

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia i  
Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!



A Blessed Christmas and a Healthy and  
Prosperous New Year!

—  
Welcome—Witamy

We cordially welcome to our group:

Richard & Georgene Jasinski

3121 Parmalee Dr.

Seven Hills, Ohio 44131

who are researching surnames:

Granatosky, Jasinski, Melnick, Wisniewski

and

Dennis & Constance Turski

2146 W. 5th St.

Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Szczastak, Turski

## A Polish Christmas Tradition

### The Oplatek—The Blessed Christmas Wafer—Our Christmas Oblation\*

A Sacred Legacy from the Past to Brighten Your Future

Delicate, Ornate, Festive, Beloved—The Christmas wafer commemorates a custom which is many centuries old. Oplatek, from the Latin, “Oblatum”—Holy Bread—is “Our Christmas Oblation.” Believed by some to emanate as far back as the “manna” of Exodus 16:31, it is sometimes referred to as bread of Angels. The ritual observance is called Wigilia in Polish, Vilia in Slovak, Kucios in Lithuanian, “Feliz Navidad” in Hispanic. We, who are entrusted to keep this tradition sacred from generation to generation, are grateful to our forebearers who preserved it for us and for growing numbers of others. It is the most unique family celebration in Christendom perpetuated with the full blessing of the Church.

Through our beloved Christmas wafer, we are reminded of the Holy Nativity. We remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem—literally “house of bread.” We hallow His proclamation: “I am the Bread of Life.” At the Holy Supper, Our Lord blessed bread. After His resurrection, our Lord was known to the Emmaus Disciples “in the breaking of bread.” On Christmas Eve, children, with eager anticipation, await the First Star, then declare: “It is here! The Star!” The sacred observance reflects traditions hundreds of years old, adding new ones as they develop. A door may be left partially open for “a guest” who may appear. “A guest in the home is Christ in the home.” An extra setting is often reserved at the table symbolizing that Christ is the Unseen Guest in the home. In one custom, a small quantity of straw is placed under the table cloth, or on a special plate, covered with a white napkin. Upon this “manger” are placed the Christmas wafers. The Christ-Child from the home Nativity scene may be placed there also. A brief family Devotion begins the family festivities of sharing the blessed Christmas wafers and the Vigil meal.

Breaking and sharing the Christmas wafer in traditional ways, we make an oblation of best wishes to family and friends, accompanied by expressions of forgiveness. Thus we share in harmony and joy in Christ as the Christmas Festival Family of God. As we continue this blessed tradition or begin a new heritage, our Christmas wafer helps us bring joy and happiness to our hearts and homes, aiding us in joining the Angelic Chorus in their “Te Deum:”

**“GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, PEACE ON EARTH TO ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL”**

May Almighty God’s deepest penetration into human form as the Christ-Child born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, enter your heart with the magnitude of His cosmic divinity. As He embraces you with His heart, may the Holy Babe Who left the security of eternity to become our Saviour, bless you with His outstretched hands of Love. As you culminate the celebration with a pilgrimage to the Shepherds’ Mass—midnight worship—may the Babe of Bethlehem, the True Bread of Life from Heaven, bring to all the full intent of Our Christmas Oblation.

**A BLESSED CHRISTMAS WITH LOVE, JOY, PEACE AND HAPPINESS IN THE NEW YEAR.**

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### Rest in Peace

Mention must be made of the death earlier this year of Mr. W. S. “Jack” Kuniczak. He died on Sept. 20th at Quakertown Hospital near Philadelphia. He was 70 years old. Mr. Kuniczak gave us a modern-day translation of Sienkiewicz’s trilogy: *With Fire and Sword*, *The Deluge* and *Fire in the Steppe*. He also gave us a new translation of Sienkiewicz’s better known work, *Quo Vadis*. He was an author in his own right, having written: *The Thousand Hour Day*, *The March* and *The Valedictory*. May he rest in peace.

