



Polish Heritage Center



Visitor Experience, #24 in Series

Pauline Urbanczyk 1858-1942

Sister Mary Veronica

By Janet Dawson Ebrom



Pauline Urbanczyk, on the left, and her sister, Katherine Urbanczyk
Photograph courtesy of: Mary Louise Kollodziej-Bukowski, San Antonio, Texas

Pauline Urbanczyk was born on May 19, 1858, in Panna Maria, Texas, to **Matthew Urbanczyk** and **Francisca Dziuk**. Their Franciscan pastor, **Father Anthony Rossadowski**, baptized the baby girl in Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church on May 29, 1858. For her first sacrament, the infant was surrounded by her *four* godparents: **Joseph Krawiec**, **Agnes Kowalik**, **Josepha Knieska**, and **Josepha Przybysz** (entry #58). Pauline's parents and godparents were actively involved in parish life and lovingly guided her spiritual growth.

In the spring of 1867, plans for constructing a two-story stone building in Panna Maria were begun with the lower floor for a school and the upper story as living quarters for the priests (Dworaczyk, p. 38-39). The construction site had to be cleared for the new building which was to be situated where the original parish cemetery was located; this involved the heartbreaking task of relocating the graves of some of the first immigrants. Even though Pauline was only nine years old during the excavation, she had vivid recollections years later about her father, **Matthew Urbanczyk**, showing her the bones of her grandmother. "He told her to cut a lock of the hair that still clung around the skull, as a remembrance. The little girl, however, did not have the courage" (Dworaczyk, p. 40). Pauline's grandparents, **Jacob Urbanczyk** and **Francisca Garbella**, had arrived in Texas in 1854 after leaving their home parish, Św. Michała, in Rozmierz, Upper Silesia, now in Poland.

When the building in Panna Maria was finished, the parish school was dedicated in 1868 with the boys and girls taught in two different groups. Pauline was in the class taught by **Father Felix Zwiardowski**. He applied to the Sisters of Divine Providence in Castroville to send more teachers, so three German nuns arrived in Panna Maria. While **Father Felix** tutored the three nuns in Polish, **Pauline Urbanczyk** assisted them in teaching Polish. "She was also a great help in the conversations between the Sisters and the people" (Dworaczyk, page 48). During these formative years in the close-knit community of Panna Maria, Pauline discovered her destiny as an educator and answered God's call to religious life.

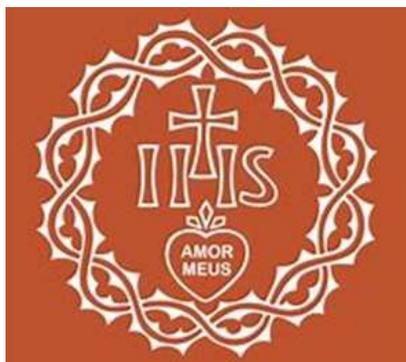
In 1875, **Father Felix Zwiardowski** founded a new community of Sisters called the Community of Immaculate Conception. He also designed their habit made of blue material, and the blessed habits were given to each Sister before the entire congregation in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Panna Maria. These Sisters were often referred to as the “Blue Sisters” because of their habit. The “Blue Sisters” who were born in Texas and whose families had emigrated from Upper Silesia were: **Marcianna Czerner, Cecilia Felix, Barbara Krawietz, Konegunda Krawietz, Anna [Joanna] Moczygemba, Lucy Niemiec, Albina [Balbina] Sowa, and Pauline Urbanczyk** (Dworaczyk, pages 48-49).

This 1875 photograph taken in Panna Maria, Texas, has an inscription on the back of the original that says, “**Mary Hedwig.**” According to letter No. 34743 written by **Father Felix Zwiardowski** to **Father Bakanowski** on April 20, 1875, one of the Silesian girls, **Paulina Urbanczyk**, was **Sister Maria Jadwiga** (Baker, page 215, note 65). The **Dziuk** family who loaned the photo to the Institute of Texan Cultures noted it may be of **Pauline Urbanczyk** which seems very likely given her religious name as **Sister Maria Jadwiga** or **Mary Hedwig** as written on the back. If so, this may be the only surviving photo of the habit designed by **Father Zwiardowski** and made of blue material worn by the “Blue Sisters” of Panna Maria.



