

FAITH • FAMILY
COMMUNITY



POLISH
HERITAGE
CENTER USA
PANNA MARIA, TEXAS

Visitor Experience #41



Reverend Monsignor Thomas Lyssy

1926–1990

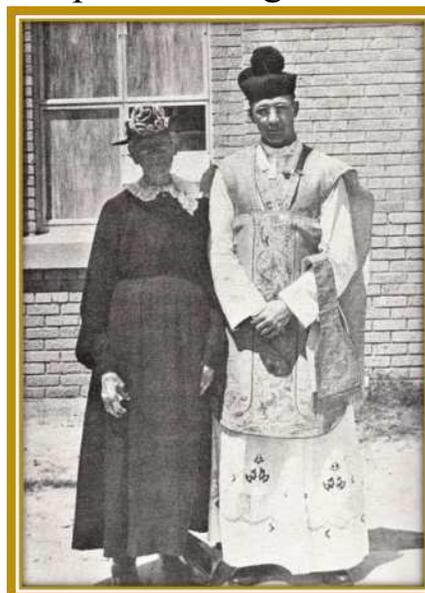
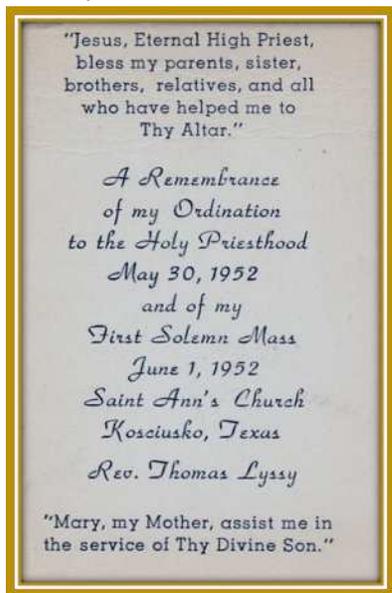
“...labors as a good soldier of Christ Jesus...”

By Janet Dawson Ebrom

The Lyssy family immigrated to Texas from Prusków, Upper Silesia, in present-day Poland, when **Franz Lyssy**, his wife, **Catharina Krull [Kroll]**, and their nine children arrived in 1856 (*Schüler*; numbers 136-146). Seventy years later, their great-great grandson, **Thomas Lyssy**, was born on June 5, 1926, in Kosciusko, Texas. On the day of his birth, his parents, **William John Lyssy** and **Regina Wiatrek**, took their infant son to St. Ann Catholic Church to be baptized. The Baptism was performed by **Reverend John Jachtyl**, and the godparents were **Edmund Dziuk** and **Pelagia Skloss** (page 30, entry #31).

Thomas attended elementary school in Kosciusko for seven years. He selected the saint's name **Anthony** for his Confirmation by **Archbishop Arthur J. Drossaerts** on November 5, 1939 (page 36, entry #2). Thomas' mother **Regina** was in St. Ann's Altar Society, his father **William** was in the Holy Name Society, and they were both members of the Holy Rosary Society. In addition to farming and raising cattle, **William** also served as a Director of the Stockdale Security Bank for 21 years. Inspired by such dynamic and devout role models, **Thomas** decided to enroll in St. John's Seminary in San Antonio where he studied from 1940 to 1952.

On May 30, 1952, **Reverend Thomas Lyssy** was ordained a priest at San Fernando Cathedral by the **Most Reverend Robert E. Lucey**. **Father Lyssy** celebrated his first Holy Mass at his home parish of St. Ann's in Kosciusko on June 1, 1952. In attendance were many relatives including his maternal grandmother, **Eva Sowa Wiatrek**, shown in the photo at right.