# Traditional Polish Dishes to Grace Your Wigilia Table

## Mom's Polish Sweet Bread for Christmas

### Ingredients:

2 cakes yeast (or 1 large size)	1 doz. egg yolks
4 Tbsp. warm water	1 1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. sugar	1 tsp. vanilla
1 qt. milk, scalded and cooled to lukewarm	1 c. yellow raisins, plumped in warm water
1/2 lb. butter	10 c. sifted all purpose flour
1 1/2 c. sugar	1/2 tsp. nutmeg (optional)

Crumble yeast in cup with lukewarm water and 1 teaspoon sugar. Let stand until bubbly. Melt butter in lukewarm milk. Add 1 1/2 cups sugar and stir until dissolved. Beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored and add to milk and sugar mixture. Stir in yeast, salt, flavoring and raisins. Sift flour slowly into mixture. Mix until well blended, turn out onto well floured board and knead thoroughly (15 to 20 minutes, at least), or until satiny and blistered. Put dough into greased bowl and let rise, covered, until light. Punch down and let rise a second time. Punch down again, shape into loaves and put into greased loaf pans. Let rise again, covered, about an hour, brush with beaten egg mixed with 1/4 cup milk and bake in moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 1 hour, or until done. Cool 10 to 15 minutes before removing from pan. Yield: 6 loaves.

Submitted by Richarda Jambrozy

## Kutia by Roseanne

### Ingredients:

1/2 lb. hulled wheat	1/2 can Canned poppyseed filling
1/2-1 cup honey (start with 1/2 cup, then add more to taste)	
1/2 cup ground almond meal	1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. grated lemon	1/2-1 cup soaked raisins
2/3 cup dried apricots (cut into small pieces)—optional	
1/4 cup apricot filling—optional	

Rinse wheat, and soak overnight (1/2 container). Rinse again 3 times or so until the water is pretty clear. This removes the excess starch. Add water about two inches above wheat and cook 50 min or 1 hr. in microwave til the wheat is very soft. (My microwave is a 900 watt, so adjust to your heat.) Drain excess water, and add rest of ingredients.

Too much honey makes it too liquidy, but add to your taste. Mixture should be semi-liquid. Could add several Tbsp. of butter if you want to.

Submitted by Roseanne Ewazen

## Traditional Polish Barszcz by Loretta

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 c. quick cooking oatmeal	1 tsp. dry yeast
1/2 tsp. salt	2 c. hot water
3 Tbsp. flour	

Mix the ingredients together and let stand overnight at room temperature until it ferments or sours. Cover with plastic wrap. The next day strain through strainer (like a tea strainer but bigger). Keep pressing until you have about 1 Tbsp. left. In a pot boil 6-8 cups water (start with 6 cups). Beat one egg and 1 pt. sour cream into oatmeal mixture that has been strained. Pour mixture into boiling water, mix with whisk, stirring constantly until it comes to a boil. Add dry mushrooms, 1/2 cup or a little more, which have been cooked plus water. This gives the barszcz flavor. Serve with rye bread crumbled or mashed potatoes or hard boiled eggs sliced.

Submitted by Loretta Lobaza

## —For Christmas Day—

### Chrusciki by Madeline

#### Ingredients:

5 egg yolks

1 whole egg

2 Tbsp. sweet cream or milk

2 1/2 c. flour

1 tsp. salt

1 Tbsp. brandy

Mix well all the ingredients except the flour in a bowl. Add flour slowly until it forms a ball. Put on lightly floured board and knead until smooth. Test. When you cut through dough and if you find a hole or two, it is ready to roll out. Roll out thin, cut about 3 x 1 inch ribbons. Cut an inch in center and fold through, making a bow.

Heat 1 pound of shortening in a skillet; deep fry. Throw in 3 at a time, turning them with 2 forks and take out and drain on paper toweling and arrange on platter or put in a box. They can be frozen.

When you serve them, sift powdered sugar on them.

Caution: Do not cut them too long, they stretch when they are fried. They should be fragile so you must use caution in handling.

