high school, a Solemn Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving, confirmation of two hundred and twenty five children, and ended with a banquet for a thousand parishioners and guests. This certainly had to be one of the high points in the priestly career of

Monsignor Duda.

This glorious period in the life of the parish was soon to be tempered with a not-so-glorious time. In 1952, Monsignor Duda applied for and received a wine and beer permit for the church's recreational center, the bowling alleys. The timing was very bad since the City Council had legislation pending before it to tighten "home rule" in the banning of all beer, wine and liquor sales within 500 feet of a church, school or recreation center. Somehow the *Cleveland Press* got wind of the matter and proceeded to give the story front page exposure. The story implied some kind of a collusion since Paul T. Betley was on the Zoning Board and it was this group which was the arbiter in disputes over location of liquor permits. Mr. Betley was also the president of the church's recreation center. The story further implied that Monsignor Duda "is a close friend of Gov. Lausche" and somehow used his influence in order to get the liquor permit. No amount of explaining did any good. The *Press* was on some kind of a crusade or some kind of a vendetta. The Monsignor and lay leaders of the parish labelled the story false and distorted. They claimed that spirits would only be sold during the hours of bowling, from 6 to 11 PM, and during bowling season. By the time bowling started, the children were out of school. Then, on July 7th, the paper again runs a story concerning the Sunday sales of liquor at the parish carnival held on the parish grounds. On July 10th, State Liquor Director, William C. Bryant, orders an inquiry into the issuance of the liquor permit. The Cleveland School Board got into the fray and claimed that it had not been notified about the church's application for a permit and if it had been notified, they would not have been in favor of issuing such a permit. Letters, critical of the pastor and the lay leaders involved, were being sent to the chancellery. One East Side Catholic even took it upon himself to write to the Vatican regarding the permit issue. Finally, Monsignor Duda threw in the towel and sent the permit back to Columbus. It was not worth all the aggravation.

The year 1952 was still not over and there was one other item that the *Press* had to report on. For whatever reason, The *Cleveland Press* was not too kind to the parish. On November 19th, the paper reported on a police raid on a PTA sponsored bingo party at St. John Cantius Elementary School Cafeteria. The facts were to be presented to the police prosecutor's office.

It seems that three policemen were dispatched to the school at 9:30 pm the day before and they found 50 to 60 women playing "a game similar to bingo" with canned goods for prizes. The police took the canned goods along with the bingo cards and numbers, evidently to give to the police prosecutor. The ladies dispersed peacefully and no one was arrested. The story does not say who requested the raid or who complained about this nefarious activity. Monsignor Duda immediately protested to Police Chief Story that the police had "improperly interrupted" a PTA sponsored bingo game which was to raise funds for a school Christmas party. Chief Story reminds the pastor that all forms of bingo are illegal and "cannot be permitted anywhere". Assistant Prosecutor Bernard Conway however, refused to order a prosecution of the group and directed the police to return prizes and cash seized in the raid. One can assume, with a high degree of certainty, that Monsignor Duda was very happy to see the end of 1952.

By 1955, the good monsignor was having heart problems. He had embarked upon his priestly career at a relatively late time in his life and had accomplished much in his thirty nine years as a priest. Now it seemed that all the pressures, strains and stresses, and father-time, were beginning to take their toll. He was seventy nine years old and spending a lot of time at Marymount Hospital. And it was there that he died on November 27th. He had sacrificed his whole life to serve his fellow man, to serve his church, to serve Polonia and above all, to serve his God. He was indeed a good shepherd.

Many important events took place during Monsignor Duda's pastorate. On the international scene, the Second World War culminated with the dropping of the atomic bombs and the beginning of the Atomic Age. The USSR reneged on its promise of free elections in Poland and began to dominate its neighbors beginning what would become known as the "Cold War". Stalin would die in 1953 but his policies continued on for decades to come.