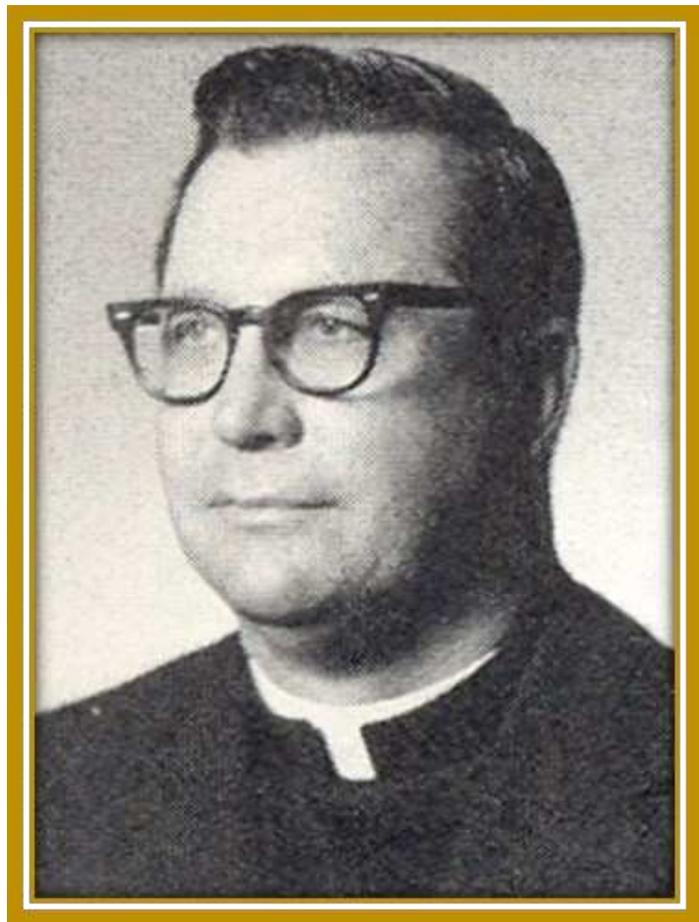


Card courtesy of: William and Bernice Lyssy, Kosciusko, Texas

Photograph from: *The Sowa Family History: Six Generations of Polish Texans*, page 192

Immediately after his Ordination, **Father Lyssy** was appointed assistant pastor for the month of July in 1952 at St. Agnes Church in Edna, Texas. Then he became assistant pastor from July 30, 1952, until September 16, 1960, at St. Patrick Church in San Antonio. Also, he served as Chaplain to the 141st Infantry of the Texas National Guard. On September 16, 1960, he was assigned to St. Mary's in Victoria where he ministered for almost five years. On April 19, 1965, he assumed duties as pastor of San Francisco de la Espada Mission Parish, and on September 15, 1966, as pastor of St. Benedict Church in San Antonio. **Father Lyssy** received a special honor of being named a Papal Chamberlain to His Holiness **Pope Paul VI** on January 24, 1968. On July 12, 1972, he was appointed pastor of St. James Church in Seguin where he was later the Vicar Forane of the Seguin Deanery (Murray, page 1).

In June of 1973, **Monsignor Lyssy** embarked on a European trip with his mother, **Regina Wiatrek Lyssy**, and his cousin, **Helen Pawlik**. They toured Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. In Rome, they had the honor of an audience with the Holy Father, **Pope Paul VI**, followed by a tour of the Vatican. Msgr. Lyssy's mother **Regina** said that the highlight of the trip was the joy of visiting Poland, her grandfather's homeland. This was the first pilgrimage tour of Poland by Texans and was organized by **Father John Yanta**, President of the Polish American Congress of Texas. Their extensive tour of Poland included Kraków, Zakopane, Opole, Płużnica, Warsaw, and the Black Madonna Shrine in Czestochowa (Personal interview of **Regina Wiatrek Lyssy** by **Janet Dawson Ebrom** on April 7, 1979).



Photograph from: *Archdiocese of San Antonio 1874 – 1974*, page 271

In late 1978, **Monsignor Lyssy** "...suffered a severe heart attack and upon recuperation served for three years as Chaplain to the Sisters of St. Benedict at St. Scholastica's Convent in Boerne" (Murray, page 1). During the 1980s, **Monsignor Lyssy** "...was actively involved in Chaplaincy activities at Fort Sam Houston. With a distinguished record he retired from military service with the rank of Colonel on June 5, 1986" (Murray, page 1). **Monsignor Lyssy** also received a Legion of Merit Award, the second highest award given to service men during peacetime (*Centennial: St. Ann's Catholic Church, Kosciusko, Texas, 1898-1998*, page 185).

