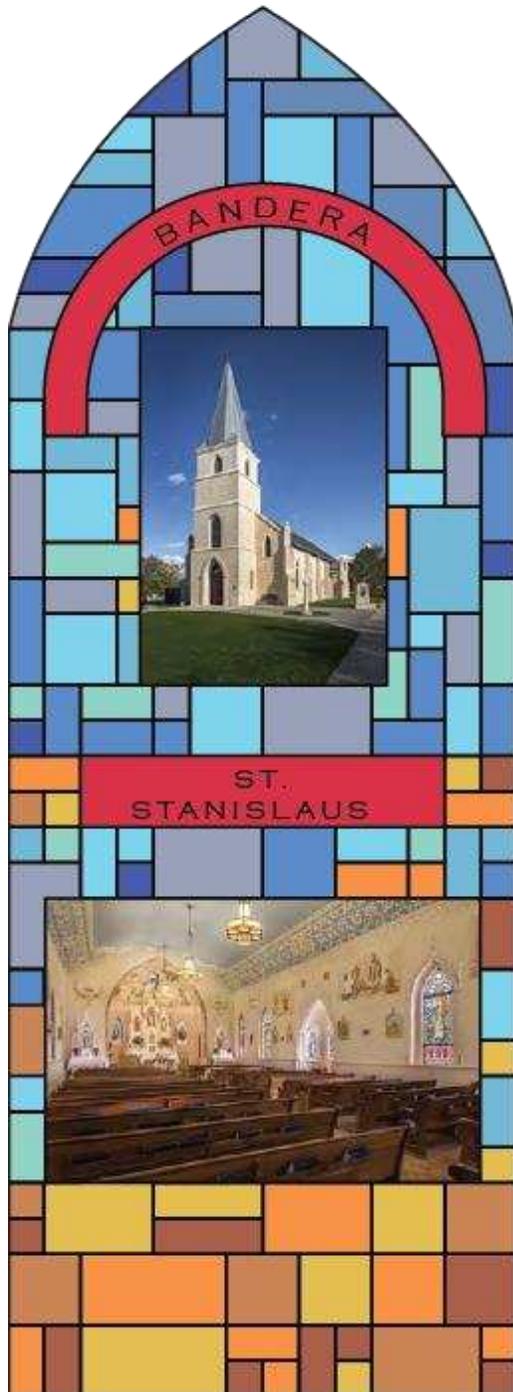


# Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria

Visitor Experience, #7 in Series

## Bandera, St. Stanislaus Parish

By Theresa Batto Helbert



St. Stanislaus Catholic Church was established in 1855. Its sixteen founding families were poor Polish immigrants that came to Bandera seeking a better life. They were small landowners from Upper Silesian villages who sought freedom from oppressive taxation. John James and Charles de Montel owned a saw mill and were looking for laborers. They provided wagons and ox carts for the immigrants to come to Bandera on the condition they were not allowed to leave.

The Polish immigrants were not only hardy and strong in body, they were also very strong, faith-filled Catholics. By 1858, on a parcel of land purchased by Bishop John Maria Odin for one dollar, they had constructed a small 20 ft. by 30 ft. log church in which to pray and sing even though they had no priest. However, once or twice a month, Father Leopold Moczygamba would come from Panna Maria to celebrate Mass. The people named their church St. Stanislaus, in honor of the Polish bishop who was martyred while saying Mass on May 8, 1079.

In 1866, the Resurrectionist Fathers arrived in Texas and Father Clemens Kucharzyk, became the first pastor for St. Stanislaus Church. Fr. Clemens was replaced by Fr. Felix Zwiardowski in 1869. In 1870, due to the departure of the priest in Panna Maria, Fr. Felix traveled between there and Bandera attending the spiritual needs of both parishes.