*Photograph courtesy of: **John F. Dziuk** Family - UTSA's Institute of Texan Cultures, 068-1248*

The Blue Sisters opened schools in Cestochowa, Meyersville, St. Hedwig, Banderá, and San Antonio (Dworaczyk, pages 48-49). After five years, this order of teaching nuns whose original Motherhouse was in Panna Maria transferred to St. Hedwig. Two years later, the community was dissolved, and the nuns were allowed to enter other congregations if they so desired (Dworaczyk, page 54). Pauline briefly joined the Divine Providence Convent as **Sister Maria Jadwiga** (Baker, page 215, note 65).

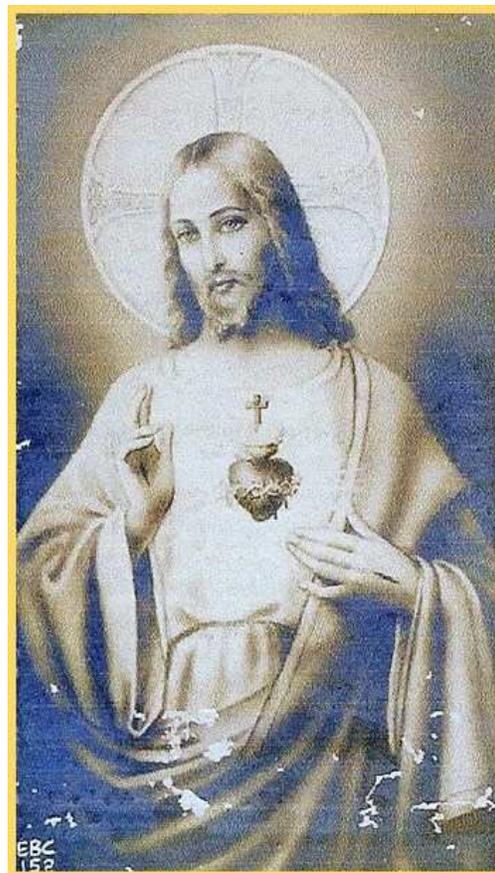
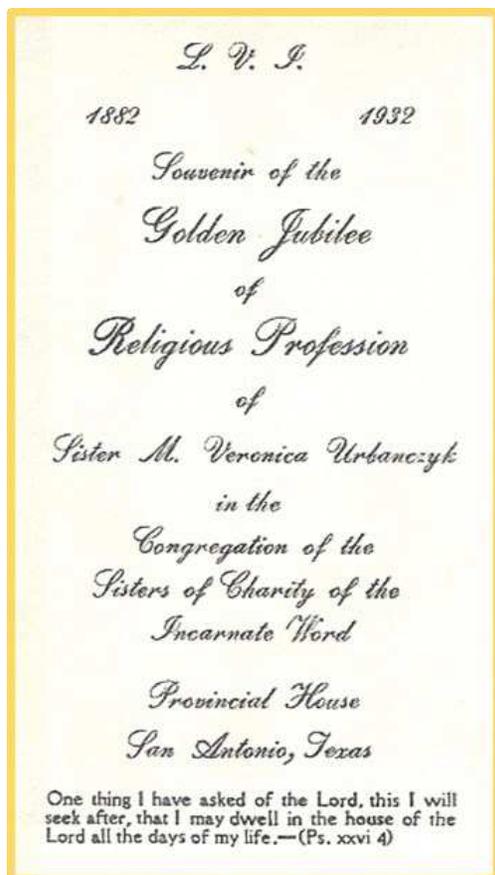


In 1882, Pauline finally entered the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and made her first profession of vows as **Sister Mary Veronica Urbanczyk**. Five years later, she made her perpetual vows on March 19, 1887. She dedicated herself to the noble profession of teaching in various parishes throughout Texas. Wherever she was assigned by her superiors, **Sister Veronica** embraced her ministerial mission of molding her students' hearts and minds.

