

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia i
Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!
2007-2008



A Blessed Christmas and a Healthy and
Prosperous New Year!

January Meeting Date—Because New Year falls on the first Tuesday of January, our next meeting will be held on the second Tuesday, January 8, 2008.

Welcome—New Member—Witamy

Ron & Cathy Kraine, interested in surnames:
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DOLNICEK, KOSHLA, KOSLA, KOSZLA, KRAINE,
KRAJCZYNSKI, WITKOWSKI

Continued on page 11

History of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish of Lorain, Ohio

Third Installment

Years of Many Changes

Fr. Edwin J. Osowski, Assistant Pastor of St. John Cantius, succeeded Fr. Dembowski on January 31, 1952. Fr. Osowski was well respected in the diocese and is remembered as an affable priest by those who knew him. He had ambitious plans to develop the parish but, unfortunately, was not of robust health. He became ill in March, 1954, but continued his duties as pastor. While preparing for the 11:00 Sunday Mass on September 19, he died in his room of a heart condition. His body was returned to the rectory on Monday and transferred to the church at 3:00 on Wednesday, when a Rosary service, given by all the priests of the Lorain deanery and some from Cleveland, was held. The Dean of the Lorain Deanery and Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Elyria, Msgr. William Newton, conducted Vespers at 7:30. That evening 3,000 people viewed the body of the 53-year-old pastor. At 10:30 Thursday morning, Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus escorted Archbishop Edward F. Hoban from the rectory to the church, where the Office of the Dead was chanted. Knights of St. John and Knights of Columbus served as a color guard. After the Divine Office, the archbishop celebrated a Pontifical Requiem Mass. He was assisted by Msgr. Joseph Sztucki of St. Hyacinth Church in Cleveland. Deacons of Honor were Fr. Leo Rygwalski of St. Stanislaus in Lorain and Fr. Frank Szudarek of St. Hedwig's Church in Akron. Fr. Stanley Podbielski, Director of Cemeteries for the Diocese of Cleveland, was deacon to the archbishop and Fr. Casimir Cudnik of Holy Cross Church in Elyria was subdeacon. Msgr. Newton gave the sermon. More than 1,000 people and 300 priests filled the church to overflowing for the services. Fr. Osowski was buried in Calumet City, near Chicago, the town of which he was a native. In the absence of a pastor, Fr. Casimir Pilatowski, Assistant Pastor, was appointed administrator pro tem.

Fr. Stanislaus S. Rybacki was named the eleventh pastor of Nativity on October 29, 1954, and installed two days later. He previously had been pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Cleveland. The most potentially catastrophic event in the parish's history occurred during his pastorate when on February 7, 1956, a nine-year-old Central Lorain boy started a fire in the altar servers' sacristy. It is believed that that afternoon he removed some coins from a poor box and dropped a taper, used to light vigil lights, onto a rug in the sacristy. The fire quickly spread. Fr. Rybacki and Fr. Casimir Pilatowski, Assistant Pastor, attempted to quench the fire with extinguishers before the firemen arrived. The former received burns to the forehead and latter had his hair singed. The firemen did an excellent job fighting the blaze but before they were able to complete their work, the entire sacristy with all its supplies, including 24 new servers' cassocks, was destroyed as were its doors, ceiling, and stained glass windows, which broke from the heat. The fire made its way through the corridor, leading to the church, ruining the passageway and burning the rug on the right side of the side altar. Fortunately, a firewall in the sacristy prevented the flames from consuming the church. However, smoke did enter the interior and fill the entire space. Valuable paintings on the walls were destroyed and the altars, statues, and pews were covered with smoke film. After the firemen had completed their successful efforts, large blowers were brought in and 150 parishioners immediately began the hours of long work removing debris, scrubbing floors, and wiping the altars, statues, and pews. The indefatigable parishioners held their usual Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help that evening and attended Masses in the morning. Costs to rebuild the damaged section of the church and redecorate the interior came to \$63,000. This work was initiated the following March.

