



Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

Greetings to you all from sweltering South Texas. As we stay relatively comfortable in our airconditioned homes, I can't help but recall what summer must have been like for our immigrant ancestors. Their survival truly is a tribute to their faith and resilience, as well as the kindness of their neighbors. Join us in praying for rain and for the restoration to health for our friends who are ill.

August 6th marks the second anniversary of the death of Bishop John W. Yanta, visionary founder of the Polish Heritage Center. On Saturday, August 3, at 4:30 pm, Bishop Yanta will be honored with a Mass at the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Panna Maria. Following Mass, Father Wieslaw Iwaniec will bless the new headstone at Bishop's gravesite next to the church. A reception will follow in the Polish Heritage Center along with entertainment from the Polish dance group Wawel from Houston. All are welcome to visit with us as we celebrate Bishop Yanta's long and storied life.

Education was always very important to the Bishop, and we honor his legacy with the Bishop Yanta Scholarship. A committee is considering the inaugural applications from Catholic students attending Texas colleges and universities who have a direct connection to the Polish immigrations to Texas.

The PHC writing committee is busy at work with texts provided by IPN, the Institute for Polish Remembrance, as we update exhibits in the post-World War II galleries.

Bishop Yanta envisioned parish churches organizing pilgrimages to the Polish Heritage Center and made funds available to support this effort. We are also reaching out to area nursing homes and senior residential facilities. Contact Alice Poore, director@polishheritagecentertx.org, to get more information and plan your visit to Center.



Polish Soldiers Visit PHC

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

The PHC was recently visited by three very interesting young men and their families. They are members of the Polish army and serve as tank specialists and crewmen. They have been sent to San Antonio for an eight-week crash course in the English language and will then continue their training in Georgia, where these soldiers will take a three-month extensive course in tank operations. When asked if they had visited the Alamo, one of them laughed and said, "Time is scarce. It is not as important to us as Panna Maria, the church and this center." What a wonderful compliment to all of us at the Polish Heritage Center.



ACE at the PHC

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

School is out for the summer, but not for the students registered for the ACE summer program from surrounding districts. The PHC hosted five tour groups in June, including students from Kenedy Elementary and Middle School, Stockdale Elementary and Middle School, and Three Rivers Elementary and High School.

The days were fast-paced and filled with fun facts and lots of laughter, especially in the Cestohowa Exhibit where the students attempted to identify artifacts on loan from the families of Cestohowa. Hands down, Geri Wiatrek's Victorian button hook stirred up the most interest with students not believing women had as many as twenty buttons on their shoes between 1850 and the early 1900s.

Students enjoyed the tours of the Gallery exhibits given by Sam Kotara, Susan Moczygomba-McKinsey and John Wojtaszyk. After the tours, students were then encouraged to wander around the exhibit area and use the audio-wands to listen to individual stories of the exhibits that interested them the most.

Education Specialists Susie Kotara and Michele Adams, and volunteers Becky Bexar and Shirley Palitza, then instructed the students in the art of making a tissue paper poppy flower and shared with them the history of Poland's national flower.

Refreshments were served and later students were directed by Sam, Susan and John to the beautiful Immaculate Conception Church, St. Joseph's School (now museum), the graves of Bishop Yanta and Father Leopold Moczygomba, and of course, each group enjoyed taking a picture under the magnificent oak tree where the Polish families held Mass on Christmas Eve 1854.

To put the finishing touch on these visits, each student left the Center with a red bag filled with Polish candy, a bookmark of either the Apostle Cyril or Apostle Methodius, along with their hand-made poppy flower. The staff at PHC feels very blessed to be a part of the ACE summer program and to share Polish history and traditions with these amazing children.



The Blessed Mother statue, donated by Ronnie and Terry Urbanczyk, was blessed in Panna Maria May 19, followed by a reception at the PHC.

Unsung Heroes from an Undersung Country (Part One)

By: Joseph Pearce

Nations, as well as people, can be unsung heroes. They can suffer and be heroic in their suffering. Poland is such a nation. Hemmed in by neighbors that have all too often been enemies—and, as often as not, conquering enemies—Poland’s whole history has been shaped by suffering. It has been besieged and attacked by the Russians in the east and the Prussians in the west, and by the Swedes in the north and the Austrians in the south.