She was given an administrative position when **Bishop E.J. Dunne** of Dallas made an appeal to the Sisters of Charity to teach in the mining town of Thurber. Men operating the mines were immigrants from various parts of Europe, so most of them and their children could not speak English. Accordingly, "Rev. Mother Madeleine could not refuse the bishop's urgent request for sisters, even though there were only three to spare, **Sister Veronica Urbanczyk**, superior; **Sister Cesarius O'Shea**; and **Sister Anthony Gleser**. In 1898, they opened Hunter Academy to educate the 106 children in the small mining community. Since many of the children worked in the mines along with their parents, classes had to be taught at night as well as during the regular daytime hours" (Slattery, p. 92).

At the age of 52, Pauline was recorded with her birth name rather than her religious name in the 1910 DeWitt County census. She was listed after Rev. Thomas Moczygamba along with other Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word (stamped page 167). Ten years later, she was enumerated in the 1920 census of Bexar County as Sister Veronica, a teacher in a private school on St. Hedwig Road (sheet no. 10B).

After devoting 50 years of her life as a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, she celebrated her golden jubilee in 1932 as shown on card below.



Jubilee card courtesy of Loretta Dziuk Niestroy, 1937-2018

Sister Mary Veronica Urbanczyk, who joyfully educated countless Texas children, died on April 3, 1942, and was buried in Incarnate Word Convent Cemetery, San Antonio, Texas.

Sources:

Baker, T. Lindsay. *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas.* College Station, Texas: Texas University Press, 1979.

Dworaczyk, Rev. Edward J. *The First Polish Colonies of America in Texas.* San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1936.

Slattery, Sister Margaret Patrice, C.C.V.I. *Promises to Keep: A History of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas,* 1995.

Nuns to Memorialize

*This is a **partial list** of departed nuns who descend from our immigrant families.*

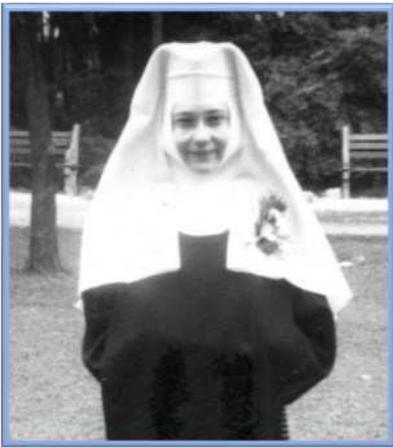
ANDERWALD, Bernadette: Sister Bernadette [1917-2016]

BIENEK, Geraldine Ann: Sister Mary Geraldine [1950-2009]

DWORACZYK, Euphemia Constance: Sister Wenceslaus [1919-2011]

DWORACZYK, Mary Margaret Ann: Sister Mary Fermine [1929-2008]

FRANCKOWIAK, Dorothy Helen: Sister Mary Wenceslaus [1882-1934]



GAWLIK, Florence: Sister Mary Angela [1933-2015]*

Photo courtesy of Dorothy Gawlik Moy, San Antonio, Texas

GIENIEC, Elizabeth: Sister Mary Alexandrine [1917-2008]

GOLA, Julia: Sister Mount Carmel [1870-1939]

JANTA, Maria: Sister Mary Heliodora [1852-1925]

JANTA, Anna Caroline: Sister Mary Władysława [1856-1944]

JASKINIA, Barbara Philomena: Sister Mary Gerard [1923-1995]

JENDRUSH, Albina Barbara: Sister Mary Bernardia [1922-2004]

KORZEKWA, Emelia: Sister Cyrilla [1896-1982]**photo on right*

KOWALIK, Mary Angelee: Sister Mary Angelee [1934-2016]

KRAWIEC, Albina: Sister Mary Elizabeth [1864-1884]

KRAWIEC, Anastasia: Sister Mary Joseph [1854-1919]

KRAWIEC, Mathilda: Sister Mary Alacoque [1858-1881]

KRAWIECZ, Barbara: Sister Cecilia [1859-1895]



KRAWIETZ, Agnes: Sister Bronislaus [1888-1937]*

Photo courtesy of Flavia Anita Gabrysch, Falls City, Texas

KRAWIETZ, Mary Anna: Sister Stanislawa who later changed her name to Sister Mary Teresa [1892-1985]* *photo*

KULESZA, Anna: Sister Karolina [1885-1972]

MOCZYGEMBA, Joanna: Sister Ephrem [1860-1946]

MOCZYGEMBA, Margaret: Sister Charlotte [1912-1991]