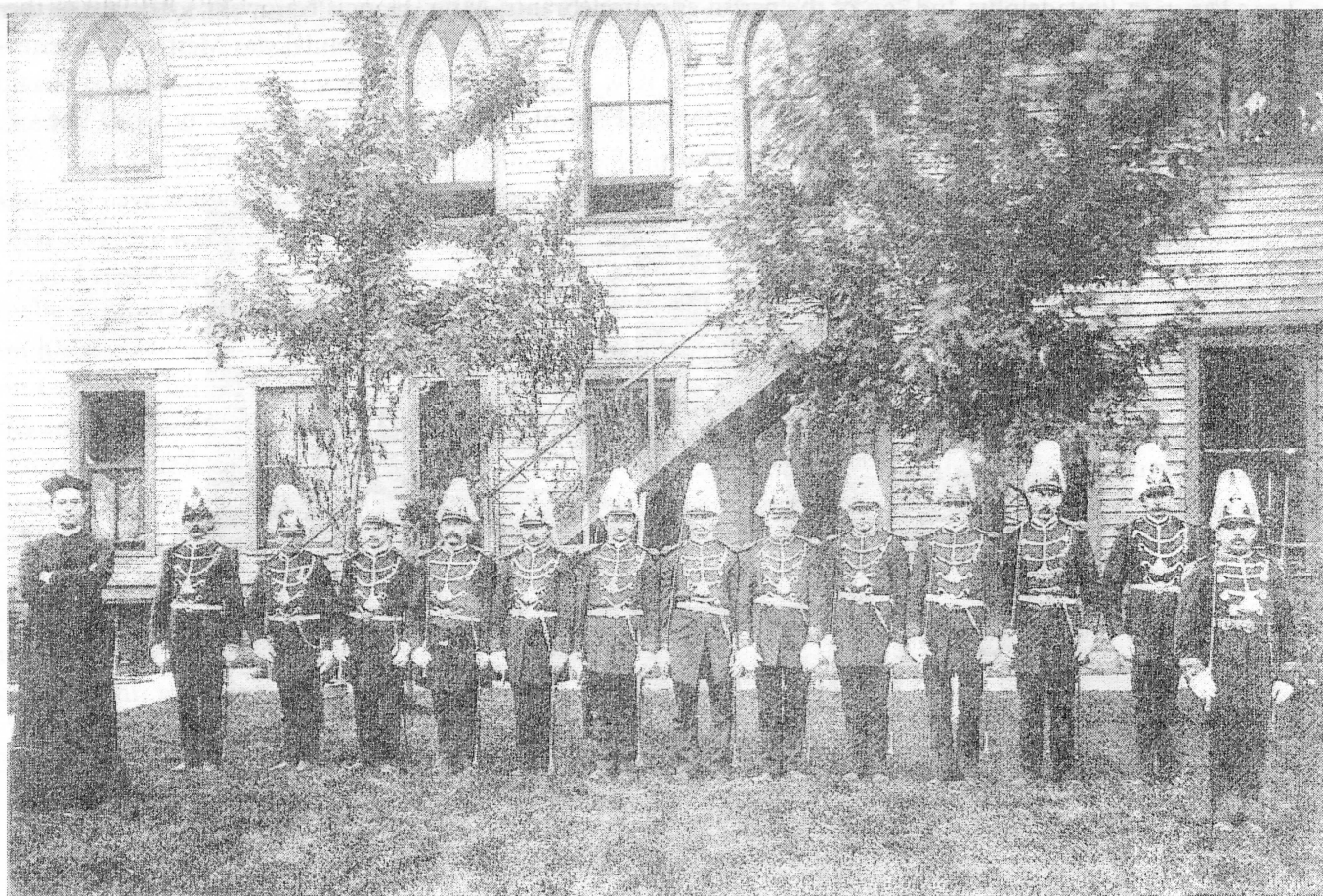
In 1956 the Nativity PTA became affiliated with the diocesan union and thus became the Nativity Parent-Teacher Union (PTU). On June 2, 1957, a son of the parish, Fr. Arnold Petrosky, T. O. R., offered his first Mass in Nativity Convent, the site chosen due to the repairs occurring in the church. Fr. Rybacki celebrated a Solemn High Mass of Thanksgiving at Nativity on the occasion of his fortieth anniversary of ordination on April 24, 1962. Rev. Anthony Gawlik served as deacon and Rev. Francis Bartnikowski as subdeacon. Rev. John Deka was the Master of Ceremonies and Rev. Agnellus Sobolewski, O. F. M., gave the sermon. A dinner and special program followed. In 1965 both the church and school were repainted and redecorated. On May 22 of that same year, another parishioner, Gerald J. Keller, joined the sacerdotal ranks.

Fr. Rybacki retired on February 1, 1966, due to poor health. He died the next year on January 11 at his home in Mentor-on-the-Lake. His body lay in state in the church for three days. The last day, being Sunday,

Vespers of the Dead were offered. The following day, the Office of the Dead was chanted and a concelebrated funeral Mass offered with Bishop Clarence Isseemann as the main celebrant.

Fr. Stanislaus J. Ciolek was named the next pastor on February 15, 1966, coming to Nativity from Sacred Heart Parish in Cleveland where he was as assistant. During his tenure, on August 15, 1966, an additional lot to be used for parking next to the school was purchased for \$14,500 and in September, 1967, a new rectory and five-car garage were built, the funds coming from 50/50 tickets sales. Sad to note, Fr. Ciolek also expired as pastor at the age of 59, having fainted and drowned while bathing on Monday, March 9, 1970. On Tuesday and Wednesday, his body lay in state in the rectory he helped to build and his remains were borne to the church on Thursday. Cursillista prayer services were held on Wednesday and the Rosary said by the Knights of Columbus on Thursday. A Mass with the school children was said at 9:00 Friday morning and Bishop Isseemann and Twelve clergymen concelebrated the funeral Mass at 11:00. Among those assisting the bishop were Fr. Ciolek's two brothers, Fr. Joseph Ciolek, a former assistant at Nativity, and Msgr. Casimir Ciolek. A sister, Sr. Mary Leonia, also formerly at Nativity, was present as well. Also assisting the bishop were Fathers Edward Gackowski of Transfiguration Church and Francis Szczepanski of Sacred Heart Church, both in Cleveland. In the eulogy, given both in English and Polish by Fr. Leo Rygwalski, Dean of Northern Lorain County and Pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in Lorain, he stated, "He made changes here. He was prudent, dedicated, persistent, maybe even stubborn. Let us pray that we may have more such faithful and dedicated priests." Knights of Columbus and St. John again acted as honor guards. Members of the parish council served as pallbearers. As the 1,000 people present left the church, the priests formed as honor guard, lining the aisle as the choir sang a Polish hymn. Fr. Theodore Marszal, Assistant Pastor, acted as administrator upon Fr. Ciolek's death.