After 35 years of ministry throughout Texas, **Monsignor Thomas Lyssy** returned to his home parish as pastor of St. Ann's in Kosciusko on March 1, 1987. Later that year, he was interviewed for a story in the *Today's Catholic* newspaper. "This is one of the best parishes in the archdiocese," **Monsignor Lyssy** told journalist, **Anne Pedrotti**. The article noted, "This real sense of family is perhaps the best aspect of St. Ann's Parish. Most of the parishioners have either close or distant relatives living in the community, and the entire parish is like one large, extended family" (page 10). On Sunday, October 28, 1990, after **Monsignor Lyssy** had attended a reunion luncheon earlier and seemed in good health, he passed way at St. Ann's rectory that night.

A *San Antonio Express-News* article quoted one of his brothers, **William Lyssy** of Kosciusko, who said, "He was very active, led a full life and made many converts. When people called on him to perform weddings or funerals, he was always willing to help out. My brother enjoyed being in a rural and farming community. He was very dedicated to the military. He liked the outdoors, hunting and fishing and had many friends" (page 2-D).

The Archdiocesan Chancellor, **Reverend Monsignor Patrick J. Murray, J.C.I.**, detailed the final farewells, "At 7:30 in the evening of October 30, 1990, a Mass of the Resurrection was concelebrated at St. Ann's by at least forty priests with his good friend, **Monsignor Alois Goertz**, as principal celebrant and homilist and the participation of a vast throng of parishioners and friends. This was followed by a recitation of the Rosary. On the following day, October 31, at 10:30 a.m., the Funeral Mass was concelebrated by the **Archbishop [Patrick Flores]**, the Bishop of Dallas, **Most Reverend Charles Grahmann**, the **Auxiliary Bishops Bernard F. Popp** and **Edmond Carmody** and as many as one hundred priests. Likewise an overflow throng participated. The principal celebrant was the **Most Reverend Archbishop [Patrick Flores]** and the homilist, **Father Victor Goertz**, one of Monsignor's classmates.

A fellow Chaplain, **Father Joseph Petsch**, Col. USAFR (Ret'd), pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Comfort, conducted the services at the graveside in the nearby cemetery.”

Reverend Monsignor Patrick J. Murray eloquently paid tribute in a letter addressed to his brother priests and deacons, “In every respect **Monsignor Lyssy** provided a strong example of one who ‘labors as a good soldier of Christ Jesus’ (II Tim. 2:3). We shall miss his unselfish participation in programs aimed at the advancement of priestly spirituality. May he rest in peace.”



Rev. Msgr. Thomas Lyssy

Born

June 5, 1926
Kosciusko, Texas

Ordained a Priest

May 30, 1952
San Antonio, Texas

Died

October 28, 1990

Burial

St. Ann's Cemetery
Kosciusko, Texas
October 31, 1990

Sources:

- Centennial: St. Ann's Catholic Church, Kosciuszko, Texas 1898-1998*. Privately printed, 1998.
- Ebrom, Janet Dawson and Richard Allan Sowa. *The Sowa Family History: Six Generations of Polish-Texans*. Chicago, Illinois: Adams Press, 1981.
- Murray, Rev. Msgr. Patrick J., letter to “Dear Brother Priest/Deacon,” Archdiocese of San Antonio Chancery Office, San Antonio, Texas, November 12, 1990.
- Pedrotti, Anne, *Today's Catholic* [San Antonio, Texas], December 4, 1987.
- San Antonio Express-News* [San Antonio, Texas], October 31, 1990.
- Schüler, Julius Heinrich. *Summarisches Verzeichnis der im Laufe des Jahres 1856 durch den Agenten Julius Heinrich Schüler in Oppeln nach America beförderten Personen* [Summary list of persons sent to America by the agent Julius Heinrich Schüler in Opole in the year 1856]. Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu [State Archive in Opole, Poland].
- Wangler, Rev. Msgr. Alexander C., editor. *Archdiocese of San Antonio 1874-1974*. San Antonio, Texas, 1974.