Submitted by Madeline Grimes

### Kielbasa

#### Ingredients:

pork butts

fresh, finely diced garlic or garlic powder, to taste

pepper, to taste (about 1 tsp. per 5 lbs.)

sage (optional), to taste (about 1/2 tsp. per 5lbs.)

salt, to taste ( about 1 Tbsp. per 5 lbs.)

marjoram (optional), to taste (about 1 tsp. per 5 lbs.)

water

casings

Making good kielbasa is a matter of experience and taste. After making it several times, one learns the techniques and it becomes easier to do. Each of us has their own individual taste and you can add or withhold spices as you wish.

Trim the excess fat off the pork. Cut the meat into 1 inch cubes and place in a large bowl. Add salt, pepper, garlic, marjoram (optional) and sage (optional). Mix well, moisten with water and mix again. Cover the bowl and place in refrigerator overnight to allow flavors of seasonings to permeate the meat. Wash casings, letting the water run through the inside to wash out the salt residue and spot any holes in the casings. If you come upon a hole, cut the casing at that point and you'll either have a small sausage or discard the piece of casing. Using a meat grinder with a sausage stuffing attachment, fit the casing over the greased tube end of the stuffer, and tie it off. Grind the meat using a coarse blade. Should air bubbles form in the casing, you can prick the bubble with a straight pin. Pack the meat firmly into the casing and tie it off.

Cover the bottom of a roasting pan with water and roast covered (at 350 degrees) until the pork is thoroughly cooked. Usually, roast for 45 minutes, turn the kielbasa over and roast for another 45 minutes. Drain off the liquid from the bottom of the pan, leaving only enough so that the sausage does not stick. Uncover and brown on both sides. Smaczego—Bon Appetite—Enjoy!



## —Happenings—

### **Our Annual Christmas Party—**

We held our annual Christmas party on Dec. 5th. For a while there in the morning, one wasn't sure whether we would be able to have our party or not, what with the snow flurries and all. But later, the flurries lessened and even though it was cold, the roads were drivable. There were 53 members and guests in attendance. There were the goodies that we expect each year; kielbasa, gołąbki, pierogi, kutia, kasza (buckwheat), ham, bigos (hunter's stew), potato salad, śledzie (herring) and all kinds of baked items. To all who brought something to the party, a great big Polish hug and dziękuję for making the party the success that it was. This year, we had as our guests; The Rt. Rev. Jan Dawidziuk and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Zaun and Mr. & Mrs. Richard Dzik. Father Jan said grace and after the meal, Father welcomed all who attended and we even got to sing a few carols, in English and in Polish. And even though we are at the beginning of the Advent season and are told to fast, the Lord will forgive us this one evening together as we celebrate and look forward to the anniversary of His birth.

### **Happy Birthday Sister Rosette—**

On Tuesday, Nov. 28th, Sister Rosette celebrated her 91st birthday. She is one of our members (surname, Rospotynski) and a member of *The Sisters of St. Joseph, The Third Order of St. Francis*. Sister has been in the Order for over 70 years. And she is still very active at St. John Cantius, the parish where she grew up and where she went to school. God Bless You Sister, and may He grant you many more years.

### **Wawrzyniec z Clevelandu—**

We have all heard of Lawrence of Arabia. Well, we have our own "Lawrence of Cleveland" aka Wawrzyniec z Clevelandu aka Lawrence Bender. A short while ago, he had the audacity to allow his appendix to burst. After much persuasion, he permitted his wife Mary to take him to the hospital. The medical staff at Southwest Community Hospital must have done a good job on him for he seems well on the road to recovery and is as ornery as ever. He, with his wife Mary and his cousin, Clemmie Zakarowsky, made the kielbasa for our party. And it was scrumptious. Larry organized the Grabiec reunion party this past autumn and since then has been sought after as a speaker to various local genealogical groups. He gave a talk to the *Cuyahoga Valley Genealogy Society* on Monday, Dec. 4th at the Independence Civic Center. Wherever he speaks, he donates a book that he had published about the family to the group. You're all right, Wawrzyniec.

