



Visitor Experience #46



Boże Narodzenie!

*The “Pasterka” or Shepherds’ Mass at Midnight of Christmas
Image by Wood, Ronsanville, & Harlin, Annapolis, MD*

In His Own Words, by Bishop John W. Yanta



John W Yanta —4th grade

I always knew I was Polish. My parents, John Andrew Yanta and Mary Magdalene Pollok, could both trace their lineage back to the original immigration and though they talked about the early life here, there was no real family history.

I began to embrace my Polishness in the 1970s, founder of the Polish American Congress, Texas division, co-founding the Polish American Priests Association and accepting a Kosciusko Foundation Scholarship to study Polish in Kraków, at Jagiellonian University where Pope John Paul II studied. And I became very interested in learning my own history.

As a Bishop, I got Catholic newspapers from around the country and one told of a diocese in Pennsylvania converting their old Catholic school into a heritage center. That got me to thinking about applying that to Panna Maria, which is the first and oldest Polish settlement in the United States. At that time, I was still only thinking of using a room or two in the old public school building as a place where we could fill in the blanks about my heritage and that of others.

I recruited my longtime friends, Aloys Notzon, who has a good mind and lots of experience, and Sam Kotara, who worked with me when I was youth director for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I got my own lawyer and CPA interested in the project. And I had experience starting organizations like the San Antonio Neighborhood Youth Organization. So from there our leadership and organization grew.

In God's Providence, shale oil was discovered in Karnes and DeWitt counties in Texas where the Polish people had settled. I am part of that. So even with eight children in our family, my 1/8 share helped with the startup costs for this project.

Again, the Lord in his wisdom is the planner of all things. While serving with the Kenedy Foundation in the Corpus Christi area, I had experience in turning the old headquarters into a museum. So God prepared me for the next step. We chose an architect, Morkovsky & Associates in San Antonio, and a designer, Steve Harding Design of Galveston and Houston.

Health issues affected me starting in December 2016, and I was in the hospital and in rehabilitation for over six months. The project too was affected, but it was not destroyed. And with the faith and commitment of the project's leaders and our generous donors, we began to build the building.

I had to have a tracheotomy and must live life with this condition, but thanks to the Lord, I am OK and still active. God has blessed the project with wonderful gifted persons on the Board of Directors, our staff, donors and volunteers. I am grateful to God for each one of them.

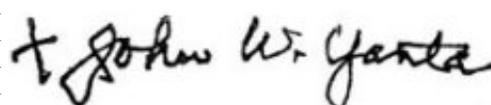
I wish that the project always remains faithful to its goal of being a first class operation and place in every way. Our immigrant ancestors gave us a distinctive first class beginning and I, as one of the descendants, realize the debt I owe to them. We must pass on their history of faith, of taming their new land and overcoming hardships to future generations.

Look at the goodness of God and how easily this land could have gone to other people, but God made sure conditions were correct for Polish farmers to come and settle on that land. This is all God's work. These Polish people could have gone to Connecticut or Montana or Missouri, but they came to Panna Maria, Texas.

There is not a day I don't thank God for what we receive. This has been a tremendous blessing. I think it's very important for everyone, particularly church leaders, to be able to put all of this to good use, to be good stewards. To me, what we are doing with the Polish Heritage Center is one of the very best use that you can make out of pennies from heaven.

To the Polonia in America and around the world, I invite you to please come see what God has enabled us to do. We want to share our part of the national story that began with our ancestors. We want you to see the beauty of our story as we see it. God's working through Divine Providence over these many years brought us this story to share with you.

I thank God for being with us, step by step, along the way. For me, it's my call to stewardship. I knew God wanted me to do something.



Father John Yanta
blessing his par-
ents; John Andrew
& Mary Magdalene
Pollok Yanta at his
first Mass.



Tax Benefits to You of Giving to Charity

There are great tax benefits for those who give. Here are some of the benefits you should know about.

- **A gift to a qualified charitable organization may entitle you to a charitable contribution deduction against your income tax if you itemize deductions.** If the gifts are deductible, the actual cost of the donation is reduced by your tax savings. For example, if you are in the 33% tax bracket, the actual cost of a \$100 donation is only \$67 (\$100 less the \$33 tax savings). As your income tax bracket increases, the real cost of your charitable gift decreases, making contributions more attractive for those in higher brackets. The actual cost to a person in the lowest bracket, 15%, for a \$100 contribution is \$85. For a person in the highest bracket, 39.6%, the actual cost is only \$60.40. Not only can the wealthy afford to give more, but they receive a larger reward for giving.