Fr. Casimir Cudnik assumed the pastorate of Nativity on April 2, 1970, coming to Lorain from St. Adalbert's Parish in Berea. It was Fr. Cudnik who had the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa restored and placed in the main altar of the church. His time at Nativity was tragically brief as he died at the age of 62 of a heart attack while golfing on Wednesday June 23, 1971. His body lay in state in the rectory on Friday and



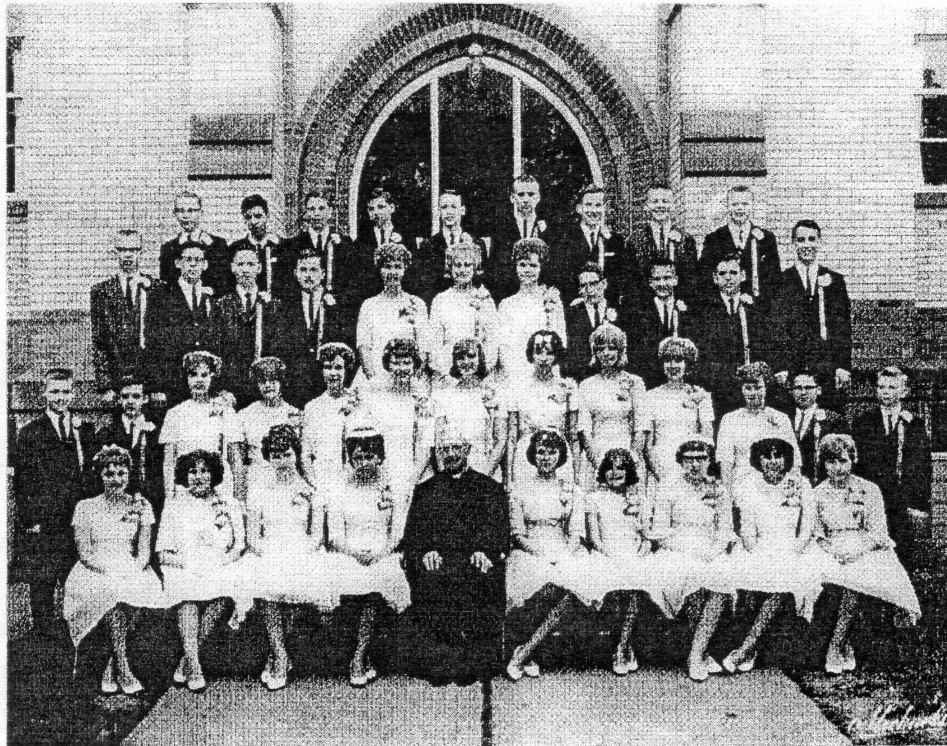
Fr. Charles Ruszkowski and a fraternal Organization—Circa 1905

Saturday and was moved to the church at 3:00 on Sunday, when Vespers of the Dead were held. The funeral Mass was offered at 11:00 on Monday with Bishop Issenmann as the principal celebrant and the pastor's brother, Fr. Chester Cudnik, Pastor of St. Barbara's Parish in Cleveland and former assistant at Nativity, and member of Fr. Casimir's ordination class as concelebrants. Once again, Fr. Marszal maintained the interim administration of the parish.

Fr. Casimir Pilatowski returned to Nativity, this time as pastor, on July 7, 1971, having been previously in charge of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Grafton, the former mission of Nativity. The first major project he tackled was the rebuilding of the church organ. The original instrument was donated by Andrew Carnegie, the famous steel man and philanthropist, in 1917. Fr. Radecki traveled to Pittsburgh with blueprints of the new church because he had heard that Mr. Carnegie was providing organs to newly constructed churches in the Cleveland area. Mr. Carnegie responded that the organs he was providing were too small for Nativity but that he would have one built for the church if the parish could raise \$1,000 for shipping and installation. The Votteler-Holtkamp-Sparling instrument that resulted was the largest organ that firm had built at the time. By 1971 the instrument was in a grave state of disrepair, so it was decided that it should be completely rebuilt. Electric valves and new quiet motors and blowers were installed. A new cabinet was built and one row of pipes was replaced. The chimes, donated by the Cecilian Choir in 1946, were retained. Joseph Nagel of Cleveland performed all this work for \$15,000. A concert, displaying the capabilities of the renewed instrument, took place on December 5. In 1972 the church was equipped with a new boiler and heating system.

The Diamond Jubilee

The Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 9, 1973, was the day chosen to celebrate the parish's seventy-fifth anniversary. A Pontifical Concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving was offered at 4:00 with Bishop Issenmann as the main celebrant and Fathers Pilatowski, Marszal, Leo Rygwalski, Dean of the North Lorain Deanery and Pastor Emeritus of St. Stanislaus Church in Lorain, Gerald Keller, Associate Pastor of St. Barnabas Church in Northfield and son of the parish, and Arnold Petrosky, T. O. R., of St. Leo's Parish in Philadelphia and son of the parish as concelebrants. Msgr. Francis Karowski, Officialis of the Diocesan Tribunal gave the homily and Fr. Edward Luca, Vice Officialis of the Tribunal was Master of Ceremonies. Assisting at the Mass were other sons of the parish, Rev. Deacon George Losiewicz and seminarians Gerald Zellers and William Knoll. The Mass used was that for the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God. The music was a blend of new, traditional, and Polish hymns.



