



an historical account.

Centennial St. Stanislaus Kostka Church (1867-1967),
Chicago, IL, p. 33-48. CAP at Orchard Lake.

1867

Shortly after the close of the Civil War, European immigration gathered momentum and poured new life and energy into a country bent on a rapid recovery from the ravages of a devastating conflict. Northern cities like Chicago had not suffered too much from the war, and could expand with ease. It is most difficult to ascertain what particularly drew the incoming Poles to Chicago, but the record shows that even those who temporarily stopped in other cities, eventually gravitated toward the new metropolis in the Midwest. A good guess is a strong labor market, and glowing reports from earlier arrivals.

As early as 1864 there were enough Polish residents in Chicago to bring about the organization of a benevolent society — St. Stanislaus Kostka Benevolent Society. The earliest record shows these names: Anthony Schermann, Peter Kiolbasa, John Niemczewski, John Arkuszewski and Paul Kurr. They obviously were staunch Catholics, judging from the fact that they chose such a title, and in their limited records mention the names of Fathers Moczygomba, Szulak and Molitor. There is also good historical proof that they aligned themselves with St. Joseph's Parish near Chicago and LaSalle Streets and St. Michael's Parish at North Avenue and Cleveland Street. The language barrier must have firmed their desire for a Polish parish. At any rate the actual beginning of their own parish harks back to 1867 when the St. Stanislaus Benevolent Society was reactivated and definite plans for a parish were drawn up.

The first two years of the parish were a period of trial and implementation, and as the number of people increased, needed leadership and material support emerged. Their first and foremost need was a priest who spoke their language and one who would reside permanently with them. The Rector of Holy Name Cathedral, the Rev. James Roles, and Peter Kiolbasa carried on a correspondence with the Resurrectionist Fathers at Rome, and as early as April, 1869 a Resurrectionist Missionary, Father John Wollowski preached a Mission to them at St. Joseph's Church. However, due to certain delays in communication and changing circumstances the first duly appointed pastor was a secular priest, Father Joseph Juskiewicz. This was in October, 1869. His stay was short. Real estate property for the new parish had been purchased prior to the new pastor's arrival. The Society was able to buy four lots at Noble and Bradley Streets, for approximately 1,700 dollars. Makeshift construction and meager funds delayed the work, misunderstandings and human spats entered into the picture, and it was several years before all was right.

Father Juskiewicz's pastorate lasted from October, 1869 to September, 1870 when Rev. Adolph Bakanowski, C. R. succeeded him. In less than a year's time a rather unpleasant and empathic atmosphere developed in the new parish, but fortunately Father Bakanowski was well qualified to handle the situation. Father Juskiewicz left for Mt. Carmel, Pa., worked there for a time and then returned to Chicago where after a brief illness he died. He is buried at St. Boniface Cemetery.

It took a while to placate the people who had divided into two camps on the question of property titles held in the name of the St. Stanislaus Benevolent Society. Father Bakanowski prevailed upon them to follow the legal route and transfer titles to the bishop's corporation. After this had been settled he got down to the business of completing the construction of the church.

1871

On June 18, 1871 Bishop Foley blessed the new church, a rather imposing building with classrooms on the ground floor and the church above. The first Confirmation service took place after the blessing and more than 300 of the faithful were confirmed. The newspaper accounts of the event testify to the importance of it, because it was attended by people from all parts of the city. Bishop Foley was well pleased with the pastoral work of the Resurrectionists, and the following month, when he was visited by their Father General, Rev. Jerome Kajsiewicz, C. R., he put them in charge of all the Chicago missions among the Poles.

The joy and satisfaction from the events of the summer of 1871 were short-lived. The Great Chicago Fire started on October 7th. late at night or in the early hours of the morning of October 8th., and changed the complexion and history of the city. The loss in lives and property was staggering but the Polish community suffered relatively little. Those who were victims of the fire were quartered in the parish building and financial aid was extended to them to help tide them over the critical days. When Chicago began its post-fire rebuilding program the parish was effected greatly by the number of new people arriving in droves to work on this project. Within a year the congestion became unbearable and a mission church was built two blocks south on Noble Street. This became Holy Trinity Parish.