MZYK, Helena: Sister M. Edith [1915-2008]

NIEMIEC, Lucy: Sister Mary Louise [1860-1933]

OLEJNIK / OLENICK, Salomea: Sister Sixtus [1906-1950]

RAKOWICZ / RAKOWITZ, Barbara: Sister John Nepomucene [1885-1924]

SCZEPANIK, Cecilia: Sister Jean Marie [1913-2005]

SOWA, Balbina: Sister Mary Gabriel [1861-1906]*

Photo courtesy of Regina Wiatrek Lyssy, 1902-1983

STANUŚ, Anna: Sister Mary Clotilda [ca. 1855-1879]

STANUŚ / STANUSH, Clara: Sister Mary Dominic [1897-1968]

STANUŚ, Eva: Sister Mary Incarnation [1853-1936]

STANUŚ / STANUSH, Maria Justina: Sister Mary Christina [1905-1961]

WACLAWCZYK, Edna: Sister Mary Estelle [1929-2014]

URBANCZYK, Pauline: Sister Mary Veronica [1858-1942]

WARMINSKI, Mildred: Sister Mildred [1927-2012]

WINKLER, Elizabeth: Sister Mary Dominic [1858-1916]

ZIENC, Paulina: Sister Mary Clara [1861-1891]

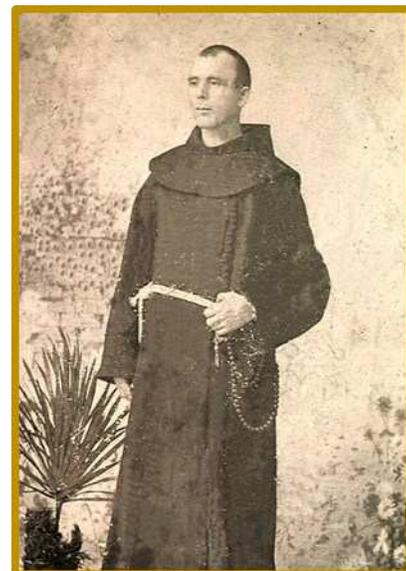


Priests, Monks, and Brothers to Memorialize

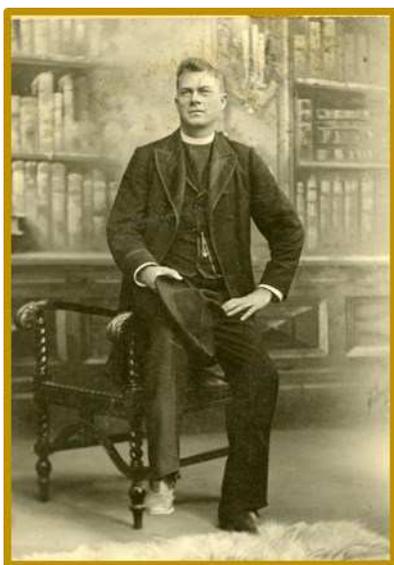
This is a **partial list** of departed priests, monks, and religious brothers who descend from our immigrant families.

DRAGON, Reverend Edmund S. [1905-1961]
DWORACZYK, Reverend Edmund Leon [1936-1970]
DWORACZYK, Reverend Edward Joseph [1906-1965]
DWORACZYK, Reverend Julius Valerian [1919-1993]
FOEGELLE, Reverend Monsignor Peter L. [1901-1986]
IBROM, Lorenz: Brother Basil [1865-1965]*

Photo courtesy of Alice Kowalik Reue, Yorktown, Texas



JANTA, Franz/Francis: Brother Fabian [ca. 1855-1929]
JANYSEK, Reverend Monsignor Theodore Joseph Thaddeus [1905-1989]
JURASCHEK, Reverend Monsignor Erwin Alexander [1921-1993]
KOŁODZIE, Reverend Emmett Benedict [1905-1986]
KOŁODZIEJCZYK, Reverend Joseph Everest [1914-1996]
LEDWIG, Reverend Francis Joseph [1889-1947]
LYSSY, Reverend Thomas [1926-1990]



MOCZYGEMBA, Reverend Monsignor Henry I. [1914-1995]
MOCZYGEMBA, Reverend Leon (Leo) Vitalis
Stanslaus [1894-1959]
MOCZYGEMBA, Reverend Leopold (the nephew) [1858-
1892]
MOCZYGEMBA, Right Reverend Monsignor Thomas
[1863-1950]*