Fr. Stanislaus Rybacki and the 1965 Graduating Class

After the Mass there was a social hour at 6:00 and a banquet at 6:30 at the Lorain Youth Center. Nearly 900 parishioners and friends, some traveling great distances for the event, packed the hall. Deacon Losiewicz gave the opening prayer and Fr. Keller the invocation. Joseph Zahorec, Mayor of Lorain, brought greetings from the city and a resolution passed by the city council, commemorating the anniversary. State Representative Leonard Camera read two resolutions, one from Governor Gilligan and one from the Ohio House of Representatives. The parish was represented by Dr. Jerome Socha and Mrs. Stan Kufel. Fr. Rygwalski gave remarks and these were followed by the address of Bishop Isenmann in which he said, "Anniversary celebrations are only deserving if we can say in our hearts we have kept the faith." He also expressed his pleasure in the congregation's participation in the day's Mass, stating, "Participation makes the Mass a family affair and this is what it should be." In English and then Polish, Fr. Pilatowski thanked the parishioners and those who had prepared the celebration. There was a note of sadness that Fr. Marszal was not able to attend the evening's events, having been taken to the hospital after the Mass due to kidney stones. Fr. Petrosky gave the benediction and Fr. Pilatowski led the crowd in singing several Polish songs and hymns. The evening concluded with dancing to music provided by the Polka Sharps.

Parish celebrations continued in 1974 when the newly ordained Father George Losiewicz said his first Mass on June 9 in Nativity Church. A special event in the lives of our Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis, occurred on May 16, 1976. They celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of their order's founding and the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Marymount Province, headquartered in Garfield Heights. The Mother House, built there, became the source of many of our teaching sisters who no longer had to travel from Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Fathers Pilatowski, Keller, and Joseph Hilinski, Associate Pastor at Nativity, concelebrated a Jubilee Mass in the presence of the Co-Provincial, Sister Mary Theresine, and 100 sisters. The last contiguous lot of parish property was procured in September, 1978.

Another joyous event was celebrated on March 25, 1979, the fortieth anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Pilatowski, on which occasion he offered a Mass of Thanksgiving, attended by parishioners and visiting priests and sisters. The homily was given by Fr. Marszal, then Associate Pastor of St. John's Cathedral. A banquet and dance were held in the pastor's honor later that day. In addition to Fr. Pilatowski, other distinguished guests on the dais were Fathers Frank Kucia, Pastor of St. Stanislaus Church, Gary Chmura, Associate Pastor at Nativity, Joseph Ciolek, and Leo Rygwalski. The celebration was concluded with dancing to the music of Jasins Polka Tops.



Fathers Gary Churma and Casimir Pilatowski and the Graduating Class of 1981

As required, Fr. Pilatowski resigned on his seventieth birthday, September 6, 1982. Fr. Chmura assumed the position of administrator upon the pastor's departure. A special Mass was celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop A. James Quinn, Vicar for the Western Region, at Nativity at 12:00 on Sunday, April 30, 1989, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the pastor emeritus's ordination. Concelebrants were Fathers Gary Chmura, Joseph Hilinski, and Theodore Marszal, former associate pastors with Fr. Pilatowski at Nativity, and the then present pastor, Fr. Robert Bielek. A dinner at the United Polish Club in honor of the pastor emeritus was held afterward. Fr. Pilatowski delivered his soul to the Lord at the age of 81 on April 24, 1994. His funeral Mass was celebrated by Bishop Anthony Pilla at 10:00 on April 30 in the Church of St. Gabriel the Archangel in Concord Township, Ohio, his last place of residence. Father Urban Reichlin, a friend and classmate, gave the homily.

Fr. Robert M. Bielek was named the fifteenth pastor of Nativity B. V. M. on November 4, 1982. He came to Nativity after serving as an associate pastor at Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Bernadette's Parishes. One of his first imperatives was to reawaken and increase the involvement of the parishioners in church life and leadership. Thus, with the help of Fr. Benedict Sellers, O. S. B., Associate Pastor, a men's and then a women's renewal program was initiated early in 1984. The successful results of this activity continue to be felt in the parish to this day. Under Fr. Bielek's leadership, the pastoral council grew and the finance and spiritual commissions developed.

While there were many areas of growth in the parish, one grim reality was becoming more intensely apparent, viz. school tuition costs were rising but attendance at the school was declining. The operation of the school was requiring 86% of the parish's income. Other parishes in Lorain were facing the same problem. Therefore, in 1986 a study to "Strengthen Our Catholic Schools" was initiated. Pastors and educators met, consulted, and made difficult choices. The decision to open seventh and eighth grade classes at Lorain Catholic High School would have reduced the number of parishioners' children at Nativity School to less than 60 and made it obvious that the parish school could not survive. With the agreement that the other Lorain parishes with elementary programs, St. Mary's, St. Peter's, and St. John's, would receive Nativity's children, the parish sadly accepted the most painful event in its history, the closing of Nativity B. V. M. School after 87 years of existence. This occurred on June 4, 1987, after a farewell carnival for the students. The school building continued to be used for daily educational purposes for a number of years by the Head Start program and is still utilized for the parish school of religion, meetings, and receptions. Many of the sisters stayed at Nativity, serving the aged, the educational needs of the young, daily church maintenance, and the spiritual fulfillment of the entire parish.