### **New Found Friends—**

We recently sent a copy of our newsletter to *The Southwest Cuyahoga Chapter of The Ohio Genealogical Society*. Shortly thereafter, we received a thank you note from Ms. Grace Williams along with several copies of items from the early Berea newspapers. Her sister, Carol, is president of the group and editor of their newsletter. Grace is the Query Editor of the newsletter. They have been doing research for a long time and are currently reading the old Berea newspapers (beginning in 1869) hoping to publish next year the 1st ten years of obituaries, marriages and deaths. The Berea Library has the old newspapers of film but has none of the material indexed. It is a time consuming process and certainly a labor of love. Grace and Carol have graciously volunteered to be on the lookout for any items with Polish names and definitely anything which mentions St. Adalbert's parish. Carol has a lot of the years indexed so if any of you need a name looked up, like a ancestor who settled in Berea in the mid to late nineteenth century, let me know either by email (Edjmendyka@aol.com) or send me a letter at the group's address. I'll pass it along to the Williams sisters. It always amazes how many beautiful people one comes in contact with in genealogy. By the way, their group has a book for sale entitled; *Memories in Stone, Strongsville Cemetery Book, Strongsville, Cuyahoga Co., Oh*. It lists 2974 internments from the years 1816 to 1994. The cost is \$20.00 plus \$1.40 tax (if resident of Ohio) and plus \$2.50 for postage and handling if the book is to be mailed. Anyone having ancestors buried in Strongsville might find this book interesting.

## From *The Berea Enterprise* Newspaper— 1904

Thanks to Ms. Grace Williams

Jan. 15, 1904

**MARRIED.**—Mr. Edward Belter and Miss Frances Quszenski, were married at St. Adalbert's church on Monday morning, Jan. 11, 1904, by Rev. Dr. Paul Cwiakala. Mr. Belter is prominent in Polish circles and the young couple have the best wishes of all.

April 8, 1904

### LEG OFF.

In an attempt to board an east-bound local freight at the Berea yards Monday afternoon, Joseph Kozminsky slipped and was thrown under the wheels. His right leg was so badly mangled that amputation became necessary, the limb being taken off below the knee.

Kozminsky, who is sixteen years of age, resides at No. 204 Seymour avenue, Cleveland. The boy's parents were immediately notified, and his father, Mark Kozminsky, an employee of the Linndale car shops, arrived in Berea in time to accompany his son to the Cleveland General Hospital.

April 22, 1904

**IT SEEMS** that the verdict against the village for \$500 in the Kraszewski lawsuit was not granted on the wet cellar charge, but from the fact that the sewer empties too near his house. While this fact should receive the attention of the village authorities, there is no justice in the verdict. He should receive a yearly indemnity, and all former occupants of the house should be remunerated, if they begin along this line. There is much talk that Berea's sewer system needs attention, especially the sewer outlets.

## The Lawsuit

The Cleveland Press says of the Kraszewski lawsuit: An interesting situation is that which faces Berea as a result of the suit brought against it by Martin Kraszewski, in which he has succeeded in getting a verdict of \$500. The action was for \$10,000 damages, the plaintiff claiming that the village was maintaining a nuisance near his home in the form of a sink well into which the sewage system of the village drained. He claimed that the odors which rose from the sink well drove his boarders away and made the members of his family sick. The suit, which has just been tried, was begun four years ago. The cause of action was then four years old. The law allows a person to bring as many actions as he wants for damages caused by a nuisance, but the statute of limitations says that no cause of action more than four years old shall be allowed to be maintained. Hence, in order to collect as much as possible, nuisance actions are usually brought every four years.

The amount of money, given Kraszewski by the jury in this case is for the four years prior to the time the petition was filed. Another cause of action has now accrued, and Atty. Harry Garfield, who represented Kraszewski in the case just tried, is preparing to bring another suit against the village for the four years which have elapsed since the petition was filed. Unless the village removes the nuisance, Kraszewski's law suit will become a continuous performance.