The Poles are an iron-forged people, shaped into a sword of faithful resilience in the heat of battle, caught between the anvil of warfare and the hammer of conquest. Furthermore, this faithful resilience has been shaped by the resilience of the Faith, the indomitable adherence of the Polish people to the Catholic Church which is the defining attribute of the nation itself. It is this fearless and courageous loyalty to Christ and His Church which has made Poland the heroic heart of Christian Europe. And yet, too few people know of the heroes that Poland has nurtured and nestled in her faithful breast. It is time, therefore, to celebrate the unsung heroes of this undersung nation.

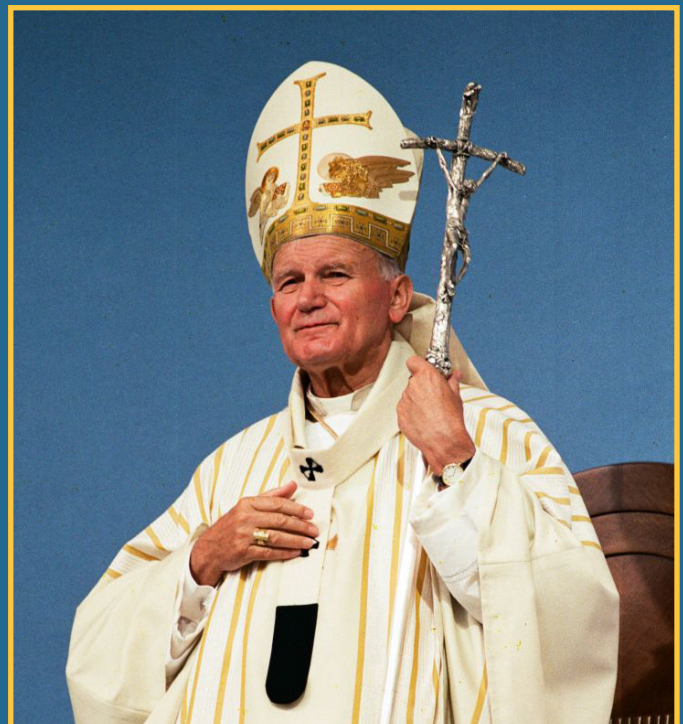
Many examples of Poland’s fidelity and fortitude could be cited. It was Poland’s famous “winged hussars,” under the command of King John III Sobieski, which won the decisive victory in the Battle of Vienna in 1683, saving Europe from the Islamic Ottoman Empire.

In the heroic defense of their homeland from the communists in the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919-20, the Poles saved Europe from Marxist imperialism and totalitarianism, at least until the betrayal of Europe at the Yalta Conference in 1945, which handed half of Europe, including Poland, over to the terror of the Stalinist Soviet Union. It was Poland, inspired by the Polish pope, St. John Paul II, which began the overthrow of the Soviet Union. Inspired by Pope John Paul’s visit to Poland and his call for courage, the Polish people began a campaign of civil resistance to communist rule which would spread to all the other Soviet-controlled countries of Europe, including, ultimately, Russia itself.

St. John Paul II needs no introduction, of course. He is indubitably the most famous Pole of the past century. His praises have been sung. He is a hero but hardly an unsung hero. The same could probably be said of King John III Sobieski. Most students of history will know of his role in saving Europe from Islamic conquest during the Battle of Vienna. And there are two other Polish heroes who will presumably need no introduction, both of whom are recently canonized saints of the Church: St. Faustina Kowalska and St. Maximilian Kolbe.

A holy hero and son of Poland who should need no introduction is Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko. Recognized as a martyr by the Church and beatified in 2010, Fr. Popiełuszko showed great and indomitable courage in his close association with the anti-communist Solidarity trade union in Poland and was murdered by the communist secret police in 1984.

Joseph Pearce is Visiting Professor of Literature at Ave Maria University and a Visiting Fellow of Thomas More College of Liberal Arts. This article first appeared in Crisis Magazine (crisismagazine.com) and is published here with the author’s permission. This is part one of three. Find more information about Polish Heroes in the PHC exhibit galleries.





**THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA**

13909 N FM 81
PO Box 25
Panna Maria, Texas 78144



PHC Hours: Wed. – Sat. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
www.polishheritagecentertx.org
(830) 310-8612

The Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria
Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization.

TAX ID: #46-0561240

News from the Heritage Communities

Celebration of Life
honoring
Bishop John W. Yanta

Saturday, August 3, 2024
Mass 4:30 at Panna Maria Church
Blessing of his headstone following Mass
Reception and entertainment follow in the
Polish Heritage Center.