Another serious concern was facing the parish at the time Fr. Bielek took charge. The fire department indicated that the church wiring was unsafe and the roof was not sound and would have to be replaced at a cost of \$60,000. A committee was formed to look at the physical plant and the members enlisted the help of the respected architect Thomas Ziska. He pointed out that there were also serious problems with the masonry in the front of the church and around the windows in the school. It was also necessary to repair the stained glass windows and paint the church interior. A conservative estimate of all the above projects came to \$320,000. A Preservation and Restoration (PAR) Campaign was begun in November, 1984. Funds were solicited and prayers for success offered to Our Lady of Czestochowa. By the end of the drive on the parish's ninetieth anniversary, \$393,596 was pledged. In addition to the above described work, the church was made handicapped accessible, new light fixtures, sound system, and carpeting were installed, the grounds received fresh landscaping, and additional repairs were made to the convent, school, and garage. Much of the remodeling was done through the volunteered time and talents of parishioners. Some of the changes observed inside the church were relocating the enlarged confessionals to the back of the church to increase access for all and allow for face to face confessions, moving the tabernacle and baptismal font, refinishing the floors, removing some pews and turning the front ones toward the altar, and installing restrooms in the sacristy. The restoration took two years and cost \$375,355 but with the collected pledges all bills were paid and some money left over for future preservation.

The success of the PAR Campaign was celebrated during the festivities marking the parish's ninetieth anniversary on January 24, 1988. The celebrants for the 3:00 Liturgy were The Most Reverend Anthony Pilla, Bishop of Cleveland and The Most Reverend A. James Quinn, Vicar for the Western Region. Fr. Bielek concelebrated with Fr. Pilatowski, pastors of area parishes, and former associate pastors of Nativity Church. Fr. Marszal, Rector of St. John's Cathedral, was homilist. Deacon Kenneth Piechowski was the Master of Ceremo-

nies and Deacon Frank Humphrey assisted. During the Mass the bishops blessed plaques, containing the names of those who donated to the PAR Campaign. A banquet followed at 5:00 at the Lorain Party Center. Speakers that evening were the former associates, Fathers Gary Chmura, Joseph Hilinski, and Francis Bartnikowski, the Mayor of Lorain, Alex Olejko, Pastoral Council President, Martha Stalinski, Parish Representative, Rita Swartz, Bishops Pilla and Quinn, and Fathers Pilatowski and Bielek. As with all major parish celebrations, the evening was capped by dancing.

During Fr. Bielek's tenure, improved liturgical celebration was stressed and was enhanced by the efforts of many students from Oberlin College. On July 1, 1995, Rev. Mr. Robert J. Dybo, Nativity's first permanent deacon, was appointed to serve at the parish, coming to Lorain from St. Mary's Parish in Elyria. The same year, the administration of the Sisters of St. Joseph, T. O. S. F., asked a number of our sisters to retire from active ministry. With so few sisters remaining, they decided to move to a house near the parish and close the convent. Fortunately, Nativity Parish still benefits from the dedicated service of the members of this congregation. At about the same time the convent was vacated, Head Start no longer needed to rent the school. To maintain the needed revenue, the convent building was rented to Compass House, a facility that helps people in overcoming substance abuse. In 1996 the church was air conditioned through the generous donations of many parishioners. Once again, donations exceeded the cost of the project. On August 4, 1997, Fr. Bielek left Nativity to assume the position of Pastor of St. Leo the Great Parish in Cleveland. The farewell Mass he celebrated on August 3 and the reception afterward were a moving tribute from him to the people of Nativity Parish and to him from his congregation for his almost fifteen years of dedicated service here. Upon his departure, Fr. Ronald J. Turek, formerly an associate pastor at St. Mary's Parish in Mentor, was named administrator. Our current pastor, Fr. Robert J. Glepko, was appointed on December 12, 1997. He came to Nativity from St. Ann's Parish in Cleveland Heights, where he was an associate pastor. Fr. Glepko had served previously in Lorain at the Church of St. Peter.

The year 1997 was designated as a period of preparation and celebration of Nativity Parish's one hundred years of faith and service, although plans began to be formulated more than two years earlier. The spiritual nature of this joyous time was emphasized during The Mission, given by Fr. Walter Hyclack October 20-24, 1996. The opening celebration of the festive year occurred on Sunday, January 5, 1997, with a special Mass offered by The Most Reverend A. James Quinn, Fr. Bielek, and Fr. Gerald Keller, Pastor of St. Adalbert's Parish in Berea. Deacon Dybo was Master of Ceremonies. During the entrance procession, the processional cross, used at the laying of the cornerstone of the church, religious articles from the early part of this century, and icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, an album of historical documents and pictures, and a wooden replica of the church were carried and placed next to the side altar as a remembrance of our Catholic Faith and Polish heritage. Modern, traditional, and Polish hymns were sung by the choir in commemoration of our long history of beautiful liturgical singing. The importance of passing on our heritage was signified by the presence of the Tatra Highlander Dancers. A reception in the school hall afterward demonstrated the importance of fellowship.