April 29, 1904

May 20, 1904

## Drowned in a Cistern.

Joseph Wenzjenski, aged three years, was drowned, Thursday, by falling into a cistern, at his home on Fair street. He was a son of Edward Wenzjenski.

The funeral will be held from St. Adalbert's church.

May 27, 1904

## Accidental Shooting.

By the accidental discharge of a revolver in the hands of John Schuerline, clerk at Goette's grocery, Walter Koszlo, aged nineteen, was shot in the face, below the cheek bone. The bullet cannot be located.

June 10, 1904

—T. Karmlowicz, residing on the south side, died at his home Sunday, June 5. He was 37 years old and leaves a wife and five children. The funeral took place Tuesday at St. Adalbert's church, Rev. Dr. Paul Cwiakala officiating.

July 8, 1904

Clarence Bartoszek and Pearl Taylor, residing on the Bagley road east of town, were badly injured by the explosion of a repeating torpedo cane. Bartoszek was working the cane when the entire contents exploded, taking a piece of his leg below the knee. A piece of the cane went across the street and nearly amputated Mr. Taylor's thumb.

July 29, 1904

Polish Joe, who has made his home at Vigil for several years past, came over to Columbia to help thru harvest, gained a residence in ten days, was taken sick and was taken to the County infirmary at Elyria.

## The Marshal In Trouble.

Sunday evening Marshal W. B. Kobie and Leon Bashinski were both locked up in the village bastille and they remained there until Monday afternoon, when they were released on bail.

It seems that there was a disturbance on the street and the night watchman arrested Bashinski, and it is claimed that Marshal Kobie interfered and tried to create more disturbance. After Bashinski had been locked up, the night watch got assistance and landed the marshal.

After the marshal had been locked up, it was discovered that he had keys to the cells and he immediately walked out into the corridor. He then put his key in the lock of the outside door, he being on the inside, and it looked as though the marshal had the "key to the situation." Mr. Klink then put a padlock on the outside and stood guard at the unprotected corridor windows until Mayor Marting arrived home Monday, before whom they had a hearing. The trial was set for Wednesday.

—The cases came up for hearing before Mayor Marting Wednesday morning and Bashinski was fined \$5 and costs and sentence suspended during good behavior. Marshal Kobie asked for a trial and the case was set for Thursday of next week.

It seems that people had trouble spelling Polish names even back in 1904. We are grateful to Grace Williams for sending us these copies of news items. It gives us a glimpse of what life was like for the early immigrants of Berea.

# History of St. John Cantius Parish

Continued from the last newsletter—



*The seventh pastor of St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish,  
Rev. Ralph A. Bodziony*

## **Rev. R. A. Bodziony's Pastorate 1973-Present**

The seventh (and present) pastor of the St. John Cantius Parish community is Rev. Ralph A. Bodziony. Father Ralph, as he is affectionately called, was born on November 10, 1929, the son of Jacob and Sophia (nee Setlak) Bodziony. He attended St. Hyacinth Grade School, Benedictine High School and John Carroll University. He studied at the following seminaries: St. Gregory the Great in Cincinnati, St. Mary's in Norwood and St. Mary's in Cleveland. Having completed his priestly studies, he was ordained on May 24, 1958 at St. John Cathedral by Archbishop Edward F. Hoban. His first assignment was at St. Mary of Czestochowa where he spent five years (1958-1963). He was then transferred to St. Adalbert in Berea where he spent six years (1963-1969). He came to St. John Cantius as an assistant on September 30, 1969 and

remained in that capacity until the retirement of Father Szudarek on January 2, 1973. Father Ralph was installed as pastor of St. John Cantius on January 28, 1973.

This year, 1998, is a very significant year, not only in the life of the parish but also in Father Ralph's life. The parish celebrates its one hundredth anniversary. Father Ralph celebrates his fortieth anniversary as a priest and his twenty fifth anniversary as pastor of this parish. He has been pastor longer than any of his predecessors. And the years of his pastorate have not been easy ones.