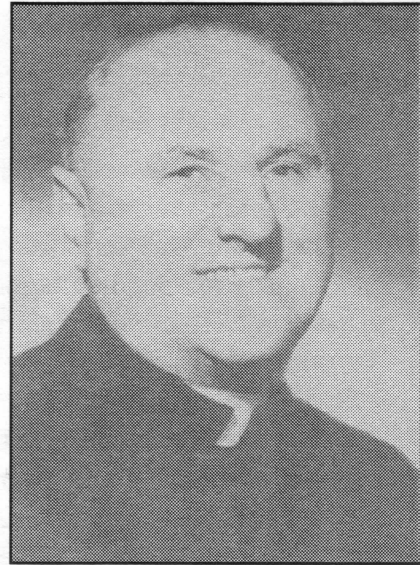
In 1940, at the beginning of Monsignor's pastorate, Cleveland was the sixth largest city in population in the United States, according to the 1940 census. It was only surpassed by New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and Los Angeles. And it was a veritable industrial powerhouse. Its strength lay in its diversi-

fied industries, its knowledgeable labor pool, and all the accompanying facets that go along to build a great city. By the time Monsignor died in 1955, Cleveland was in decline and part of the "Rust Belt". The Marshall Plan had rebuilt the industries and plants of Western Europe and their products were now competing with ours for market share in this country. As time went on, many businesses could not compete and had to go out of business. Other businesses were leaving the area and relocating in southern states where taxes and labor costs were lower.

Perhaps Cleveland's greatest years were from 1940 to 1950. Its contribution to the war effort was enormous. But Cleveland stood out in other fields as well. In the area of sports, Cleveland was often in the headlines. On April 16th, 1940, Bob Feller pitched the first opening day, no-hitter against Chicago and won 1-0. After being discharged from service in 1946, Feller would pitch another no-hitter, this time against New York on April 30th, striking out eleven men and winning 1-0. Bill Veeck bought the Indians in 1946 and the town went "bananas" when the Indians won the World Series in 1948. That year, Cleveland was known as the City of Champions as all their professional sports teams won championships in their respective sports.

December 16th, 1945, the Cleveland Rams beat the Washington Redskins 15-14 to win the National Football League Championship before 32,000 fans. The temperature was six degrees above zero. The Rams moved to Los Angeles in January of 1946 and the Browns entered upon the scene in that year. They played their first game at the Stadium on September 6th, and beat the Miami Seahawks 44-0. The Browns would enter the NFL in 1950 and begin their illustrious history.

There were other events not related to sports that effected the community. The East Ohio Gas Company explosion that took place on October 20th, 1944, was a tragic affair. One witness described it as, "what seemed to be the breaking out of hell". On October 1st, 1945, the former mayor of Cleveland, Harold Burton was appointed to the Supreme Court. And on May 6th, 1946, for the first time in ninety four years the sanctuary light before the main altar at St. John Cathedral was extinguished when the church was closed preparatory to construction work.



The sixth pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish,
Rev. Francis A Szudarek.

There was much construction going on after the war. Many parishes were updating their physical plant and adding on to what they already had, as was the case with St. John Cantius. Had they known what lay ahead of them, it is doubtful that they would have been in such haste to take on new debts for their parishes. It is quite easy to reflect on this time with the benefit of hindsight. It was not so easy to predict the future at the time; indeed, everything looked pretty rosy. And yet, there was a quiet, social revolution taking place behind the scene.

One of the greatest influences of that era was the television. People could now stay at home and get the news. They didn't have to leave their living room in order to see what was happening in the world or around the corner in their city. The television was a source of news as well as a source of entertainment. They were not as willing as before to become involved in church functions or join church groups. Another event which took place in 1954, was the school desegregation case, *Brown vs Board of Education*. The Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal", was indeed, not equal, and this ruling would have far reaching effects upon the neighborhoods of the inner city. In 1956, under the presidency of Eisenhower, the Highway Trust Fund was established which funded the Interstate Highway System. A person could now go from "coast to coast", or north from Canada to the Gulf, without stopping for a red light. What's more, thanks to the interstate highway system, people in the inner city found that they could live in one of the suburbs and commute to work. And

so, the exodus from the city began.

Rev. F. Szudarek's Pastorate, 1956-1973

The sixth pastor of St. John Cantius Parish was Rev. Francis A. Szudarek. He was the first pastor of the church who was not born in the Old Country but in the United States and, in Cleveland. He was born November 2, 1898, the son of Albert and Salomeja Szudarek. His early schooling began at *Immaculate Heart of Mary* on the East Side. He studied for the priesthood at St. Mary Seminary, at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary (Orchard Lake), and Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Father was ordained on June 6, 1925 at Kenrick Seminary for priestly work in the Diocese of Omaha. He returned to Cleveland and in time, was an assistant at St. John Cantius for twelve years from July 8, 1936 to April 23, 1948. After spending eight years at St. Hedwig's in Akron, he returned to St. John Cantius on January 12, 1956 as pastor.