Two other events of historical significance occurred in 1872. Peter Kielbasa the leader of the Polish community returned from his teaching assignment in Texas and took up permanent residence in Chicago. The other event of importance to the community was the purchase of a 21 acre plot of land in Niles and the establishment of St. Adalbert's Cemetery.

1874

Father Bakanowski returned to Rome in May, 1873, to assume an assignment from his religious order. In a span of about sixteen months St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish had three pastors, namely, Fathers Wollowski, Zwiardowski and Simon Wieczorek, On September 18, 1874 Father Vincent Barzynski, C. R. was appointed to the pastorate, and with this date begins a glorious era for the parish and the Polish community in Chicago. His pastorate lasted almost twenty-five years and his work as a priest and a community leader is really phenomenal. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish was the focal point not only for the Polish people of Chicago but also for those of practically the whole country.

The year 1874 marks the arrival of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Stanislaus and the opening of the parochial school with a student body of 150 pupils. Sister M. Rogeria was the first Superior

and Principal, and she had the able assistance of Sister M. Melaria and one postulant.

A new rectory was completed this year and the priests took up residence in the new edifice, close to the church, a convenience they had not enjoyed heretofore. The cost of the new rectory was only 1,500 dollars, but it was considered comfortable and practical.

Less than a month after assuming his duties as pastor, Father Barzynski was instrumental in convening priests and lay delegates from Chicago and out of state parishes, for the purpose of organizing and founding a national benevolent organization of Poles in America. Father Gierut conceived the idea of such an organization, but it was Father Barzynski's ability to organize that brought it into being. This convention was the beginning of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America which to this day, 93 years later, is one of the numerically strongest and most influential groups among the Polish-American element in the United States.

1877

Despite a rift among the Poles, a never ending struggle for hegemony in the community, Father Barzynski always managed to keep the vast majority of the people within the ranks of his followers. On the local level it was a contest between the St. Stanislaus Society and the St. Joseph Society. Later, on a city-wide level, the two groupings among the Poles were the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union. The St. Stanislaus Society remained with the Union and the St. Joseph Society aligned itself with the Alliance, the non-denominational group. With time a coexistence evolved and the development of the Polish community in Chicago was not too much impaired. As early as 1875 the large number of parishioners at St. Stanislaus forced Father Barzynski to expand the church facilities, and to seriously consider the idea of building a new church that would respond to the needs. Land was purchased at the corner of Noble and Ingraham Streets, for 11,500 dollars and already in 1876 the work was started on the building of a brick church, 200 by 80 feet. The project took almost two years before the first services could be held. The cornerstone was laid July 1, 1877, and the first Mass was said on Xmas Eve, 1877, in what is now the lower church. The general construction work went on for another three years and the towers and additions came in later years, but as of 1877 the accommodations for religious services were quite adequate. The parish was now ten years in existence and the statistics for this year are very telling. There were 513 baptisms, 57 weddings and 142 funerals, a good indicator of the size of the parish.

1882

The new church, complete except for the towers that were added in 1892, was blessed on July 10, 1881. A new rectory and Sisters' convent had been built in the previous two years and the parish took on the appearance of a well-built parochial unit.

A decade is a short span of time but the ensuing one was of vital import to the parish. Father Barzynski not only administered his own parish but he also was responsible for the founding of many parishes throughout the city, namely, Immaculate Conception, South Chicago (1882), Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Lemont, (1883), St. Josaphat (1884), St. Joseph (1886) and St. Hedwig (1888). All this did not cause him to slow down the development of his own parish. In 1889 the first large school building and auditorium was erected at the parish. It housed 16 classrooms, four large meeting halls and a spacious auditorium for theatrical presentations — a must in those days. Everyone was rightfully proud of the fine accommodations, and no one could foresee that in less than ten years

all this would prove inadequate.

1890

This year, 1890, marks the beginning of a long stride forward in education for the Polish community. St. Stanislaus College was founded at the parish and served as an incentive to many to reach for a higher and better status in life. Only twelve students comprised the first class and the first rector, Rev. Joseph Halter, C. R. had only one other teacher to round out the faculty. The school remained at the parish for about nine years and then was moved to Division Street.