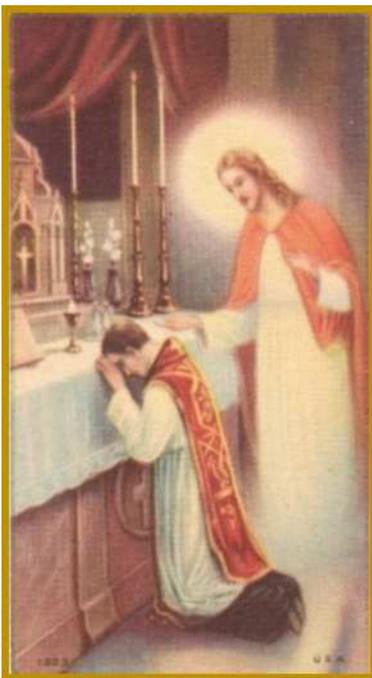
Ordination Cards – A Reflection of Our Catholic Heritage

Shown below is the inspirational 1949 Ordination and First Solemn Mass card of **Rev. Henry I. Moczygemba** [1914 –1995]. Such exquisite cards were often distributed to relatives and friends who were present at those memorable celebrations, and the cards have been handed down as keepsakes in many families. If you have ordination cards for priests or jubilee cards for nuns or Sisters who descend from our ancestral families, please let us know if you would like to add them to **Bishop Yanta’s archival card collection**. A few rare cards are in Polish as a *pamiątka* or remembrance.

Some of you have brought these beautiful cards to the scanning sessions which is an outstanding way to preserve them for the Polish Heritage Center too.

We may be the last generation to treasure them!

If you would like to donate Ordination or Jubilee cards to the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria, please mail cards to: Bishop John W. Yanta, PO Box 28125, San Antonio, TX, 78228



O Jesus, Eternal Priest, bless my parents, sisters, brothers, relatives and friends and all living and dead, who by their prayers and sacrifices have helped me to Thy altar.

*A Remembrance
of my
Ordination
to the Holy Priesthood
May 28, 1949
San Antonio, Texas
and of my
First Solemn Mass
June 12, 1949
The Nativity of the Blessed
Virgin Mary Church
Cestohowa, Texas
Rev. Henry I. Moczygemba*

Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech.

Phrase of encouragement in Polish:

bądź tej nocy aniołem (pronounced BOHNZ tey gnaw-TSE ani-O-wem):

be an angel tonight from **Dorothy Gawlik Moy**

This was a term of endearment that was often spoken by parents to their children at bedtime.

Thank you, Dorothy!

Memorializing our Revered Priests and Brothers

By Janet Dawson Ebrom

Below is a **partial list** of departed priests and religious brothers who descend from our ancestral families. Do you recognize the name of a revered priest in your family? Do you recall a priest who was a beloved pastor in your parish? They have been our role models to follow Christ. You may memorialize priests or religious brothers for a place of honor in the Polish Heritage Center.

[Eight names in red have already been memorialized with a donation of \$10,000.]

BROLL, Brother Ivo William [1877–1966]

DRAGON, Rev. Edmund S. [1905–1961]

DWORACZYK, Rev. Edmund Leon [1936–1970]

DWORACZYK, Rev. Edward Joseph [1906–1965]

DWORACZYK, Rev. Julius Valerian [1919–1993]

FOEGELLE, Rev. Msgr. Peter L. [1901–1986]

GOEBEL, Rev. Canon Bernard Marcelli [1905–2001]

IBROM, Lorenz: Brother Basil [1865–1965]

JANTA, Franz/Francis: Brother Fabian [ca. 1855–1929]

JANYSEK, Rev. Msgr. Theodore [1905–1989]

JARZOMBEK, Rev. Msgr. Casimir [1933–2019]

JURASCHEK, Rev. Msgr. Erwin Alexander [1921–1993]

KOŁODZIE, Rev. Emmett Benedict [1905–1986]

KOŁODZIEJCZYK, Rev. Joseph Everest [1914–1996]

LEDWIG, Rev. Francis Joseph [1889–1947]

LYSSY, Rev. Thomas [1926–1990]

MOCZYGEMBA, Rev. Msgr. Henry I. [1914–1995]

MOCZYGEMBA, Rev. Leon (Leo) Vitalis Stanislaus [1894–1959]

MOCZYGEMBA, Rev. Leopold (the nephew) [1858–1892]

MOCZYGEMBA, Right Rev. Msgr. Thomas [1863–1950]