## **Present Church**

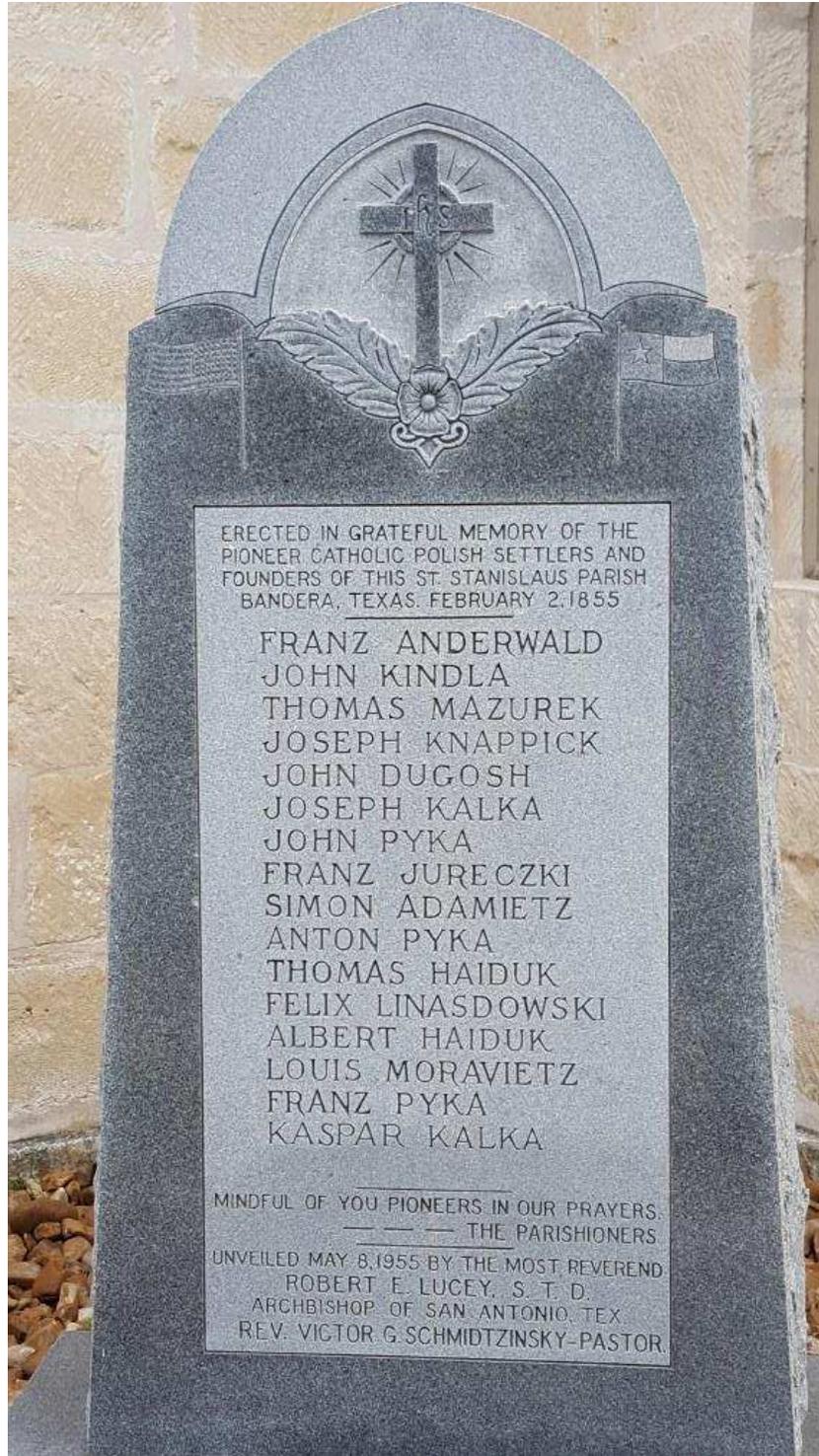
Construction on the present church building began in March of 1876 and was completed in 1877. The church was constructed of native limestone except for the sacristy and the rectory at the rear of the Church which were made of wood. St Stanislaus Church once again had a stationary priest, Fr. Bronislaus Przewlocki. On March 22, 1877, Fr. Bronislaus wrote: "There are now twenty six families all of whom congregate for divine services most faithfully."