1892

Father Barzynski had difficulty in accumulating funds to complete the church. There were so many urgent building projects that he simply had to stagger his plans. Finally in 1892 he was able to do what had been almost an obsession with him — build the church towers and erect the statue of the patron saint in the facade of the church building. The cost was prohibitive for the times, but the generous response of his people covered the outlay of 99,850 dollars in a very short time. This was the time of the Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park and visitors from all the world converged on Chicago. Many of them toured the city and St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish was one of the regular stops on these tours. It was billed as the largest parish in the world and we see why, when the parochial statistics for that year record the following: 2,260 baptisms, 372 marriages and 1,029 funerals. This year was most probably the high point of the parish's rapid growth, for with the establishment of other parishes in the city the pressure was taken off St. Stanislaus and the parish kept its size on an even keel for many years.

Toward the end of the year the parish celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its existence and at this stage was considered one of the bulwarks of the Church in Chicago.

1899

For seven fruitful and very effective years Father Barzynski continued his pastoral work at St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish and in the Polish community of Chicago. He was instrumental in helping to start new parishes as the people continued settling in the outlying sections of the city, and in some instances even beyond the city limits. His instrumentality was not limited to advice and encouragement. He even supplied or helped secure financial backing in these projects. In these years he helped to start these parishes: St. John Cantius (1893); St. Stanislaus B. & M., Cragin (1893); St. Hyacinth (1894); Sacred Heart, Melrose Park (1895); St. Michael (1897), St. Stanislaus B. & M., Posen (1898) and Ascension, Harvey (1899). He also helped Father Gordon in the organizing and founding of the Polish Alma Mater, a benevolent and fraternal organization.

The parish was on a strong footing in these years. In the pastoral and spiritual labors of the parish Father Barzynski had the help of more than twelve priests. Many of the priests who arrived from Europe came to him, were made welcome and to feel at home, and he would later find placements for them because there was a great need of priests in many places. The house complement usually consisted of the regular quota of Resurrectionist Fathers assigned to the parish and a smaller or larger number of secular priests in transit. The services and devotions in the church were many and varied and they were always attended by throngs of the faithful. Added to this were the many patriotic and social gatherings and events held at the parish, and one can easily see why St. Stani-

slaus Kostka Parish was the hub of community life for the Poles of Chicago.

Apparently the physical and material aspect of the parish was in good shape, because in 1895 Father Barzynski was able to secure the services of the well-known artist and painter, Thaddeus Zukotynski, to do the art work and the paintings in the sanctuary of the church. The work was finished in the spring of 1899, much to Father Barzynski's

personal satisfaction as well as that of the people. It was a sort of a "Nunc dimittis", a release for a servant of God, whose eyes have seen the glory of the Lord. In poor health since the beginning of the year, Father Barzynski began to ail seriously after the Easter Holy Days and died on May 2, 1899. His funeral, on May 5, was attended by an uncountable number of clergy and faithful, a testimonial to the high regard and esteem they held for him. He was buried at St. Adalbert Cemetery and a short time later an imposing mausoleum with his monument above it was erected in his name and serves as the burial place for the Resurrectionist Fathers of the American Province. This man of God was a giant in the truest sense of the word and his death closed the "pioneer era" of the parish.

Continuity is an important factor in the life of an institution. It was most fortunate for St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish that the one chosen to succeed Father Barzynski as pastor was a priest who had worked with him as an assistant pastor, and had the added advantage of six years' experience in pastoral care as founder and first pastor of St. John Cantius Parish. On May 21, 1899, Father John Kasprzycki, C. R., was installed as pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish and for the next six years served the parish in much the same way as did his predecessor.

In his pastoral work he seemed to be partial to the young element of the parish and one of his first projects in the parish was the building of a youth center, the White Eagle Turner Hall, which served as an athletic facility and social center for the young men of the parish for many decades. Today it seems an insignificant thing, an accepted thing to be done, but at that time an expenditure of 65,000 dollars for a youth center was an unheard of thing, and many parishioners grounded in European conservatism viewed this with askance. Time proved that Father Kasprzycki was a man with foresight.