A contribution to a qualified charity is deductible in the year in which it is paid. Putting the check in the mail to the charity constitutes payment. A contribution made on a credit card is deductible in the year it is charged to your credit card, even if payment to the credit card company is made in a later year.

- **Most, but not all, charitable organizations qualify for a charitable contribution deduction.** You can deduct contributions only if they are made to or for the use of a qualified recipient. No charitable contribution deduction is allowed for gifts to certain other kinds of organizations, even if those organizations are exempt from income tax. Contributions to foreign governments, foreign charities, and certain private foundations similarly are not deductible. Below, you can view a list of organizations for which your donations can be deducted. All organizations rated by Charity Navigator qualify for charitable status, and you can deduct your donations, subject to certain limitations.

There are limits to how much you can deduct, but they're very high. For most people, the limits on charitable contributions don't apply. Only if you contribute more than 20% of your adjusted gross income to charity is it necessary to be concerned about donation limits. If the contribution is made to a public charity, the deduction is limited to 50% of your contribution base. For example, if you have an adjusted gross income of \$100,000, your deduction limit for that year is \$50,000.

Adapted from Charity Navigator www.charitynavigator.com

Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria Heritage Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law, as decreed by the IRS.

Tax ID number: 46-0561240

Please note that this document is subject to tax law changes.

Donations

From November 22, 2020 through November 30, 2020

Acacia Originals, Porter, Texas

Aloys & Angela Notzon, San Antonio, Texas

Carlos & Guadalupe M Ontiveros, San Antonio, Texas

Judge Alfred Pawelek, Karnes City, Texas

Dorothy Pawlik, San Antonio, Texas

Rudy & Emily Jarzombek Pollok, San Antonio, Texas

Donald D & Catherine Varella, San Antonio, Texas

John & Christie Schroeder Wojtaszyk, Panna Maria, Texas

From the Bishop's Mailbag

In November, Bishop Yanta received this letter:

To: Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria Foundation

Enclosed is an additional contribution of \$500. Please add this to an earlier \$500 contribution so I would be eligible to become a member of the Peter Kiolbassa Society. George Bobinski

This letter is touching because we all have our challenges and motivations. It might be wanting to be a member of the Peter Kiolbassa society. No matter what the gift is, it is all appreciated, we are very thankful for everything, and the gifts that are given are cumulative. And so over time, it is possible to move up accordingly.

So We Have an Opportunity for You

Members of the Polish Heritage Center Board of Directors, along with several of our outstanding donors, have contributed \$525,000 into a fund that will match your contribution, thereby doubling the impact of your gift toward finishing the Center. In order to qualify for this match, we are asking for minimum contributions of \$25,000 and above. This would be a wonderful opportunity for families to come together for a joint gift.

There is also a special \$50,000 fund that provides the opportunity to match five \$10,000 donations to memorialize five of our religious vocations. This is an excellent way for you to honor the priests and nuns who have contributed so greatly to our Polish communities.

Your support has kept us going over these many years. For that we are forever grateful and thank the Good Lord every day for your kindness and generosity. Now, when we are so close to success, we invite you to join us at the finish line where we can celebrate a dream fulfilled and a job well done.

We have focused on sharing with you the progress in the building of the Polish Heritage Center over the years. We thought that this would be a good time to share with you about *those* who are the ones actually working on the Center that you will enjoy very soon! Here are some of their remarks:



My name is **Matt Di Filippo**, with *The Venice Art Terrazzo Co., Inc.* I'm a 4th generation terrazzo mechanic/owner. My family started the business in 1934 by my great-grandfather who was an immigrant from Italy. I've been involved with terrazzo my whole life and worked at the company throughout High School and College. After I graduated from Texas A&M with a Construction Science degree, I came to work for Venice Art full time.

I have been involved with many projects over the years and this one in particular, has been a very unique project for us in the area and the community. It's been really interesting learning about the history of Panna Maria and the first Polish settlement area. My grandmother on my dad's side of the family is Czech, from Nada Tx and the Hallettsville area. I know there are several similarities of traditions and culture between the Polish and Czechs, so this has been special to be involved in a project like this.

We want to do a great job for everyone, and we are looking forward to seeing the completed museum. I'm excited to showcase this logo and show off the versatility of what terrazzo can do. To me terrazzo is more than just a floor, I feel as though it can be used to tell a story and bring people or a community together. I'm planning on coming back with my family when it's all done to tour the museum and share the story with them.