Photo courtesy of Theresa A. Szczepanik, Stockdale, Texas

NEUMANN, Reverend Charles William, Jr. [1923-1997]

NEUMANN, Reverend Paul Edward [1929-2017]

NOTZON, Reverend Marcel Carroll [1906-1992]

NOWAK, Reverend Monsignor Joseph R. [1925-1969]

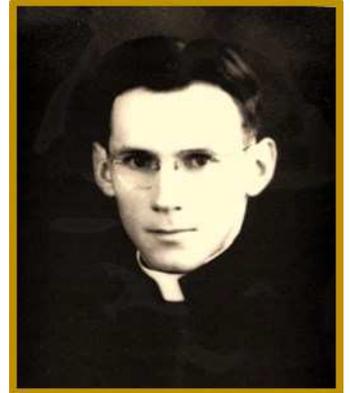
PADALECKI, Reverend, Alphonse B. [1933-1992]

PAWELEK, Brother Emil John [1909-2001]

POSTERT, Reverend Edward Bernard [1900-1977]

PRUSKI, Reverend Benedict Anthony [1917-1993]*

Photo from Priest Forever: History of St. John's Seminary, page 86



SCHMIDTZINSKY, Reverend Monsignor Victor G. [1915-2005]

SWIERC/SWARTZ, Father Lawrence [1907-2005]

Memorializing Opportunities

Sister Mary Veronica Urbanczyk was one of many special vocations to religious life encouraged by her devout parents. It would honor her legacy to have her memorialized in the Polish Heritage Center. Each departed religious vocation from our immigrant families can be recognized, and if you know of any missed on the list, please contact us. They have been our role-models to follow Christ and his Blessed Mother. They have embraced their parish families, baptized our babies, performed our weddings, taught our children, and consoled us in times of mourning. If you would like to memorialize a nun, priest, monk, or religious brother for a \$10,000 donation, please contact John Wojtasczyk at 210-387-7472 or 210-733-1979.

We acknowledge those who have supported the ongoing efforts in bringing the Polish Heritage Center to fruition. We have received donations from the following since our last newsletter!

Anonymous, Texas

Association of Polish Priest of Connecticut

Stella Bednorz (memorials donated in memory of Clem Bednorz), Panna Maria, TX

Ronnie & Laura Bitterly, San Antonio, TX

Gianna Cortez, Shavano Park, TX

Ronnie & Laura Dylla, St. Hedwig, TX

Leroy & Janet George, Lavon, TX

Leona M. Stanush Gill, Austin, TX

Art Gmurowski, Austin, TX

Eric & Kay Haiduk, White Deer, TX

Thomas C. & Sally S. Kallina, Garwood, TX

G. Michael & Kathleen M. Kyrish, San Antonio, TX

Rev. David M. Misbrener, Rootstown, OH

Sr. Luz Moreno, San Antonio, TX

Al & Angela Notzon, San Antonio, TX

Msgr. Thomas Olszyk, St. Francis, WI

Guadalupe & Carlos Ontiveros, San Antonio, TX

Elaine Opiela, Karnes City, TX

Florence K. Opiela, Gillett, TX

Carolyn & Richard Osburg, Calliham, TX

Thomas M. & Bridget M. Pawlik, San Antonio, TX

John H. & Patricia Picacio, San Antonio, TX

Theresa Pieprzyca, Garwood, TX

Msgr. Daniel Plocharczyk, New Britain, CT

Jerome & Rose Respondek, Jr, Yorktown, TX

Rev. Eugene Rzczkowski, Washington, DC

Suzanne Moczygemba Sheppard, San Antonio, TX

Paul A. & Iris M. Tam, Yorktown, TX

Tam-Warzecha Estate Partnership, San Antonio, TX

The Rosenstiel Foundation, Philadelphia, PA

John A. & Mary Pollok Yanta Memorial Trust, San Antonio, TX

The shell is 99.99% complete!