A delightful complement to Nativity's celebrations was the Lorain International Festival, which honored the Poles as the spotlight nationality during the week of June 22. A large number of parishioners planned, volunteered for, and participated in the weeklong activities, including the parade in which Nativity had a special float.

Another extremely important observance took place on July 13 when the parish presented its Reunion Picnic. The day began with a Homecoming Mass, celebrated at noon at the Lorain Catholic High School Athletic Field. Concelebrants were Fathers Bielek, Marszall, and Keller. Deacon Dybo assisted. A very special part of this service was the entrance procession with many of the graduating classes of Nativity School represented. Even graduates from the 1920's marched in the line. It was a bittersweet day for Fr. Bielek for he had desired to offer this Mass for so long but he also would be leaving the parish soon. The Mass was followed by a reception in the school commons where refreshment were offered and class directories and memorabilia were displayed. After the reception, the annual parish picnic, which had a record attendance, started. The day was quite successful and brought many good times and happy memories to parish friends and past and present parishioners. Many other wonderful events took place throughout the year and they are listed in Appendix IV.

The parish properties were significantly beautified during 1997. The money raised through the ongoing preservation collection provided the funds to do plaster and paint repairs in the church, to improve the sound

system, to provide new carpeting and furnishings for the rectory which had been unchanged since it was built, to repave the school parking lot, and to install a new and enlarged concrete parking area in back of the rectory. The cost of these projects exceeded \$135,000. All these joyous festivities culminate on this day, January 11, 1998, as we offer together a Mass of Thanksgiving and then continue our celebration with a banquet at DeLuca's Place in the Park. Niech Bedzie Pochwalony Jezus Chrystus—I Na Wieki Wiekow. Amen! Praised Be Jesus Christ—Both Now and Forever. Amen!

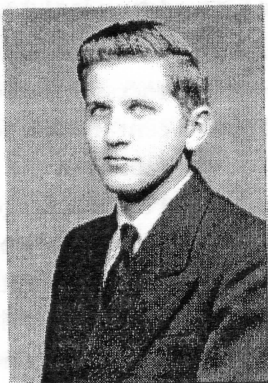
This is the third and final installment of the history of *The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish* of Lorain, Ohio. We have **Frank Kaminski** to thank for donating a copy of this history to our library. All the folks who had anything to do with publishing this history can be proud of themselves. It is an excellent book, very well researched and written. Generations from now will read this book and say a prayer for those who were thoughtful enough to set down all these facts and figures. And on behalf of those of us who read these words today, Thank You.

So many times we read in the papers stories about "heroes". The stories seem to be about men and women who live far away from where we live. Here is a story about a Clevelander, a hero in every sense of the word who died for what he believed in, a "homegrown" hero, a Polish-American man who was born and raised on the Eastside of Cleveland. The story is told by the niece of this man. Lucia is a member of our group.

Brother Roman Wicinski, S. M.

by

Lucia Wicinski Dominak



Brother Roman Wicinski, S. M., was born on December 4, 1929, in a house on Kazimier Avenue in Cleveland. The family home was across the street from the priest's house at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. He was the first child of Karol Wicinski and his second wife, Helena Kuca Wicinski. He was born into a family which included five half-siblings from Karol's first marriage to Marianna Gruzca Wicinski. My father was Roman's eldest half-brother. Helena and Karol would have three more sons after Roman.

From what I have been told, my Uncle Roman seemed destined to a religious vocation. His older sister, Sophie, would often organize the neighborhood children in elaborate mock wedding celebrations. I have heard that he always played the part of the 'priest' on such occasions. In his formal picture from the Marianist Order, he bears an uncanny resemblance to the actor, Jeffrey Hunter, known for his portrayal of Jesus in the movies. They shared the same piercing blue eyes.

Brother Roman went to Sacred Heart of Jesus School and Cathedral Latin High School. He spent time in Mineola, New York, and Dayton, Ohio. He taught mathematics at the University of Dayton. In 1957, the Marianists opened St. Patrick's College in Asaba, Nigeria. Brother Roman became the headmaster of St. Patrick's. Later, he was involved in the Marianist Preparatory School in Epkoma, Nigeria. The preparatory school was established to educate the natives for the priesthood and brotherhood.

During the Biafran Civil War, Brother Roman was killed on April 16, 1968. He had traveled alone to attend a conference of school principals in Benin City in his faithful Volkswagen Beetle. He left Asaba at 8:15 a.m. He stopped at a post office along the way. The war in Nigeria involved Ibo tribesman (the "Biafrans") versus federal government troops. Nigeria had recently received its independence from Great Britain. Brother Roman had been attempting to reopen the school in Asaba as the war was slowing down. Conflicting accounts blame different parties for the murder of Brother Roman. One account states that there were white mercenaries from Russia

in the area, and since Roman had recently visited Poland—a country behind the “Iron Curtain”—he was suspect.

It appears that Roman was detained at a roadblock set up by raiders at the post office in Ogwashi-Uku. There were no known eyewitnesses to the events that ensued. He arrived at approximately 9:00 a.m. At 1:00 p.m., Reverend Richard Wall, a local parish priest was told by a parishioner that Brother Roman had been captured. Rev. Wall was warned of imminent danger and was warned to stay indoors. A few minutes later at 1:20 p.m., nuns at a local hospital were told that Roman had been captured and killed. Brother Roman’s body was found on or near an old door behind the post office.