If there is one phrase to characterize the history of the parish during Father Ralph's pastorate, it's, "the struggle to survive". In the Annual Parish Report for the year 1977-1978 (from the midyear of '77 to the midyear of '78), the questions are asked, "Is this a National Parish? If it is, do the majority of your parishioners maintain a close identity with their ethnic background? Explain." The explanation given is, "Without the support of the parishioners who belong for ethnic services, we would not exist". Another question posed has to do with what are the long range projects or special goals of the parish. The answer given to this query, in capital letters is, "SURVIVAL". Later on, in 1993 when the parish was celebrating its ninety fifth anniversary, a small book of photographs of various parish groups and parishioners was put out for the occasion. In the introduction, Father Ralph states, "We have been a "Survivor" during these changes", referring to the many changes that had taken place. And indeed, the parish continues to be a "survivor".

When a parish is growing, one can pretty well determine where to allocate its funds and where to concentrate its attentions, spiritual and otherwise. When a parish is in a period of decline, the task of managing the parish is much more difficult. Income is decreasing and how is one to maintain the parish? Where does one make the cuts, what are the parish's priorities, what are the programs whose budgets must be reduced or eliminated altogether? None of these are easy questions to answer but they all need to be addressed.



A case in point was what to do with the Sister's Convent. There were only a few Sisters living there in 1976 and more and more of the teachers were lay people. It was not economically feasible to maintain the old convent. And so, another smaller convent was established at 2265 W. 10th St.. The convent on Professor Ave. was taken over by Catholic Charities and turned into an alcoholic rehabilitation center, a halfway house, called *The Matt Talbot Inn*. In this way, the expenditures of the parish were reduced and the facility continued to serve the Greater Cleveland Community in a much needed area.

Another problem that needed to be addressed was what to do with the old elementary school. Grade school enrollment was declining and the smaller numbers didn't warrant using the building. The pupils in the grade school were combined with those of *Our Lady of Mercy Parish* for a few years but that didn't work out. In 1977 the student body of the grade school was moved to the high school building which was being underutilized. There was some discussion in 1981-82 about converting the old elementary school into apartments for the elderly. The projections for this conversion proved to be too costly and the project was dropped. For a time, the school was used as a multi-service center housing a Spanish chapel, meeting rooms for the K of C and a Golden Age Center. This did not prove to be workable. Then, the building was used for storage and "flea market" sales were held there. Some of the proceeds from the sales were used later to help pay for the refurbishing of the church organ. Finally, in 1996, the building was leased to PEP (Positive Education Program), a unique educational program for special children. The school took on the name of *Phoenix Place*. In this way, the parish realized some income and the facility was being used in a positive manner.

Another area that needed to be looked at was that of Social Programs. There were growing numbers of people who were unemployed and living below the poverty level. Also, thanks to modern medicine, people were living longer but not all of them were enjoying their twilight years. And there was the problem of addiction, alcohol and drugs.

In August of 1986, with the cooperation of the Council of Churches, the parish opened a Hunger Center. It

does not serve daily meals, as St. Augustine does, but distributes canned goods and other staples to the needy twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The parish has had a Golden Age Club since it was founded on April 10, 1957. It needs to be nurtured. The club continues to be a place for the seniors to get together and socialize. They also contribute in that they make pierogis for various parish events. And, when the old convent became a alcoholic rehab center, a Alcoholics Anonymous group was formed and they meet at the center weekly. And so the parish commitment to the community continues.

There are other programs in which the parish is involved. Some of these programs are with other parishes, some with Catholic Charities, and some with other community groups. A few of these programs are: a special Spanish Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul Society aid to the poor, Day Care, Special Services to the Elderly, Credit Union, Housing Assistance and whatever else may be needed to help someone. When the parish claims that it has served God and the community for one hundred years, it is not an empty claim.

Many important events occurred during Father Ralph's pastorate. The most important one took place on October 16, 1978, when a Polish Cardinal from Krakow by the name of Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II. He was the first non-Italian pope elected in four hundred and fifty five years; the first Polish pope in the history of the world and the first Polish pope in over a thousand years of Polish Catholicism. It was during his reign that the entire Communist Empire collapsed and he most certainly played a major role in its demise. With the death of Communism, the countries of Eastern Europe were once again free to seek their own destiny.