Acacia Originals

Left: Zee Zavala -Senior Project Manager

Right: Tyle Johnson -Field Services Manager

The Polish Heritage Center project has been a challenging and joyful adventure. From the beginning it has been unlike any other project, coordinating information from many different sources, allowing this project to complete while meeting various expectations. The



wide range of products and materials presented many new opportunities for Acacia to experience and integrate into our library of skillsets. The vendors, teams and individuals we partnered with have been experienced, helpful and as exacting to high standards as we like to think we are. Every day we are blessed with great leaders like Steve Harding and Randy Reiley who shared their visions, patience and willingness to listen. We've been doing this a long time and we cherish the opportunities we are given to be able to work on projects like this with top of the line materials, great teamwork and people that are passionate about the cause.

Ozzy Chavez Electrician

It's been a blessing for me installing the electrical side of Polish Heritage Center. For me it was personal cause I gave my life to Christ 3/21/17, and few months later I found out I was going to be running this job. I knew right there I was blessed to run the electrical side of this building! Part of God's perfect pathway for my life! (Psalm 32:8)

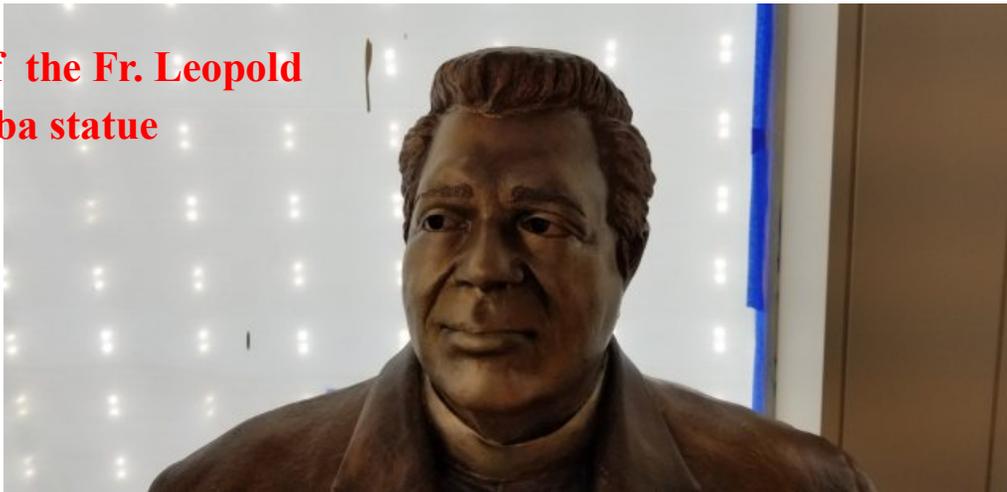
It's been a blessing and an honor to do my part with the help of all of Future Electric to help build this place to show and glorify God's Kingdom.

CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



The triple seal medallion in the Lobby

The bust of the Fr. Leopold Moczygemba statue

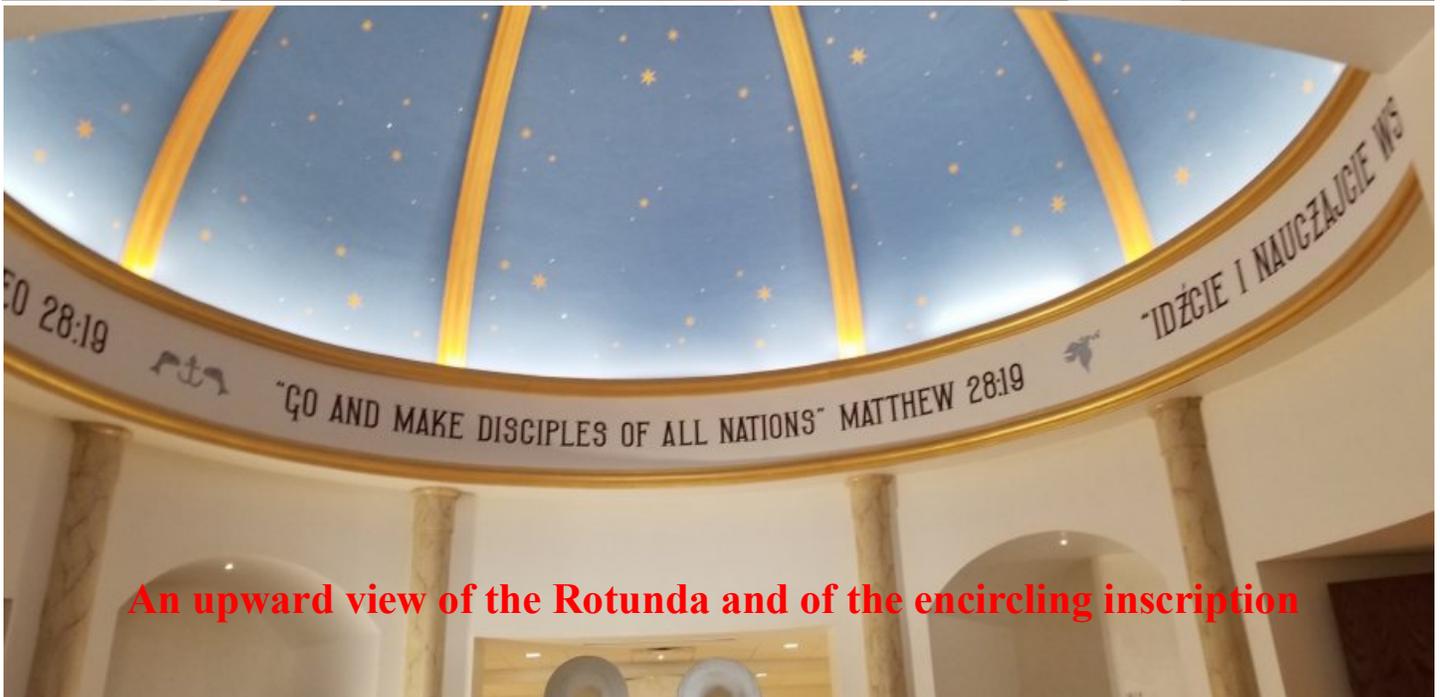


A panoramic view of the Lobby

CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



The background image for the Heritage Circle glass panel



An upward view of the Rotunda and of the encircling inscription

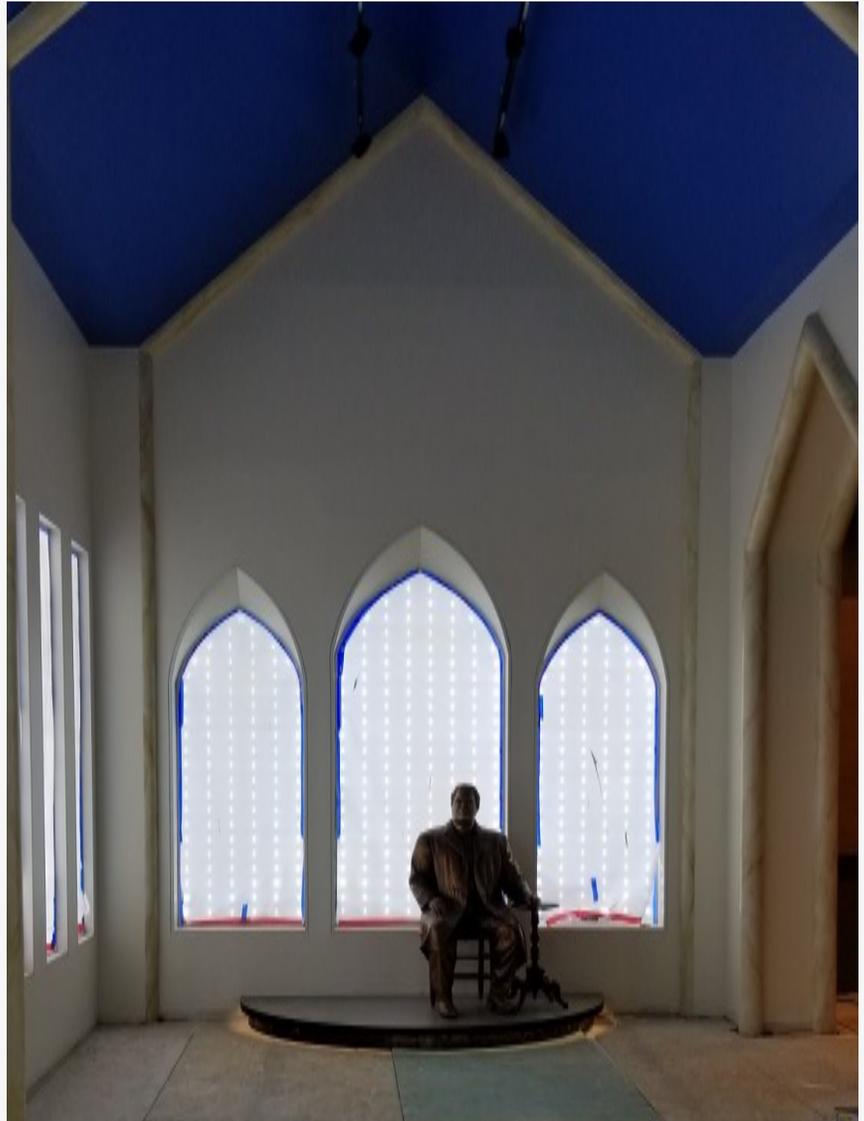


Theater seating

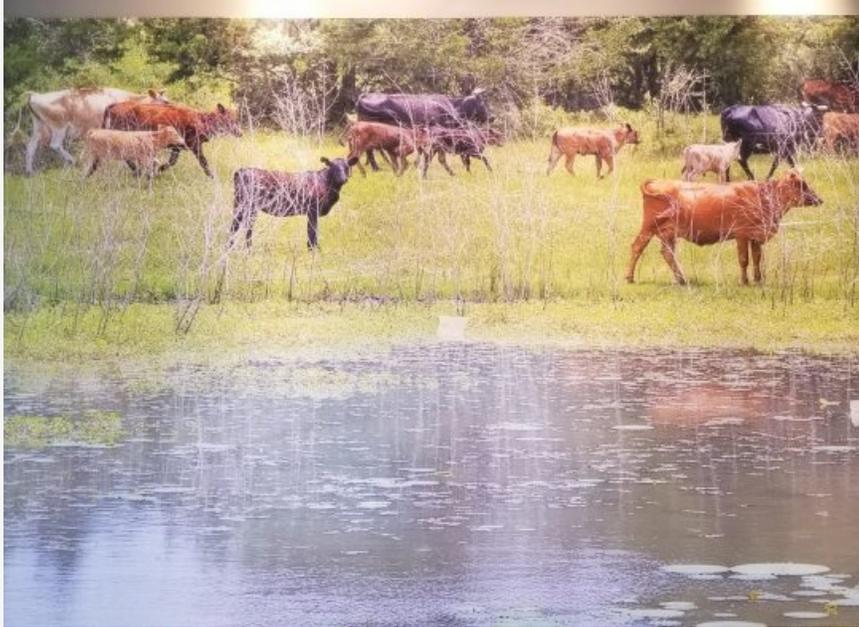
CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



The icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa in her own special niche



↑ A view into the Chapel, with the statue of Fr Leopold Moczygemba in place



← Graphic for Farming & Ranching

CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



Graphic on contemporary Poland



Graphics of our immigrant ancestors arriving in Galveston and beginning their trek from Indianola to San Antonio

St. Pope John Paul II Speaks to Texas Polonia

Assumption Seminary, San Antonio, Texas, September 13, 1987
Appearing in the PAPA 10th Anniversary Convention Program, page 1

*Photograph courtesy
of Vatican staff
photographer.*

Below is part the
address that St. John
Paul II delivered to
1,500 Texas Polonia
during his visit to
San Antonio.



*A Shepherd
for our
times!*

By Bishop John W.
Yanta, Part 2 of 2

John W. Yanta

(This is an English Translation of Remarks Originally made in Polish)

“In Poland, Panna Maria, Texas, is very famous. Everyone knows of Panna Maria and those first Polish immigrants who responded to the call of their pastor and spiritual leader, Father Leopold Moczygemba. I wish to thank you for the visit this evening. To the oldest Polish parish in the United States, to all parishioners of Panna Maria and to all Polish people living in the state of Texas, I extend my warmest greetings. Although I will be meeting with American Polonia in Detroit, it would have been a great disappointment not to meet with this, the oldest Polish community in the United States: Panna Maria, Texas. My American Bishops informed me that the hot Southern climate, typical of what I have experienced today, proved to be unbearable for so many immigrants, that some chose to relocate to the Northern climes of Chicago. However, the community and Parish of Panna Maria endured and survives to this day. Their perseverance is a joy to us. ***All of our great American Polonia credits its origin to you, Panna Maria, as the first nest built on American soil by Polish immigrants inspiring others to follow in your footsteps.*** As I meet with Polish immigrants all over the world, our thoughts always return to our homeland. Regardless of distance, by many years, and generations, your thoughts and hearts return to the land of your forefathers.”