For those in the area, it is worth a trip to Panna Maria to see the bountifully finished shell of the Polish Heritage Center. It is a worthy structure to be the focal point and home to the Polish Heritage Center! But do not let the stunning exterior fool you. Only the building is finished, for now! Inspired by what will preserve our ancestors' legacy, we all need to focus and dedicate ourselves to finishing this National Shrine that tells the story of those original immigrants upon whose sacrifice we have received and have been blessed by God in all that we now have and enjoy today. We are just past our half way point in our Capital Campaign drive. It is our desire to "pay as we go" so that we do not incur too much debt. This is how our ancestors did business. But, we rely on your kind generosity to make this a reality. To the many who have supported this project, we say **THANK YOU!** For those have not yet, we ask for your consideration. We need your continued help for the Polish Heritage Center, because once built we need to keep it open. A "one and done" donation is helpful in the short run, but consider how you might be able to include the Polish Heritage Center in your long range plan. Including the Heritage Center in your estate planning, listing it as a beneficiary of a plan or policy, setting up a memorial trust are only a few ways you can help us provide for a future so that your children and their children can experience some of what your parents and grandparents were like. This is a different way of thinking for most of us today, but at least now we are the beneficiaries of our ancestors before us. Pray for success! Question? Call 210-387-7472 for details.

FROM THE BISHOP'S MAILBOX

Recently, I've received these letters and notes in the mail. These mean so much because they are from the heart. Here are a few I would like to share with you.

From Fr. David Misbrener, Rootstown, Ohio

*"My name is **Fr. David Misbrener**, and I am a priest for the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio. I've been a member of PAPA for several years, even though I am not Polish. My dad and grandparents came from Croatia. Many of the Polish customs and traditions are the same as ours. Here in Ohio, the Polish parishes always remained traditional parishes and wonderful places to worship. In my Diocese, sadly there is only one Polish parish left, and it is dwindling pretty quickly.*

At the last PAPA meeting in Cleveland, we heard about the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria that you are building. I would like to send a little donation for the Center. I wish it could be more, but I'm sending what I can for now. I have always wanted to visit San Antonio, Texas, and the Polish Settlements."

From Eric Haiduk, White Deer, Texas



"Pochwalony Jezus Chrystus! Greetings from White Deer. We miss you so much. I think of you often with respect and affection. You can see from this picture and I think of you every time I work in my little shop. I keep your coat of arms that I made for the times that you came to White Deer in those happy days.

We have enjoyed watching the progress of the Polish Heritage Center and enclose here a check for our little part.

God bless and keep you and bless all your works. Please keep us in your prayers.

Na Wieki Wieków!"

From Lorraine Manka Ponish, Uvalde, Texas

*"Every time I receive another Polish Heritage Center newsletter, I am so grateful to God that people are willing to record experiences of 'people, places, and things!' I remember **Father Janysek** and the Falls City picnics. The holy cards are truly works of art! And prayers too!*

Also, please excuse this stationery. I seem to do my better writing on lined paper! Maybe it comes from my early years at Panna Maria school while using Big Chief tablets to practice penmanship and other related studies."

- Continued -

Gianna Cortez—During a recent visit to me by a family, their 3rd grader, Gianna Cortez, a great grandniece of Father Camilo Garcia (*the first native Hispanic vocation to serve the Archdiocese of San Antonio*) dug into her little pockets, pulled out, and presented me with **\$1.27**, all that she had, for the Polish Heritage Center. What inspiration! She understood the importance and significance of this project and wanted to do what she could to help. As the saying goes, *out of the mouths of babes!* Let us all learn from and appreciate her lead. She is an example of the widow's mite.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

For those who receive the *Wilson County News*, what can you say about the center two-page spread on the Polish Heritage Center in their Wednesday, May 9th issue of *South Texas Living*? This wonderfully written article was capped off with a large two-page photo of our beautiful Heritage Center. Perhaps what captivated me most in the article was that the Center “...will feature high-tech, interactive and immersive experiences relating the history of the first settlers, up to and including the present-day Polish families, with self-guided tours in English, Polish, and Spanish.” The word is getting out! Thanks to the staff of the Marketing Committee and the press release that they prepared and forwarded to the *Wilson County News*. And a **VERY** special thank you to **Elaine Kolodziej**, one of our community champions, and her staff at the *Wilson County News* for providing such a wonderful platform to help get the word out and inform the larger community about this our very important project.