After an absence of eight years, Father found the parish pretty much the way he had left it. There were seven masses on Sunday and four on weekdays. The total number of Catholic families in the parish stood at fifteen hundred and ninety one, a decrease from the record number of a few years ago but still a large congregation. In that year of 1956, there were; one hundred and forty one baptisms, a class of eighty eight received First Communion, one hundred sixty five were confirmed, there were twenty five marriages and seventy five deaths. There were seven vocations from the parish. The enrollment for the elementary school stood at six hundred and seventeen and for the high school, four hundred and thirty. There were male and female societies in the parish and they were strong and active.

Seventeen years later when Father Szudarek retired in 1973, the entire picture of the parish had changed. There was now a Saturday mass at 6:30 pm and four masses on Sunday. There were two masses on weekdays. The number of Catholic families served by the parish had declined to seven hundred. During the year, there had been; six baptisms, a class of seven received First Communion, forty two were confirmed, there were ten marriages and thirty three deaths. There were no vocations. The enrollment for the

elementary school stood at ninety. The high school was no longer an independent entity but had been merged with other area high schools to form Cleveland Central Catholic High School. There were five male societies in the parish with three hundred thirty eight members and five female societies with three hundred twenty four members. There was also a CYO group with nineteen members.

The numbers pretty much tell the story of the decline of the parish over these years. It had to be very difficult for Father Szudarek to witness this happening. He had been an assistant at the parish during the "growth years" and it must have been heart wrenching to watch the changes taking place, and not be able to stop or reverse them. And what were some of the causes for the changes?

Many of the big employers in Cleveland had moved out of the area and taken jobs with them. In 1950, Cleveland was the seventh largest city in the USA with a population of 914,808 (the highest ever). By 1970, Cleveland had dropped to the twelfth position with a population of 750,879. Also, the residents were fleeing the inner city for the suburbs. A good example of this is the numbers of Catholic families in two Polish parishes, one in the inner city and one in the suburbs, in two different time periods. The parishes are St. John Cantius and SS. Peter and Paul in Garfield Heights. SS. Peter and Paul was established in 1927.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	
	<u>SJC</u>	<u>SS. P & P</u>
1943	1,891	866
1968	695	2,565

St. John Cantius was not the only inner city parish to lose parishioners at this time. St. Stan's, once the largest Polish parish in Greater Cleveland, in 1968 had but one thousand eighty families on its registers, St. Casimir's had seven hundred fifty and St. Mary's of Czestochowa, seven hundred sixteen. Many of these churches had gone into debt to upgrade their properties in the fifties and now in the sixties and seventies, found themselves with a heavy debt burden. The flight, in some areas, continued to such an extent, and over such a long period of time, that the parish could not maintain itself. This was the case with St. Mary's of Czestochowa which eventually had to close

its doors in 1996, a very sad time for the many old parishioners.

One must remember that the building of the I-71 Freeway cut through the Tremont neighborhood along its western boundary. It divided the community and was highly detrimental to the well-being of Tremont. Many of the families that were dislocated were members of the Cantius community. Some of these families joined new parishes in the suburbs; some maintained their ties with their old church. The overall effect however, was a further reduction of the parish congregation.

There were other causes for the decline of the parish and the neighborhood. One must remember that the sixties were tumultuous times. The decade began with the election of our first Catholic president. Three years later, he was assassinated. During President Johnson's administration, the most sweeping Civil Rights legislation in our nation's history was passed. Later in the decade, Rev. Martin Luther King was assassinated, and so was Robert Kennedy. The country was undergoing a traumatic, social change. It was the time of "flower children", peace marches, draft-card burnings and young men fleeing to Canada and Europe to avoid the draft. The Vietnam War was tearing the country apart. And the Church was also undergoing a fundamental change, as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

Pope John XXIII was well up in years when he was elected Pope in 1958. No one foresaw what he would do after he was elected. What he did, was call for an ecumenical council. The council was announced on January 25, 1959. The first session was on October 11, 1962 and the last one was on December 8, 1965. The Council was to be a symbol of the church's openness to the modern world. As a result of the various council deliberations, many far reaching changes came about. For the ordinary Catholic, the changes that most concerned him were those having to do with the liturgy. Latin was no longer to be used in saying the mass. The mass would be said in the vernacular. And there were changes in how the mass was said, the priest now faced the congregation. There were changes in how one received the consecrated host, how one fasted before receiving the host, how one went to confession and many other changes that did not appeal to the more conservative element in the

congregation. Changes are difficult to accept sometimes. How many parishioners were lost or disaffected because of the Council is hard to tell. Certainly, there were some.

