



Dziękuję

I Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

Dziękuję, a big Polish thank you to all of our Polish Heritage Center friends and donors. You are in our daily prayers, and we are so thankful for all of you who have recognized the importance of Bishop Yanta's vision of a first-class institution that honors our hard-working immigrant Polish ancestors who came to Texas from the region of Upper Silesia.

The number of visitors to the PHC continues to grow and we have already exceeded last year's total attendance. Our programming has included presentations by authors and historians Dr. T. Lindsay Baker and Professor James Pula, writers like Ewa Barczyk, Sonya Zalubowski, and Dr. Piotr Przybylski. Our marketing program is expanding to include not only the PHC website: polishheritagecentertx.org, but also newspaper articles and highway billboards.

The Center's concept for rotating exhibits began with the Women's History exhibit, which was followed by the current exhibit of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Cestohowa and the blessing of the Cestohowa window in the Center.

We are delighted with the opening of the Bishop John W. Yanta Room where workshops, wedding rehearsals, birthdays and reunions are being held. The Center also participated in the NPR program on Polish culture and cuisine as well as hosting parish, diocesan and group tours of the Center.

A visit by the Institute of Polish Remembrance (IPN) has opened a relationship with their efforts to portray Polish history accurately. Our collections committee has reviewed and approved several donations of books and background materials from descendants of the first Polish immigrants and also a collection of research from Dr. Baker on his work as historian for the Center's exhibits.

Thanks to each of you for being involved in the Polish Heritage Center. We always remember that none of this would have been possible without the leadership and vision of Bishop Yanta. May God continue to bless our donors, our Board, our Executive Director, her staff and our visitors.

I A Word on the PHC Endowment

The Board of the Polish Heritage Center has approved the establishment of the Polish Heritage Center Foundation Endowment and is accepting donations for the Endowment fund to be managed by SENDERO under policies approved by the PHC Board.

The first generous donation came from the John and Mary Pollok Yanta Memorial Trust established by Bishop John W Yanta. All donations or bequests are welcome.

Please contact Aloys Notzon, notzonal@gmail.com, or Alice Poore, director@polishheritagecentertx.org, for further information.

Educational Outreach

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director



Excitement is building at the Polish Heritage Center. Bishop Yanta's vision of educating and inspiring our youth about Polish heritage, culture and traditions has begun. Our first group of students, Mrs. Warner's 3rd graders from Falls City ISD, arrived on Thursday, November 30, to visit PHC for the first time. The following day, Mrs. Trevino's 5th grade class from Karnes City ISD came to visit the Center. More school trips from each district are scheduled for after Christmas break.

Months of planning and coordination have gone into making these trips possible. Meetings were held with each district's superintendent, principal, and teachers. Units of study for grades 3-8 were developed by an outstanding teacher, Katie Ferguson, and presented to all social studies teachers in these two districts. Plans are to share these units of study with districts all over South Texas. They will also be available for our local homeschoolers. After a weeklong study of Polish history, immigration, settlements and traditions, the culminating activity for hundreds of school children will be a half-day visit to the Polish Heritage Center.

On arrival, students will enjoy our award-winning documentary which explains the story of the first Polish immigrants, why they left Poland and how they settled in Panna Maria. They will spend time listening to the audio wands in our exhibit area, visit the Cestohowa anniversary exhibit, and then compete in a scavenger hunt, finding the answers to intriguing questions. Next, younger students will learn the significance of the poppy flower, how it is meaningful and medicinal to the Poles and then create their own with the help of local volunteers. The older students will decorate wooden eggs with seeds to make a traditional ornament. Students will have a chance to shop in PHC's new gift shop, visit the historic Panna Maria church, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is just a short walk from the Center, and then finish their day with lunch under the gazebo.

Each student will leave the PHC with several take-away gifts: a bag filled with Polish candy, a bookmark of Cyril and Methodius, who were missionaries to the Slavic people, along with a pack of beautiful prayer cards. We are excited to welcome these children and will strive to make their trip to the Polish Heritage Center memorable!



Reasons and Ways to Give

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

We are almost to the close of 2023, and it is a perfect time to consider a tax deductible donation to support the Polish Heritage Center and to help us move forward into the new year with our plans to expand our educational programming, increase the awareness of our Polish heritage through new and amazing exhibits, enhance technology and genealogy capabilities and expand our media footprint internationally.

In the October newsletter, you were introduced to a new way to help PHC accomplish our goals. We incorporated a new method, a QR Code, to make supporting the PHC quick and easy.

Just follow these simple directions:

1. Point your camera at the QR CODE to the right.
2. When your camera scans the code an icon, donor perfect.net, will appear. TAP it.
3. This will bring you to a screen called Donation information.
4. Follow the instructions on the phone to make your donation.
5. You will receive a receipt at the end of the transaction.



Please remember any amount, large or small, helps our mission continue. Because of supporters like you, the Foundation will be able to follow the vision of our founder, Bishop John W. Yanta, by providing a unique experience that will rekindle a new generation's interest in their Polish heritage. Thank you all so much for your continued support and I look forward to meeting each of you on your next visit to the Polish Heritage Center.

Sharing Christmas Traditions

By: Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey, PHC Board Member

When it comes to Christmas, we can't help but remember the joys of holidays past, indulging in the "sacred memories of our heritage," as Bishop Yanta liked to call them. Polish Christmas traditions are beloved in whatever forms they are celebrated today, and their roots run deep through the generations. Here are a few.

