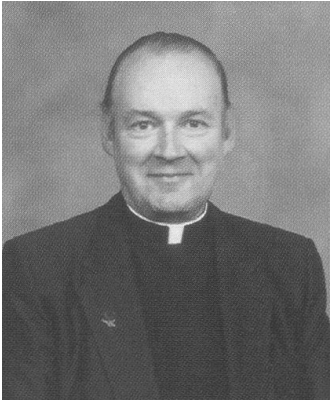


Congratulations, Fr. Francis Gwiazda and Parishioners of St. Laurentius Parish



The Polish American Congress, Eastern Pennsylvania District, the Polish American Cultural Center Museum and Polonia extend congratulations to Fr. Francis Gwiazda, Pastor, and the people of St. Laurentius Parish as they mark the 125th Anniversary of the oldest Polish parish in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Since St. Laurentius Parish was founded in 1882, it has nourished the Catholic faith and the traditions of the Polish people. We congratulate Fr.

Gwiazda for helping Polonia maintain the Polish spirit through his leadership and participation. Polonia is honored to salute the people of St. Laurentius Parish as they mark another milestone in the parish's history. We wish you Dwiescie Lat!

125th Anniversary Schedule:

Sunday, October 14, 2007, 2 P.M., Mass of Thanksgiving
St. Laurentius Church, Memphis & Berks Streets in the Fishtown section of Philadelphia, PA. Celebrant, Cardinal Justin Rigali

125th Anniversary Reception, 4 P.M., Romano Caterers, 1523 E. Wingohocking Street, Philadelphia, PA

For information call St. Laurentius Rectory (215) 739-1776

Maria Koleda, President

St. Adalbert

Polish Language School &
PAC, Eastern PA District
Youth Committee

Thompson Street and Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(610) 368-1604

HOW PROUD ARE YOU?

When someone asks you whether you're proud to be Polish, how do you respond? Presumably, your instinct is to respond in the affirmative. But, I ask: How proud are you, honestly? Do you participate in the plethora of activities and programs sponsored by the numerous Polish-American organizations, including the Polish American Congress, in the Philadelphia area? Do you strive to learn about Polish history? Do you contribute to programs that educate our youth about our Polish heritage?

When it comes down to it, only a portion of us participate in events sponsored by the Polish American Congress and other Polish organizations, including parishes and schools. This begs the question: Are you proud to proclaim your pride for our rich Polish heritage?

Our heritage is rich, very rich, and we have many things of which to be proud. For one, we have a fascinating history that demonstrates that we Poles have endured and survived immense suffering and loss, and we have done so with incredible strength of character and dignity. In consideration of this, why is it so difficult to join together in good times? I challenge you to show your fellow Polish-Americans and everyone else just how proud you are by contributing your time and efforts to worthy causes sponsored by the Polish American Congress and other Polish organizations. Let's show the world that we are united, capable, and yes - PROUD!



Jadwiga Kozdra, President

Our Lady of Czestochowa
Polish Language School &
PAC, Eastern PA District
Youth Committee

654 Ferry Road, Doylestown, PA
215-429-6161

It is my great pleasure to welcome all students attending Our Lady of Czestochowa Polish Language School in 2007-2008. Some are new and some have been with us for some time. We welcome new faces any time. Many of our students, teachers and parents volunteered their time during the 42nd annual Polish-American Festival at Our Lady of Czestochowa Shrine. I sincerely thank them for their time, hard work and courage to be on the stage while presenting the Harvest Festival and playing parts in a traditional Polish Wedding, which was a unique addition to this year's festival. The shows would not be as successful if it were not for their energetic participation. I encourage all students to get involved in celebrations of Polish traditions and culture during this school year and beyond since the Polish-American community depends on the new generation.



Saint Laurentius Church History



With Gothic spires reaching up to Heaven and stained glass windows that catch the sun like a beacon of light, the magnificent edifice of St. Laurentius Church evokes reverence in all who look upon it. But the oldest Polish Roman Catholic Church in Philadelphia was not always such a powerful symbol of Christ. Its origins herald back to a time when immigrants—with little money, and nothing more than a strong belief in God—sought a humble house of worship.

In the late 19th century, Polish people in the area desired a parish to educate their children according to the traditions of their homeland and the doctrines of the Roman Catholic

Church. Early religious services were held in the basement of St. Boniface Church on Diamond and Hancock Streets, and later, at Norris and Sepviva Streets. Neighborhood children received catechism lessons at a nearby blacksmith shop.

With fewer than fifty families, and only \$31.50 in the treasury, the Polish people petitioned the Archbishop of Philadelphia for a church. Their prayers were answered in 1882, when St. Laurentius Church was established, and later erected at Berks and Memphis Streets. Children attended St. Laurentius School in the basement of the building under instruction from the Felician Sisters, a Polish order of nuns.

The first Polish-speaking priest at St. Laurentius Church, Rev. Adalbert Malusecki, led efforts to construct the church's upper chapel. Master craftsmen from Mannheim, Germany were called upon to build an ornate wooden altar, pulpit, statues and elaborate cutglass windows. Later, in 1912, under the stewardship of Rev. Gabriel Kraus, the sanctuary was embellished with oil paintings portraying the life of Christ and his Saints.

Throughout the years, St. Laurentius School blossomed into a bustling academic institution. By 1923, a new convent and school building were purchased at 1614-16 E. Berks Street. A few years later, at the church's 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee, the school's attendance swelled to nearly 800 students.

As the congregation grew, the church reached out to the community. A newspaper informing residents and parishioners of activities and events—called the Parish Calendar—hit the presses in 1957. At the insistence of Rev. Stanislaus J. Garstka, the Catholic Ladies Guild was formed that year to raise funds and help plan events, including the celebrated annual Christmas Bazaar.

In the 1970s, Rev. Anthony F. Ziemba, "Father Tony" as he was lovingly called, drew many parishioners to the church with his gentle, cheerful nature. Families were brought together; marriages made stronger. To mark the church's 100-year Jubilee in 1982, Rev. Ziemba invited John Cardinal Krol to preside as celebrant during the Centennial Mass. Cardinal Krol, an archbishop of Polish origin, honored the congregation by attending.

In the early 21st century, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia began to lose parishioners as fewer Catholics attended mass on a regular basis. Rev. Frank Gwiazda, whose stewardship began in 1986 and continues today, was faced with the arduous task of raising declining enrollment at St. Laurentius School. His faith in God, perseverance and support from loyal parishioners helped him keep the school doors open and maintain the tradition of Catholic education and shared fellowship—a dream first sought by those heeding the call of God more than a century ago.

In Grateful Recognition of a
Major Donation

to the

**Polish American Cultural
Center Museum**

in Memory of

Peter Kierbiedz

Offered by Hedwig Kierbiedz