Lieutenant Colonel Godwin Ally, the commanding officer of the 7th Brigade of the Nigerian Army arrived in Ogwashi-Uku at 4:30 p.m. on April 16th. Lieutenant Ally was told by one of his men that a mercenary had been killed and left behind by the “Biafrans”. Lieutenant Ally immediately recognized the body of Brother Roman and had it sent to Rev. Conlon, S.M., the parish priest in Asaba. Rev. Conlon took the body to St. Patrick’s College and Rev. Thomas Niemira, S.M. He had a pine coffin made. Roman was buried on April 17th next to the Marianist Preparatory School at Epkoma where his body remains today. When the Marianists left the area, the school building and property was given to the local diocese. The Marianists still have a presence in Africa—but not in Nigeria. Various people have told me that Brother Roman’s grave is treated reverently by the locals. I have a stone from Roman’s burial plot that was given to me by a Marianist priest.

Brother Roman’s wrists had been fastened with a vine and nickel-steel handcuffs. He had bullet wounds in his arm, left temple, and chest. Since there is no other evidence of trauma according to the official report from the U.S. Embassy, I can only hope that Brother Roman did not suffer long.

This April will mark the fortieth anniversary of Brother Roman’s death. I was not aware of the circumstances of Roman’s death until I wrote a letter to the Marianist Order in 1996. Often, I had received newsletters and appeals from the Marianists. I had sent away to the Marianist Order for masses, etcetera. Never in their letters did I ever hear any mention of Brother Roman. I asked in my letter if anyone knew Brother Roman?...did anyone ever think about him? I had often felt that Brother Roman and his fate had been slighted, especially when stories about the nuns from the Cleveland Diocese that were killed in El Salvador were retold each year in the local papers and on local television stations.

I received a plethora of information about Roman’s death from Rev. James Fitz, the provincial of the order located in Dayton. I may have been shielded from some of the details in 1968 because I was only 15 years old. At 15, I was one of the oldest nieces and nephews of Brother Roman when the tragedy happened. I was lucky enough to have known Brother Roman in life and to have pleasant memories of his visits back home. My earliest memory was singing a song I had learned in French in the second grade for him. He took a genuine interest. I typed him a letter on my toy typewriter that I got for Christmas when I was nine years old, and he actually responded! I remembered seeing him off at the airport on one of his visits. Most of my memories come from his visit in the summer of 1966. He wasn’t allowed to stay at my grandparents’ house and had to commute from Cathedral Latin High School in my grandfather’s old green Packard. It was around the time of the Hough Riots and someone had written “Soul Brother” in white shoe polish across the back window. Brother Roman accompanied our family to Cedar Point Amusement Park that summer. We visited the “Jungle Larry Safari” attraction. A man from Africa dressed in full native garb became embarrassed when he found out that my uncle lived in Africa. I guess what he was wearing wasn’t the latest in fashion back in Africa.

Back in Cleveland, I remember not believing it when my father told me that Roman was dead. I kept on insisting that it ‘must be some kind of mistake’. A ‘funeral’ was held at Sacred Heart Church for Roman. An empty coffin sat on a catafalque in the front of the church. An easel held a portrait of Roman. Waves of tears and sadness hit me every time I looked at his face.

This April, I hope to attend Mass at Sacred Heart to commemorate the life and death of my uncle, Brother Roman.

Story submitted by:
Lucia Wicinski Dominak

How good is your knowledge of things Polish? How good is your knowledge of Cleveland's Polonia? Of Cleveland's neighborhoods? Here is your chance to excel by answering correctly to:

Cleveland's Polonia Trivial Pursuit*

(Answers at the end of the game.)

- 1) Which of the following dances did not originate in Poland?
A) Krakowiak. B) Mazurka. C) Polka. D) Oberek or use Kujawiak
- 2) In 1854 the first permanent settlement of Polish immigrants in the United States took place. In what state was this settlement established?
A) New York. B) Pennsylvania. C) Texas. D) Maryland.
- 3) The city in the United States with the largest Polish, Polish-American community is Chicago. What are the second and third largest cities of Polonia?
A) Cleveland. B) Detroit. C) Pittsburgh. D) New York.
- 4) In Cleveland, Ohio, there are a number of Polish neighborhoods often identified by the Polish Roman Catholic Church in the neighborhood. In the Tremont area that was often identified as the "Kantowa" community, the Roman Catholic Church dominate in the area is:
A) St. John Cantius. B) St. Casimir. C) Sacred Heart of Jesus. D) St. Hyacinth.
- 5) In Cleveland's Poznan neighborhood at East 79th Street and Sowinski Park, the dominate Polish Roman Catholic Church is:
A) St. John Cantius. B) St. Casimir. C) Sacred Heart of Jesus. D) Saint Stanislaus.
- 6) Which of the following churches would not be considered that part of Polonia known as "Warszawa"?
A) St. Stanislaus. B) Sacred Heart of Jesus. C) Immaculate Heart of Mary. D) St. John Nepomucene.
- 7) The first Roman Catholic Church established to serve the needs of Poles in the Berea quarries was:
A) St. Adalbert. B) St. Barbara. C) Sts. Peter and Paul. D) Our Lady of Sorrows.
- 8) What was the hospital opened in 1948 primarily to serve the needs of Poles in the southwestern part of the Cleveland area? Initial financial support was raised by Chester Jablonski and Edmund Lewandowski.
A) Marymount. B) St. Vincent Charity. C) St. Alexis. D) Parma Community Hospital.
- 9) The industrial company that was an important employer of labor in the Fleet-Broadway area for seventy years, especially of Polish, Czech and Lithuanian women. Faced with unionization in 1955-56, the company moved south leaving many workers without pensions.
A) American Steel and Wire. B) Warner & Swasey. C) The Harshaw Chemical Company. D) The Cleveland Worsted Mill Company.
- 10) The Polish National Catholic Church was organized in 1897 in part to have the Mass said in Polish and to give parishioners rather than clergy control of church property and finances. It was also organized for which of the following reasons:
A) In opposition to Irish control of the American Roman Catholic Church which wanted to Americanize Polish immigrants. B) To determine who would control Bingo games and summer carnivals. C) To allow priests to marry. D) None of the above.
- 11) The fraternal insurance organization established as a local fraternal in 1895 in opposition to allowing non-Catholic Poles into membership and today is an affiliate of the Polish Roman Catholic Union is:
A) Association of Polish Women. B) Alliance of Poles in America. C) Polish National Alliance. D) Union of Poles in America.