Amid all this upheaval, the everyday affairs of the church went on. Bills had to be paid, buildings had to be maintained, sacraments had to be administered and life went on. In June of 1965, Father Szudarek celebrated his fortieth anniversary as a priest. He marked the occasion by offering a Mass of Thanksgiving and later in the day, a reception was held in his honor for guests and parishioners at the high school auditorium.

Later on that month, another event took place, this one not as honorable. The *Cleveland Press* ran a story on June 22nd under the headline, "Wine Drinker Breaks Into W. Side Church". The story goes on:

"A wine-drinking intruder last night smashed vigil lights in St. John Cantius Church, 906 College Ave., and left a trail of bloodstains in aisles and pews.

Rev. Fr. Francis A. Szudarek said the vandal apparently entered by snapping off two bolts on the two main front doors. He bent double two microphones, tore out the wiring for the public address system, stole a veil from a statue of the Blessed Virgin and broke seven vigil lights.

Into one vigil-light holder the intruder poured wine. An empty wine bottle was found in the church. Father Szudarek said the largest bloodstains were found at the altar, where worshipers kneel to pray."

This incident, as much as anything, illustrates the temper of the times. One cannot even imagine such a sacrilegious act being perpetrated in previous years.

In the city, on July 18th of 1966, the Hough Riots erupted on Cleveland's East Side. Mayor Locher asked that the National Guard be called out on the morning of the 20th. Order was finally restored and on the 25th, stores in the neighborhood that had not been damaged, were reopening. As a result of the riots, four people had been killed, thirty were injured, close to three hundred were arrested and approximately two hundred forty fires were reported. Two years later, in July of 1968 (23rd-28th), the Glenville Shootout occurred which resulted in seven persons being killed and fifteen being wounded. Such were the times.

As time went on, Father Szudarek decided that it was



Parish Boy Scout Troop No. 233; the Scoutmaster was Mr. Louis F. Baran, a Cleveland policeman (the man in the white shirt in the back row. Fr. Szczepanski is at the far left, next to Councilman Paul T. Betley and Pastor Duda is at the far right. Circa early 1940's.
(continued from page 1)

time for him to retire. In 1973, he would be seventy five years old. He determined that he would retire at the beginning of the year, January 2nd. On December 30, 1972, the people of the parish held a "Recognition Night" for a beloved priest who had faithfully served them for many years, first as an assistant and then as pastor. Father became Pastor Emeritus of St. John Cantius Church.

After his retirement, Father Szudarek still lived at St. John Cantius and continued with his priestly duties as often as his health permitted. The year 1975 was special, for it was the fiftieth anniversary of Father's ordination. On April 13th of that year, a Mass of Thanksgiving was offered and a testimonial banquet was held later in the day in his honor. Father continued on for seven more years, his health continuing to deteriorate. On Monday morning, June 28, 1982, he died at the rectory after having received the Sacraments. The Funeral Mass was said on Saturday, July 3 at 10:30 a.m. at St. John Cantius Church and the burial was at St. Mary Cemetery in Cuyahoga Heights.

Our next newsletter will contain the final installment of *The History of St. John Cantius Parish*.

Pulaski memorabilia. His must be one of the finest, if not the finest, collections in the country. He also has some interesting items that touch upon the lives of other outstanding Poles, such as Ignacy Paderewski and Helena Modjeska.

Also at our October meeting, many of our members got to meet for the first time our gracious host, The Rt. Rev. Jan Dawidziuk. Fr. Jan is the pastor of St. Mary's and is very supportive of our group. We thank him, the parish council, and indeed the entire parish for accepting us and giving us a home.

Membership Expiration and Dues

With the publication of our next newsletter, the one year free membership extension grace period will have been completed. We ask therefore that anyone who wishes to remain a member of our group and who has not paid his dues, please do so now. The address is :
The Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland
P.O. Box 609117
Cleveland, Ohio 44109.
Thank You..

**THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL
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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 the month from September thru June at St. Mary's PNC Church; 5375 Broadview Rd. (corner of Broadview & Wexford); Parma, Ohio. Parking is available in the parish lot, the entrance of which is on Marietta Ave. 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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