From John Cebrowski, VP – Director of Development

You might be interested in knowing that we open and close every meeting of the Board of Directors, of the Campaign Steering Committee, and all meetings with prayer. Not unexpectedly the Lord has been answering our prayers.

We are slightly more than halfway towards our \$14 million dollar goal. Recently we have fully engaged social media, recruited (32) “champions” – passionate advocates in numerous parishes and communities across Texas, appointed three new Board members, and recruited a Grants Manager to pursue Foundation and corporate support.

We are in the process of updating our website with images of the planned interior and exhibits and new information about a variety of giving levels. Folks, you can feel the momentum!

The Polish Heritage Center, located in Panna Maria, is the ‘Plymouth Rock’ of American Polonia. This is the spot where Poles back in 1854 literally ‘dug in’ to plant our culture and customs in America. It was tough, only 18 years after the Battle of the Alamo, but they had brought with them their faith, their families, their know-how, and their tools. They thrived! We owe tribute to them for their sacrifices and their grit. Bishop Yanta, to his great credit, is leading us with vigor to honor those audacious pioneers.

This is a *National* Heritage Center, not a local or Texas-only project. Did you know that Polish-Americans are the 8th largest ethnic group in America, approximately 10,000,000 plus strong? This Heritage Center is for the benefit and pleasure of all of them...*and* visitors from Poland.

Our current priority is fund raising to finance the interior construction and the exhibits. The Bishop and I seek your help. *All donations...small and large are gratefully appreciated.*

Please share this newsletter with friends and neighbors who have been waiting on the sidelines unsure of the viability of this endeavor. Let them know what you have done. Initial uncertainty was understandable considering the size and scope of the project. *But now you can see the results...the building shell is complete!* Please come by and see it. In the years ahead the Heritage Center will be an economic boon to south-central Texas.

Regardless of whether you have benefitted or not from the mineral rights under the land that our forebears sweated and toiled over, I am certain you would wish that your legacy be defined by the tribute you paid to your ancestors and to the enlightenment of your descendants.

In the coming months selected members of our Campaign Steering Committee will be reaching out to folks who have not yet participated in this historic project. We ask that you receive us in the spirit of charity and respect for our ancestors.

Thank you all.

St. Pope John Paul II being greeted by Fr. Bill Zadora, SDS, pastor in St. Hedwig, during the San Antonio Papal visit of September 1987



The sponsoring opportunity for the life size image of St. John Paul II which will reside in the Rotunda is available for \$500,000.

Two miracles are attributed to St. John Paul II; the first is the healing of a French nun who suffered from Parkinson's Disease, and the second is the healing of a Costa Rican woman suffering from a terminal brain aneurysm. St. John Paul II was canonized on April 27, 2014.

Bishop's Monday Kitchen Cabinet meeting



From left to right: Bishop Yanta, Frank Guerra, Al Notzon, Sam Kotara, Joe Yanta, John Cebrowski, and Maureen Brown meeting to discuss the progress and latest items in ongoing progress of the Polish Heritage Center.

Our Center—A Heritage Center

The dictionary states the meaning of heritage as: “property that descends to an heir, something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor, e.g. legacy, inheritance.” Our Polish Heritage Center preserves the great values of our deceased family and ancestors. Values of faith, family, and community. Our Heritage Center will have the best of high tech to engage you as the ancestral story is now in our hands to hold for future generations. Much of our Polish heritage has disappeared. Due to funerals over the years, much of our beautiful Polish heritage has largely evaporated. Our duty is to preserve what we have inherited, build on it, research it, and hold as a treasured legacy for the present and future generations. What precious, sacred inheritance is our Polish Heritage Center!

We can accomplish this only through prayer and seeking His Holy Will as we now begin work on the interior. Our Center will tell the story of our first Polish ancestors whose faith we have received. Thank you for your prayers, Masses, Rosaries, and devotions for the completion of the Polish Heritage Center as we progress towards the Grand Opening!

Weekly, I will offer my Mass for all you who have donated toward the support of the Polish Heritage Center. I will remember and offer up for you and your families' intentions and ask for the intercession of our Blessed Mother, along with your deceased family members and ancestors.

Asking for God's continued blessings upon you and yours,

†Bishop John W. Yanta