Two years later, Fr. Bronislaus died and was buried in the church. Later, when the body was exhumed to move it, it was found incorrupt. The body was then put in a glass case and placed beneath the floor of the Church. Twelve years after Fr. Bronislaus had died, Fr. Felix wrote: "Praying at the grave of our departed brother I noticed that his body, which could be seen thru the glass, bears strange marks of preservation. His hands and face, after those twelve years, have remained the same as in time of death, even the hair remains the way I combed it at the time of the funeral." When the glass case was accidentally cracked in 1927, signs of decomposition were noticed so the body was interred in the cemetery adjoining the Church.

## **List of Pastors from the beginning**

The first rectory was built in 1881. From 1879 to 1891, the parish's spiritual needs were attended to by Fathers Jablonski, Pelczar, Magot, Cichocki, and Wolenczewicz. The next two pastors were the first non-Polish pastors. Fr. Roberts was pastor from 1892 to 1896 and Fr. Neisenz from 1896 to 1899. But the Polish priests returned with Fr. Matysiak from 1899 to 1900 and Fr. Kwoka from 1900 to 1901. Following them were pastors: Fr. Laporte from 1901 to 1904. Frs. Monasterio and O'Sullivan 1904 – 1905; Fr. Robling 1905 - 1909; Frs. Gulbach and Miedanner 1909 – 1910; Fr. Gallegher 1910 – 1912; Fr. Heffernan 1912 – 1919; Fr. Harnowski 1919 – 1920; Fr. Taradellas 1920 – 1921; Fr. Boivin 1922 – 1924; Frs. Boivin and Kickx 1924 - 1928; Fr. Endler 1928 – 1930; Fr. Kickx 1930 – 1934; Fr. Henkes 1934 – 1935; Fr. Strobel 1935 – 1944; Fr. Schiel 1945 – 1954; Fr. Schmitzinsky 1954 – 1967; Frs. Dragon and Palmer served as assistants during Fr. Schmitzinsky's tenure; Msgr. Ehlinger, assisted by Fr. Kalina 1967 – 1972; Msgr. Bruno Hubertus 1972 – 1977; Fr. Leyva, asst. to Msgr Hubertus, 1975 – 1977; Msgr. Smith 1977 – 1989; Msgr McManus 1889 – 1998; Fr. McGlanaghy 1998 – 1999; Fr. Horgan 1999 – 2000. In 2000, St. Stanislaus received another Polish priest, Fr. Oleksy SDS 2000-2012. The current pastor is a diocesan priest, Fr. John Nolan 2012 – present.

# The Founding Families



Monument erected in 1955 in honor of the original founding families

In 1930, Fr. Kickx remodeled the rectory that was originally constructed in 1897 using the rock left over from building the school. He added the two stained windows behind the main altar in memory of his parents and spent his leisure time refinishing the altar. He then personally financed and built the confessional (the present day Baptistry). It was completed shortly before Christmas 1934. On January 17, 1935, Fr. Kickx died. He is buried in St. Stanislaus Catholic Cemetery.

Again in the early 1950's, Fr. Schmidtzinsky oversaw many improvements to the church, school, rectory, and convent in preparation for the centennial celebration on May 8, 1955. Fr. Schmidtzinsky honored the founding families with a monument at the entrance to the church. During the 1950's Texas agriculture suffered from a severe drought. To mark the end of the drought, in November 1957, a statue of the patron saint of farmers, St. Isidore, was erected. Recognizing the needs of Catholics in the Medina Lake area, Fr. Schmidtzinsky also opened a mission church, St. Victor's Chapel.

In 1966, the Carillon Bells were donated to St. Stanislaus commemorating the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary (966 – 1966) of Poland's Christianity. In 1988, a new steel steeple and cross was added and the land for the new cemetery was purchased.

In 1989, outdoor Stations of the Cross were added to the Church grounds. That same year stained glass windows were installed in the baptistry. In 1996, the indoor Stations of the Cross, statues and altars were refurbished. And in 1998, the shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe was erected. Stained glass windows in the Adoration chapel and the sacristy were added in 1999. Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament began in November of that year and has continued to the present time.