An ever-increasing number of children in the school resulted in the conversion of the parish auditorium into 24 classrooms, in 1901. It was an unwritten law among the Catholics of the Polish community that their loyalty to their Church and their country could best be served by a parochial school where their children were well grounded in catechetics and educated in the language of their forefathers. This was not done with any prejudicial attitude toward American ways, but more in a spirit of loyalty to their traditions and background, and with strong conviction that this type of adherence will help somehow in the eventual attainment of freedom for their mother country, Poland. This characteristic of the Poles was frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted by others who never truly fathomed their psychology. Protagonists of immediate Americanization never realized that what they labeled ethnic clanishness was actually a defensive attitude built up over many years by many generations that desired to survive as rightfully proud people. Parochial schools were of prime importance to them and were expanded at a startling pace.

1905

Father Kasprzycki did well as a spiritual leader, and administered the parish efficiently. In 1904

the main altar was installed in the upper church, and most of the finishing touches on the church building were completed. His big concern was to draw up and set in motion an overall plan for a building program that would meet the needs of the parish — a new immense school, a convent and a parish auditorium. Before this could pass the discussion stage, his time as pastor terminated. In June of 1905, at the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Resurrection, at Rome, Father Kasprzycki was elected General of the Order, and despite the honor and distinction that was accorded him and through him to the parish, everyone was indeed sorry to lose him as pastor. In the interim, a matter of about six months, Father Andrew Spetz, C. R., an assistant at St. Stanislaus Kostka for many years, administered the parish.

1906

On January 6, 1906, Father Francis Gordon, C. R., pastor of St. Mary of the Angels Parish, was appointed pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish. He established and developed St. Mary of the Angels Parish, built up the Polish Publishing Company and made the Polish Daily News a politically and socially powerful newspaper. The latter two were particularly identified with Father Gordon who as their head carried a great deal of influence in the city's political life. He was a man of great initiative and enterprise, and after his appointment to the pastorate at St. Stanislaus, he set out at once to activate Father Kasprzycki's building plans.

The construction of an immense school building, convent and auditorium began that spring. The work moved at a rapid pace and was a source of great satisfaction to the parishioners who witnessed an example of twentieth century ingenuity in building construction. High and immense buildings were being built throughout Chicago and it was an era of municipal pride in the growing city. This same atmosphere prevailed at St. Stanislaus but it was short-lived. On the night of December 21, 1906, a tragic, uncontrollable fire destroyed the entire complex under construction. Providentially, no one perished in the fire but the Sisters lost their convent and all their personal belongings. The parish, with only partial insurance coverage, was dealt a great financial blow. The older parishioners who had vivid memories of the great Chicago fire of 1871 feared for a time that this would be a repetition of that memorable conflagration. Their fears were allayed when the following day only smoldering walls remained and the adjoining buildings were safe.

Heavy-hearted but undaunted, the parish began a rebuilding job at once, and the generous people made this financially possible at great sacrifice to themselves. The old hospital on Division Street was leased from the Nazareth Sisters and the school sisters were quartered there until the new convent was built and opened for occupancy in August of 1907. The parish auditorium was completed by the end of the year and dedicated on New Year Day of 1908. The occasion was utilized to bolster the spirit of the people and to add encouragement in completing the vast building program.

1908

Despite labor and union difficulties the new school and the other buildings that had been added to the parish unit were finally completed and fully furnished. A memorable day in the annals of the parish was May 10, 1908, when Archbishop Quigley solemnly blessed and dedicated the new buildings. This was a festive occasion with tens of thousands in attendance. That evening at the commemorative banquet in the new auditorium the list of speakers included the Archbishop of Chicago, James E. Quigley, the Vice-President of the United States, Charles Fairbanks and the Treasurer

of the State of Illinois, John F. Smulski. It was a day of triumph, but more so a day of thanksgiving. The second festive and memorable date in 1908 was July 29, when the parish played host to the first American Bishop of Polish origin. Bishop Paul Rhode had attended the parochial and his parents had been parishioners here. He was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Chicago by Archbishop Quigley and the formal reception in his honor was held at the parish auditorium. In the absence of the pastor, Father Spetz hosted the new bishop, hundreds of clergy and a host of representatives of the Polish communities from all over the United States.