Answers: 1(C), 2(C), 3(B & D), 4(A), 5(B), 6(D), 7(A), 8(A), 9(D), 10(A), 11(B)

* We have Ron Marec to thank for this quiz. Should any of you have a difference of opinion as to the answers to any of these questions, please see Ron to iron out any disputes.

By the way, first prize for answering all the questions correctly earns that person the right to visit the new Wal-Mart at the new Steel Yards Commons. Plenty of sales on plenty of items. Shop til you drop. Good Luck!

What's Happening

Schedule of Speakers for Upcoming Meetings—

January—Joanie Mihelich of Fairview Park Library will speak on the topic: *Researching at Fairview Park Library; One Day in the Life of a Researcher*.

February—Judge Raymond Pianka will speak on the topic: *Genealogy and DNA-The Polish American Search*.

March—Rob Jagelewski, tour guide of St. Stanislaus Shrine Church of Cleveland, Ohio, topic TBA.

April—Lenora Maxa will speak on the topic: *The 1918 Flu Epidemic in Cleveland*.

Dziekuje—Danke—Merci—Gratias

We would like to thank the following members who so generously supplied us with the delicious bakery and goodies we have enjoyed this year: Lucia Wicinski Dominak, Joanna Gaba, Gloria Hadbavny, Richarda Jambrozy, Georgene Jasinski, Louis Jurkiewicz, Don Kozlowski, Elaine Marec, Ron Marec, Connie Murphy, Berni O'Malley, Helen Palshook, Cindy Spikowski, Natalie Swintek, Virginia Tomon, Carole Zanath and Connie Zelek.

And thank you to **Bernard and Rita Brady** for donating a copy of Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword* and a copy of the *History of St. Stanislaus Parish of Cleveland, Ohio* to our library.

Handwriting On the Wall—

In the next few years, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland will undergo significant changes. Many of the innercity churches, like the ethnic Polish-American parishes, cannot support themselves and will have to merge with other parishes. The congregations have become very small and there are not enough priests to service these parishes. Churches such as: St. Hedwig's in Lakewood, Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Casimir's, St. Hyacinth's and others will be evaluated to see if they can survive. It is such a tragedy to see these beautiful churches and parishes living their last days. Anyone who was present at the closing Masses for Our Lady of Czestochowa and St. Josephat's know how heart wrenching the closings of these churches were.

As genealogists, we are interested in the records that are currently stored at these parishes. Therefore, if any of our members need to get any records about their ancestors from these parishes, we would strongly urge them to get these records before these churches are closed. Once they are shuttered, getting these records might prove to be a long and lengthy process.

Rest In Peace—

Our sincerest sympathies go out to the **Palshook** family. Peter's brother, Paul, passed away recently. Also, **Linda Jean Ellis's** aunt, Theresa B. Lieb, passed away last July. On November 7th of this year, member **Mary Ann (Lipowski) Nancarrow** passed away. Please say a prayer on their behalf. May they rest in peace, Amen.

Do Widzenia—Auf Wiedersehen—Au Revoir—Ciao—Adios—

And all that other good stuff. As the third editor of your newsletter over the course of the last sixteen years, I feel that it's time for me to pass the baton to someone else. A Fresh Approach—New ideas—New Directions etc.

It's been a pleasure and a privilege to serve the group. I have tried to make the newsletter interesting by emphasizing the many things about our Polonia here in Cleveland which many of our members might not be aware of, such as the histories of the various parishes in our area. This is genealogy of our most immediate ancestors, what they thought important in their daily life. And the histories of these parishes was their history.

I'd like to thank all those members who have contributed articles to the newsletter. Their contributions have made the publication more interesting and broadened its appeal.

Finally, I'd like to thank member **Ralph Lysyk** for proof reading the newsletters before they went to the printer. He pointed out errors which I had missed. And thank you to **Cindy Spikowski** and **Len Pryer** for helping to get the newsletters ready to be sent out to our members. And so—See you at our next meeting!

Ed Mendyka

THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL
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OF GREATER CLEVELAND



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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