Fr. Oleksy began celebrating outdoor Masses on All Souls Day. For this purpose, he added an altar and cross to the new cemetery. Over the next few years, he also renovated the church with new tile flooring, refinished pews and beautiful paintings and murals. He also restored and renovated the old rectory.

## **St. Joseph's School**

After 1875, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, aka, "the Blue Veiled Nuns" came to Bandera. The Sisters were founded by Fr. Felix Zwiardowski in Panna Maria. In Bandera, they lived and taught classes in the same stone



Historical marker on the old convent building



Historical marker on church building

building. In 1892, a second story was added but later removed when the building became a parish museum in 1970.

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word arrived in 1882, left for a few years, then returned in 1897. A new school building was completed in 1924 under the supervision of Fr. Boivin, The two-story structure had four classrooms on the ground floor. The upstairs was open with a stage on one end and was served as an auditorium/cafeteria. In 1963, a new convent was built adjacent to St. Joseph's School for the Sisters who taught there until the school closed in 1968. After the Sisters left, the convent was used as the rectory but now houses the parish offices. The Texas Historic Landmark was placed on the old convent and school.

## Many Priestly and Religious Vocations

The Sisters and priests were very influential in the future live of its students. Sons of St. Stanislaus Parish that became Priests were Monsignor James M Boyle (1908 – 1946); Rev. Edward B. Postert, O.M.I. (1900 – 1977); Rev. Shaun McCarty S.T. (1929 – 2007); Rev. George Montague, S.M. (1929 - ); Rev. Wayne Elkins (1936 – 1995); Dn. Robert Stein (1941 – 2012).

Daughters of St Stanislaus Parish that became nuns were Sr. Mary Gertrude, C.C.V.I., born Ida Nitzcer (1862 – 1921); Sr. Chantel C.C.V.I., born Mary Elizabeth Kalka (1856 – 1924); Sr. Josepha C.C.V.I., born Jeanetta Rappold (1904 - 2006); Sr. Agnes Teresa C.C.V.I., born Ethel Turner (1909 – 1999); Sr. Mary Elizabeth C.C.V.I., born Leona Batto (1905 – 1989); Sr. Bernadette C.C.V.I., born Bernadette Anderwald (1917 -2016); Sr. Elia C.C.V.I., born Elia Rosas (1929 - ); Sr. Dorothy C.C.V.I., born Dorothy Batto (1945 - ).

## St. Stanislaus Parish Today

Even though the parish now has a very diverse ethnicity, St. Stanislaus parishioners are very proud of their Polish roots. Polish foods have been incorporated at the parish festival and an authentic Polish sausage dinner is held in February. St Stanislaus is also a sister parish to St. Michael's in Rozmierz, Poland. We enjoy the exchange of culture, music, food, and ideas with our Polish friends during their visits here and our visits there. We look forward to learning more about our Polish ancestry.

Thanks to Theresa Batto Helbert for her quick magnificent work in providing a great history of her parish. I visited St. Stanislaus Parish for their beautiful Festival (picnic) on Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>. I was truly impressed with their spirit of joy, unity, and parish pride that acknowledges its Polish roots with great respect. I got a first class tour of the beautiful church whose interior was recently remodeled under the former pastor †Father Stanislaus Oleksy, SDS, and by the famed artist Fr. Antoni Polaniak, SDS. He also remodeled the churches of Our Lady of Sorrows in San Antonio, as well as in Cestohowa, and Panna Maria, TX. It's worth a trip to Bandera to see their church plus evidence of so much Polish Silesian history.