NEUMANN, Rev. Charles William, Jr. [1923–1997]

NEUMANN, Rev. Paul Edward [1929–2017]

NOTZON, Rev. Msgr. Marcel Carroll [1906–1992]

NOWAK, Rev. Msgr. Joseph R. [1925–1969]

PADALECKI, Rev. Alphonse B. [1933–1992]

PAWELEK, Brother Emil John [1909–2001]

POSTERT, Rev. Edward Bernard [1900–1977]

PRUSKI, Rev. Benedict Anthony [1917–1993]

SCHMIDTZINSKY, Rev. Msgr. Victor G. [1915–2005]

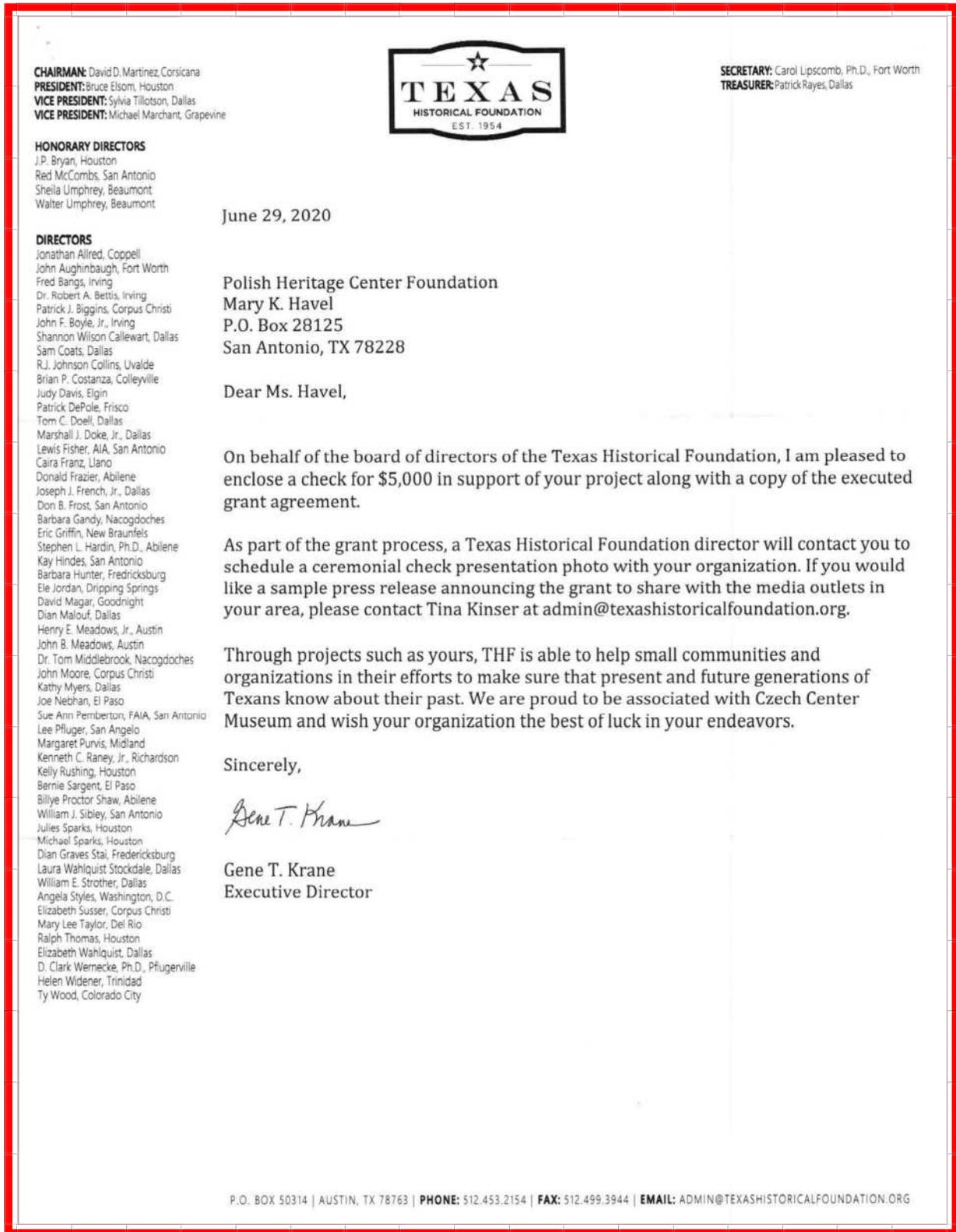
SWIERC/SWARTZ, Father Lawrence [1907–2005]