During these years, many Poles were singled out for high honors. In 1978, a Jewish Pole (or Polish Jew, whichever one prefers) by the name of Isaac B. Singer won the Nobel Prize for Literature. A naturalized American citizen, he wrote in Yiddish about village life in Poland. In 1980, a Polish poet by the name of Czeslaw Milosz, won the prize again. And in 1996, the same prize was won by another Pole, this time a woman by the name of Wislawa Szymborska. So the Poles were well represented in the field of literature

on the international scene. In 1983, Lech Walesa won the Nobel Peace Prize. And in 1994, the Pope, John Paul II, was named *Man of the Year* by Time Magazine. Quite an impressive list of honors!

Closer to home, other events were taking place. In 1984, the parish held its first Polish Heritage Festival over the Labor Day Weekend. It has proved to be a very popular event. Parishioners, past and present, and friends from all over the county and beyond, come to enjoy themselves. It is a three-day celebration which is quickly becoming a Labor Day tradition for Cleveland's *Polonia*.

A very sad and tragic event occurred in April of 1986. From the Catholic Universe Bulletin (April 11, 1986), a leading story is headlined, "Explosion at Cantius Kills Housekeeper". The story continues,

"An explosion of undetermined cause destroyed a large section of the two-story brick parish recreation center at 2265 W. 10th St. that housed a gym, bowling alley, and living quarters of housekeeper Bernice Muck. Firefighters found her body in her second floor rear quarters, in the main area of the explosion".

Ms. Muck had worked at the parish for about twenty years. It was a tragic incident in the history of the parish. There was an investigation into the causes of the blast but no definite findings were ever arrived at.

The recreational center was insured and rebuilt. The \$636,000 renovation cost was almost entirely paid through insurance coverage. On October 15, 1988 at 4:00 P.M., a Mass of Thanksgiving was offered by Bishop Anthony M. Pilla on the occasion of the Ninetieth Anniversary of the parish. This was followed by a blessing of a reconstructed entrance to the building and then a banquet was held in the newly renovated gym. On one of the walls of the renovated building hangs a plaque to honor the memory of Bernice Muck.

With the approach of the nineties, it seemed as though society was calling a "time-out" and taking a rest. The Vietnam War had been concluded, much of the racial strife of earlier decades was subsiding and it seemed that we were entering a time for "healing". In 1987, Cleveland emerged from default. By 1990, Cleveland was the twenty-third largest city in the nation with a population of 505,616 people. In forty years from 1950 to 1990, the city went from the seventh largest

city in the nation to the twenty-third. This gives an indication of the upheaval and social restlessness of the times.

Still and all, things were beginning to sort themselves out. The big companies who had intended to move their operations, did so by the nineties. Many of their employees followed them. Many other Clevelanders, seeking "greener pastures", also relocated to other parts of the nation. The "movers and shakers" of the city were well aware of the demographics and the current trends, and were planning accordingly. In 1990, Tower City Center formally opened; in 1991, Society Center Building became the highest building in the city (even higher than the Terminal Tower); in 1993, the Cleveland Indians played their last game in Municipal Stadium which was scheduled to be demolished; in 1994, Jacobs Field became the new home of our beloved Indians and the Gateway Sports Complex opened; in 1995, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum opened and by 1999, we hope to have our Browns once again playing football on the shores of Lake Erie in a new football stadium. Pretty heady stuff for a city which many were consigning to the scrap heap of the "Rust Bowl" not too many years previously.

During the nineties, the parish also was moving ahead. In 1992, a beautiful Gothic altar was installed in the sanctuary; in 1994, the church organ was refurbished; in 1996, an Endowment Fund was established for the church; in 1997, the church was repainted in anticipation of our One Hundredth Anniversary. Not too shabby!