*Bandera calls itself the "Cowboy Capitol of the World"!*

# CONSTRUCTION IS MOVING FAST!



Week 7 highlights

Week 8 highlights – Back of building

## And, the COST \$\$\$ is also moving fast!

We have paid \$175,055.48 for the 1<sup>st</sup> month's construction and \$170,564 for the second. The next month's bill is estimated to be \$337,300 and the fourth month is anticipated to be \$404,750. Come visit the site. They are working 7am – 3pm. John Wojtasczyk, my assistant, visits there every morning and speaks with the foreman and takes pictures. At this stage, the projected construction timetable is: June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Start pouring concrete for the first half of the main slab, July 13<sup>th</sup> – Start pouring second half of the main slab and, August 2<sup>nd</sup> – Start erection of the exterior walls. So far, we have not had to borrow any money from the bank. Ideally, we pray that we never have to borrow - and we pay the construction monthly bills on time. Help us, Lord!

## Thank You, We are Grateful!

Congratulations to the pace setting children of **Vincent** and **Leona Janysek** who are in the process of completing their *second* \$100,000 donation! Memorialize your parents and grandparents by asking your siblings to CONSIDER an individual or group gift of \$100,000 – some people are able to pay it immediately – others

stretch it for some reasonable additional time! The \$100,000 will have your name in the beautiful lobby as a Heritage Circle member. Additionally you can apply that total amount to the NAMING OPPORTUNITIES – 16 have been taken and 61 are still open.

Here are some samples of these still open: 1)Main Exhibit Hall - \$2,000,000; 2)Rotunda - \$1,000,000; 3)Sts. Cyril and Methodius - \$750,000; 4)St. John Paul II - \$500,000; 5)Interactive Display of Polish Family Names and Texas Silesian Polish Settlements - \$250,000; 6)Expansion, White Deer and McCook - \$200,000; 7)Fr. Moczygomba Accomplishments, Moczygomba Priests, Moczygomba Legacy - \$150,000; 8)Display Case for Rotating Exhibits (e.g. History, Prayer Books, Wedding and First Communion Certificates, etc.) - \$100,000; 9)St. Stanislaus, Bandera, 6' X 3' electronically illuminated graphic appearing to be stained glass window - \$50,000; 10)St. Michael's Cemetery, San Antonio, 6' X 3' electronically illuminated graphic appearing to be stained glass window - \$25,000.

Contact me either through my assistant, John Wojtasczyk, at 210-387-7472 or email at [wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net); phone the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria 210-263-7270; you may write me at P.O. Box 28125, San Antonio, TX, 78228, or any of the Board of Directors: Al Notzon, Joe Yanta, Randy Pawelek, Betty (and George) Kowalik, Sam (and Susie) Kotara, Fr. Wieslaw Iwaniec, Msgr. Frank Kurzaj, Pat Hoffmann, Loretta Niestroy, Cheryl Pruski, Dr. Martha Respondek, Joyce Rives, Lambert and Rosalie Titzman, and Susan Moczygomba.

## St. Pope John Paul II

“From its beginnings Polish culture bears very clear Christian signs...Polish culture still flows with a broad stream of inspirations that have their source in the Gospel...You are hearing these words from a man who owes his own spiritual formation from the beginning to Polish culture...Remain faithful to this heritage.”

Pope John Paul II, from a speech in Poland, June 3, 1979

This naming opportunity will be in Area 3, ***Early Poland and Silesia, 966 to 1854***. It is available: \$150,000.



Week 9 highlights – building the forms!



Week 9, a bird's eye view from a cherry picker!

# McCook Parish Window Taken

The 6 ft X 3 ft electronically illuminated graphic appearing to be a beautiful stained glass window of the McCook Parish Church has been “taken” by the six children of Sylvia **Gawlik Lyssy Skloss** and August **Moczygamba “Sklarz” Skloss**.

The siblings honoring their parents are: James and Carole **Skloss**, Mission, TX; John and Virginia **Skloss** Phillip, McAllen, TX; Joyce **Skloss** and Children, Cedar Park, TX; Michael and Theresa **Skloss** Allen, Mission, TX; Lawrence and Paula **Skloss**, Mission, TX and; Douglas and Mary **Skloss** Walker, Corpus Christi, TX

From Joyce **Skloss**, who organized the generous memorial, I received this message with the \$50.000 check: “...we are all blessed to have the gift of the Polish Heritage Center project that was started. It is a gift that will last many generations and a gift for which there aren’t sufficient ways to say thank you. God Bless all who are working so hard on this project.”