In Poland, St. Nicholas visits children on his nameday – December 6. Escorted by both angels and demons, he brings toys and sweets to the youngsters who've been good the past year. Those who haven't are reminded that there is still time to improve their behavior.

The most sacred time, festive evening and important meal of the year is "Wigilia," the Vigil of Christmas Eve. For many of us, it comes after a day of fasting and/or abstinence. Tradition has the table set with a tablecloth under which hay or straw is spread to remember the Baby Jesus lying in the manger. A place at the table is set but remains vacant – ready should any unexpected visitor drop by.

The Christmas wafer, *opłatek*, is passed around as a symbol of unity and love, forgiveness and friendship. The meal is sumptuous, with an odd number of dishes, though the number varies between 9, 11, even 21. Again, tradition says the main course must be fish. In our Silesian region, the dinner is finished with "makówki," which features poppy seeds mashed with honey, almonds, and raisins layered between slices of white bread rolls, then covered with cream.

Gifts are always opened on Christmas Eve, much to the chagrin of our non-Polish brethren. This is followed by Midnight Mass, the Shepherds' Mass known as "Pasterka." The Christmas tree, according to tradition, is not set up until Christmas Eve as it must survive until the Feast of the Three Kings. Christmas Day is a day of rest, spent with family. Then the following day, St. Stephen's Day, there are visits and caroling and more food.

The last important observance of the Christmas Season is the Feast of the Three Kings. Since the Middle Ages in Poland, priests visited their parishioners, blessed their homes, discussed family issues, and left behind the initials K + M + B on the upper frame of the front door, along with the date of the year. The initials are for the three Kings – Kasper, Melchior and Baltazar. And one final lovely tradition – on the Feast of Three Kings, parents place medallions, rings and coins on the altar, which are later given to their children who are leaving home for other regions or countries. Christmas blessings to you and yours – *Wesołych Świąt Boże Narodzenie*.

We referenced "Polish Christmas Traditions" by Wanda Tomczykowska and the Polish Arts and Culture Foundation for this story. This book and others featuring Polish Christmas customs can be found in the PHC Library and Archives.



Books on Christmas traditions can be found in the PHC library.

Dr. Jim Shares Polish Music



PHC board member and our favorite TAMU Aggie professor Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz will get your toes a'tapping with his Dec. 13 virtual Zoom presentation - "Why I play Polish Folk Music?"

Dr. Jim is an ag guy with a passion for preserving our Polish culture and introducing the music, food and customs to current and future generations. His presentation on Polish music will explore how it made the journey to the New World and its influence on the country/western and conjunto music we are familiar with in South Texas. Did you know a lot of Johnny Cash's hits were grounded in a polka beat?

As Dr. Jim says: "Music creates the atmosphere of any event and music brings back memories of your past while creating new memories in the present and helping to preserve our language. If a picture is worth a thousand words, music is worth a thousand memories."



Join us on Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 6 p.m. via Zoom. Look for the link on the PHC website at polishheritagecentertx.org.



**THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA**

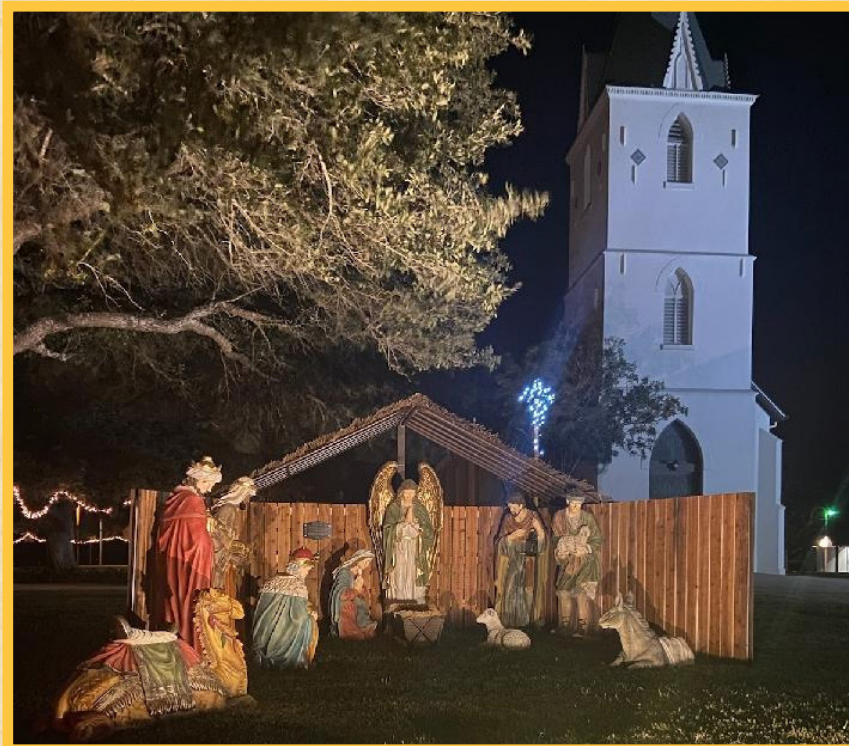
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PHC hours: Wed. – Sat. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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Wesołych Świąt Boże Narodzenie



Christmas Nativity in Panna Maria
Photo courtesy of Rebekah Pawelek