To chronicle the decline of the parish is very depressing. Perhaps a few figures will suffice to indicate the enormity of the change which has taken place. The last Confirmation service of this century at St. John Cantius took place last year (1997). There were twenty-two candidates for the Sacrament. On April 26, 1998, the year of our centenary, there will be six children receiving First Holy Communion. The grade school has an enrollment of sixty two for grades Kindergarten through eight. There are four full-time lay teachers, two part-time lay teachers, one teaching Sister and two staff people assigned to the school. The parish community currently consists of approximately

two hundred families and two hundred and seventy five individual households. When one compares these figures to those of earlier years of the century, the differences are quite evident. Still---the parish survives and in fact, things are beginning to look up.

From all indications, it appears as though the Tremont area is being rediscovered. For the first time in the memory of even old-time residents, there is new, residential construction going on in the neighborhood. On the east-side of West 7th St. from Railway Ave. to Literary Ave. new homes have been built along the length of the entire block. Many houses along West 11th, West 14th and Auburn Ave. have been remodeled and greatly improve the appearance of the neighborhood. The old "Lincoln Bath House" has been developed into a condominium complex. The apartment building on the corner of West 14th St. and Kenilworth Ave. has been converted into "assisted-living" apartments for the elderly. And there doesn't appear to be any letup in the interest being shown in the area.

There have been several articles written recently about the desirability of living in the Tremont area. To anyone who works downtown, the location is ideal. One doesn't need to fight the morning or evening rush-hour traffic. From the Tremont area, you can be in town in ten minutes. For those who like to be "near the action" (Jacobs Field, Gund Arena, the Flats), Tremont is the place to be. Access to the Interstate Hwys is close by. So, there are many things which favor the Tremont location for development.

There have been a number to new restaurants that have opened up in the last couple of years. And strange as it may seem, artists have taken a liking to the neighborhood. New art-galleries have opened and perhaps we are witnessing the establishment of an "art-colony" along the west bank of the Cuyahoga.

What does all this change and redevelopment mean to the parish? With a renewal of the neighborhood, the parish is bound to increase and grow. The real change will be in the character of the parish. It will in time, lose its ethnic, Polish character and become "homogenized American". Oh, some people who still live in the area will claim their Polish ancestry, but will no longer speak Polish, or pray in Polish or attend services in Polish. The "old-timers" who knew and used

the Polish language are passing on. Change is inevitable and one can see the handwriting on the wall. But let all future generations remember that this parish was founded by poor Polish immigrants and that this magnificent church was built by their labors for the greater glory of God.


## Epilogue

In 1978, Cardinal Wojtyla in Krakow, in his last sermon celebrating the Third of May holiday as a Cardinal, before becoming pope, had this to say:

" After all, each one of us possesses a heritage within us---a heritage in which generations and centuries of achievement and calamity, of triumph and failure, have contributed: a heritage which somehow takes deeper root and grows new tissues from every one of us. We cannot live without it. It is our soul."

The future pope was talking to his fellow Poles. The words can aptly apply to us just as well, those of us who have been associated in any way with St. John Kanty (Cantius) Parish. The parish community, the church, its history, its founders, the neighborhood --- all these things are a part of us and we are a part of the whole, for better or worse. Such is the reality.

We have taken a glance at the history of the parish. It is a rich and colorful history. We can be proud of our ancestors and the fruit of their labors. What the future holds, no one can say. Best to leave it in God's hands and *His Will Be Done. Sto Lat !!!*



After one hundred and two years the St. John Cantius Parish is without a school. The elementary school closed this year. The high school closed a number of years ago. It was no longer economically feasible to keep them open.

In the past several years two Polish-American Catholic churches in the Cleveland area have closed their doors. They are, Our Lady of Czestochowa and St. Josephat's. In each case it was very sad to be in attendance at the last mass. People who had received the sacraments there, buried their family members there, went to school there, came for the last time to say good-bye to their beloved parish. More than a few tears were shed. Nothing is more certain than change, but is it all for the better?

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**"OUR POLISH ANCESTORS"**  
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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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