THURMOND, Rev. Msgr. Benton Alfred [1921–2009]

*If you would like to memorialize a priest or brother, for details please contact:
John Wojtaszyk at (210) 387-7472.*



Polish Heritage Center lands important support from the Texas Historical Foundation!



**POLISH HERITAGE CENTER AT PANNA MARIA
RECEIVES A MAJOR GRANT FROM THE
REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

Dear Sir or Madam,

We would like to kindly inform you about the funding and settlement of the competition 'Cooperation with Polonia and Poles Abroad 2020 - Polonia Infrastructure' organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The value of the funding awarded for the task called "Finishing the interior of the Main Exhibition Hall of the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria, Texas" in the part concerning program costs is PLN 316,500.00 (*about \$80,000 USD*).

**Best Regards,
Anna Kwiatkowska**

MEMORIALIZATIONS

Beginning June 14, 2020 to July 28, 2020

Thank you all for your gifts & support!

In Memory of Zefred “Zeke” Kruciak

by Leslie & Barbara Banduch, Libertyville, Illinois

In Honor of John & Josepha Opiela Kush

by Maureen Brown & Charles Harrison, San Antonio, Texas

In Memory of Frank & Johanna Pawlik Moczygamba, Frank & Mary Kotzur Manka

by Pat Hoffmann & Barbara Moczygamba, San Antonio, Texas

In Memory of Conrad & Ethel Pawelek

by David & Cora Stout Pawelek, Luling, Texas

In Memory of Felix Henry Urbanczyk & Rosalia Constance Opiela

by Jimmy & Mary Jean Sims, Sonora, Texas

In Memory of Dominick & Ida Mae Keller

by Margaret Smith, Woodway, Texas

In Memory of George Alfred Pawelek

by Lambert & Rosalie Pawelek Titzman, Gillett, Texas

In Memory of Alvin W. Wagener

by Craig & Gayle Wagener, Houston, Texas

In Memory of John August & Suzie Katherine Bednorz Wojtasczyk

by John & Chris Schroeder Wojtasczyk, Panna Maria, Texas

In Memory of Gussie Frank & Theresa Regina Migura Yanta

by Fred Yanta, San Antonio, Texas

TRIBUTES & GIFTS

Beginning June 14, 2020 to July 28, 2020

Thank you all for your gifts & support!

Felix Almaraz, San Antonio, Texas
Bishop Charles Grahmann Memorial Charity, San Francisco, California
Marvin R & Janet M Boroski, San Antonio, Texas
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Richard & Marcenia P Cherry, Schertz, Texas
Gregory Dawson, McKinney, Texas
Edwin & Joanne Dziuk, Karnes City, Texas
George, Jr. & Sharon Dziuk, Elmendorf, Texas
Fr. Wiesław Iwaniec, Panna Maria, Texas
Fabian & Gladys Zabawa Janysek, Karnes City, Texas
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Randy & Debbie Labus Pawelek, Panna Maria, Texas
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Jeffery & Lorraine Pawelek Wiatrek, Hobson, Texas
Marvin & Patricia Wiatrek, Gillett, Texas
Julia Yanta, Houston, Texas
Thaddeus Zawistowski, Richmond, Texas

An Example of a Veterans Initiative Photo and Basic Information



Name: Johnny Edmund Ebrom – pictured in Frankfurt, Germany

Rank: Private First Class

Branch of Service: U. S. Army

Conflict or War: World War II

Military Occupational Specialty: Radio Operator

Honorable Discharge: 17 February 1947

Birth and Death: 17 March 1927 – 27 August 1993

Home Town: Karnes City, Texas

Please send photo from your ancestral family of a Veteran in uniform with any known details. You may add military honors received or stories if available.

*Send to: **John Cebrowski** at jcebrowski39@gmail.com*

New PHC Website Goes Live!