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## Have we **SCANNED** your ancestral family treasures?

It works like this. Arrange with Maureen (**Kush**) Brown at 210-263-7270 or John **Wojtasczyk** at 210-387-7472 for a time and place to scan your treasures. The articles will be given back to you on the spot. However, some people donate some to our Polish Heritage Center. Recently, Lorraine **Manka** Ponish brought in a box of personal letters from the famed Trappist monk, Fr. Lawrence Swierc, who is a native of Falls City. We will be scanning the **Madla** family of Helotes archival articles soon. Remember, our Polish Heritage Center is both ours together and yours for sure. Let’s make our Center the best possible!

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*“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” (Luke 12:48).*

# Our Two New Deacons!

CONGRATULATIONS to two deacons ordained May 28<sup>th</sup> for the Archdiocese of San Antonio: Michael (and wife Judy **Snoga**) **Pawelek** and Carl (and wife Kathryn Ibarra) **Rutkowski**. Deacon **Pawelek**, having grown up in Panna Maria, is the oldest son of †Conrad and Ethel **Pawelek**. Deacon is also a nephew of Father Jonathan **Felux**, vocation director of the Archdiocese. Deacon **Pawelek** has been assigned to his home parish, St. Joseph, Honey Creek. Deacon **Rutkowski** has ancestral roots especially through his grandfather Sylvester **Rutkowski**, one of 12 children who lived on a farm on the Ecletto Creek and were neighbors of the **Janysek's**. They belonged to Panna Maria Church. His wife Kathryn is a **Madla** from Helotes, who came from Polish Upper Silesia. At the present time, the Silesian Profiles Committee is doing research on the **Madla** ancestral Polish family. Deacon **Rutkowski**, a parishioner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Helotes, has been assigned to St. Stanislaus, Bandera. STO LAT Deacons! Congratulations to their families, fellow parishioners, and many friends! Pray for priestly, diaconal, and religious vocations!

## What T. Lindsay Baker wrote about our ancestors

*“In the 1850’s Upper Silesia constituted the southeastern tip of the Kingdom of Prussia. The region had been cut off from the Polish state for almost five centuries when the Texas emigrants departed. Despite the long rule by foreign kings and nobles, the Polish peasants who inhabited the area retained their Polish national identity, Polish culture, and Catholic religion.”* (The Polish Texans, T. Lindsay Baker, pg. 9, University of Texas, Institute of Texas Culture, 1982, San Antonio)

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*“We really don’t know who we are unless we know where we came from and how we got here”.*

- Judge Robert Thonhoff

## **God's Plan – Our Response**

One of the Bible readings for the Mass of the Resurrection (Funeral Mass) that can be chosen is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 14:12: "So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God." Jesus told the parable of the Good Steward – the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30).

God's will and plan for our life is for us to be Good Stewards. At the end of our lives Jesus will ask how we spent the gifts of time and years, our many opportunities – spiritually and materially in this richest country of the world in the 21st century, and, lastly, our dear money. Let's pray for each other that we are always grateful to the Holy Spirit for inspiring our Polish ancestors to come to Texas. They endured much suffering and poverty especially compared to our standards of living today. In gratitude let us preserve their values and attitudes for many generations to come! I believe that's God plan. We can do it with God's help and the intercession of our Saints and saintly ancestors in Heaven.

## **Prayer – The Greatest Power on Earth**

Please pray for our Polish Heritage Center in your Masses, rosaries, and devotions. Also pray to God through the intercession of our Polish saints – Our Lady of Czestochowa, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Stanislaus, St. Hedwig, St. Hyacinth, and St. John Paul II. Beautiful images of these saints will be in the rotunda.

"Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children; and may the gracious care of the Lord, our God be ours; Prosper the work of our hands for us!"

"Let the favor of the Lord be upon us: give success to the work of our hands, give success to the work of our hands" (Psalm 90).

**May God Bless You and Yours!**

**Retired Bishop John W. Yanta**