We are excited to announce our PHC website has a fresh new “revitalized” look! Check out our new user-friendly website features. Several highlights include the following: Beautiful slide shows and videos (including a welcome video from Bishop Yanta); new overall design and page layouts; event news blogs; a completely downloadable list of our many newsletters; and more! You may view our Facebook posts even if you don’t have an account. Learn all the ways you can support the capital campaign and pay tribute to your ancestors, including information on the PHC Society Levels of Giving, and estate planning. Visit the website to donate conveniently online or feel free to contact John Cebrowski, Director of Development, jcebrowski39@gmail.com.

Our mission stays the same but our wish is to have a wider Polonia audience with our new web link highlighted below. We invite you to view, add to your “favorites”, and SHARE with friends, family and Polonia organizations and newsletters editors. Please send your comment via email at office@polishheritagecenterusa.org or in the comment section of our website:

<https://polishheritagecenterusa.org>

Please also “LIKE”, Follow, and SHARE @polishheritagecenterusa on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube!

PHC Website Team

DID YOU HAVE A PRIEST IN THE FAMILY?

If you were blessed with a priest in your Polish family, we want to hear from you. The Priests’ Interactive promises to be a highlight in the Polish Heritage Center. Among its features will be brief stories about some of the deceased Polish priests who came from the heritage area. **Al Notzon** remembers his uncle, **Monsignor Marcel Notzon**, would purposely use big words so the kids were forced to use the dictionary to figure out what he was talking about. People in Panna Maria will remember that **Father Bernard Goebel** loved to hunt. He also enjoyed a glass of good Napoleon brandy. We just need tidbits of information, though any story you provide will be greatly appreciated. We especially look forward to getting family stories about the **Revs. Theo Janysek, Edmund Dragon, Ed Dworaczyk, Julius Dworaczyk, and Peter Foegelle**, among others. Please send your information to **Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey** at mckinsey@unm.edu. The sooner the better as we’re working on this interactive now.

CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



On left: A view looking up and into what will look like a chapel which will house the *large electronically illumined graphic appearing to be beautiful stained glass windows* of the core parishes that our immigrant ancestors founded.



Above: a stone retaining wall running down the drive on the south side of the building.



On left: the left side wall in the Lobby. Numerous informational monitors will be in place to provide information as you enter the Polish Heritage Center.

CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS

On right: the interior of our beautiful *lit* Rotunda dome painted in blue with gold painted trim. Within the blue field will be painted gold stars!



Above and below: some of the partitions in the Main Exhibit area on which the permanent displays will be mounted.



Poland: Faithful Daughter of the Church

Third in a series by Bishop John W. Yanta

Mieszko I

Mieszko I was the ruler of Poland from about 960 until his death in 992 AD. A member of the Piast dynasty. While he was the first Christian ruler of Poland, he continued the policies of both his father and grandfather, who initiated the process of creation of the Polish state. Mieszko I's alliance with the Bohemian Prince, Boleslaus I, strengthened by his marriage in 965 to the Princess Dobrawa of Bohemia and his baptism in 966 put him and his country in the cultural sphere of Western Christianity. According to existing sources, Mieszko I was a wise politician, a talented military leader, and a charismatic ruler. In foreign policy, he placed the interests of his country foremost, even entering into agreements with his former enemies. On his death, he left to his sons a country with greatly expanded territories, and a well established position in Europe.



*Image of the marriage of
Mieszko & Dobrawa
appearing in our Main Exhibit Area*

Princess Dobrawa

Princess Dobrawa of Bohemia was the daughter of Boleslaus I, Duke of Bohemia. Two independent sources attribute to Dobrawa an important role in the conversion to Christianity of Mieszko I and Poland. She obtained the conversion of Mieszko I and with him, of all Poland. She agreed to marry Mieszko I providing that he was baptized. The Polish ruler accepted, and only then was he able to marry the Bohemian princess. Dobrawa did have a significant role in the Christianization of the Poles. In her wedding procession, she arrived in Poland with Christian clergymen, among them possibly Jordan, ordained the first bishop of Poland in 968.

Excerpts from Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, President of the Polish American Council of Texas (PACT)

May God bless you and yours, Bishop John W. Yanta