Father Gordon left in June of 1908 for a prolonged visit to Poland and the Holy Land. The Chicago Daily News sponsored a city-wide contest to choose the most popular Chicagoan in public life, and the winner was given a grand tour of Europe and the Holy Land. Father Gordon was the natural choice of the Polish community of Chicago and the people showed their appreciation of his leadership by voting him in as the outstanding man of the city. Every copy of the sponsoring newspaper carried a ballot, and since most of our people were unable to cope with an English language newspaper, there obviously must have been a strong and an enthusiastic support of his cause.

In the summer and fall of this year electrical lighting was installed in the church and the interior of it redecorated. When in November of 1908 the Papal Legate to the United States, Archbishop Diomedea Falconio, visited the parish to impart the papal blessing to the clergy and people, the solemn vespers at which he presided were the first occasion for the use of the new lighting system in the church. The amazement and pleasure was universal. The wonders of the twentieth century were being put to good, practical use. Father Gordon returned from the Holy Land in December. He later published a book, an interesting and detailed account of his travels.

The Statistics for this year are a good indicator of the amount of parochial activity in the parish. These are the listings: 1,135 baptisms, 205 weddings, 477 funerals, 537 first holy communicants and 918 adults and children in the confirmation class. The number of families in the parish registry reached the staggering figure of 5,438.

1909

Father Gordon, pressed for time because of his work at the Polish Daily News, was unable to continue in the pastorate at St. Stanislaus, and his religious superiors and the Archbishop of Chicago decided to alleviate the tension by some changes. Father Gordon returned to the pastorate at St. Mary of the Angels and Father Stanislaus Rogalski, C. R., was appointed to the pastorate at St. Stanislaus Kostka. Father Rogalski remained here for three years and was succeeded in 1912 by Father Stanislaus Siatka, C. R. Father Siatka also served as pastor for three years and was followed by Father Francis Dembinski, C. R., who became pastor in 1915.

World War I had begun in Europe in 1914. It had a twofold effect upon the parish. The European theatre of war was centered in occupied and partitioned Poland, where the opposing armies, German and Russian, had traversed the country seven times, each crossing bringing the country closer to complete devastation. Many had families and close relatives there, so their concern was deep. The other effect of the war was the financial bonanza developing here in the States, the result of an expanding war production. Many of the parishioners now found themselves in a financial position that permitted them to buy or build homes in the newer and better sections of the city. The real estate movement was west and northwest. The parish naturally felt the loss of a goodly

number of its members, and there was no replacement of these through immigration which was at a standstill because of the war.

1915

In the years before America's entry into the war there was a great deal of activity aimed at helping, in some fashion, the liberation of Poland. The three powers that had partitioned Poland, Germany, Russia and Austria, were vitally involved in the war, and many of our people were confident that an allied victory would somehow serve as a stepping-stone in attaining their objective. This country was a neutral, and any activity on the part of an ethnic group residing in the United States, liable to embarrass the government, was not looked upon with approval. The Polish community limited its activity to fund raising and maintaining a high pitch of enthusiasm for the cause of the mother country. Oftentimes, whether among the clergy or people, it was sheer nationalism but understandable in the light of their historical background, almost a century and a half of subjugation, both political and religious.

From the spiritual viewpoint this situation brought on a high motivation to prayer and numerous devotions at the parish, prayers and pleas for peace and freedom. And all this was made more intense when on April 6, 1917 the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies. Now everyone believed that Poland's liberation was synonymous with an American victory. And ensuing events proved their thinking correct. The Fourteenth Point of the Treaty of Versailles states: "There must be a free and independent Poland." President Woodrow Wilson was the author of this point in the treaty, and insisted vehemently on its insertion therein, over the vociferous and even violent objections of the English prime minister, Lloyd George. And strange to say, what became an accomplished fact at Versailles, had its beginning at St. Stanislaus Parish.

1917-18

On February 6, 1918, Bishop Paul Rhode, with the approval of the Chicago Archbishop, George Mundelein, opened a two-day convention of the Union of Polish Clergymen, at St. Stanislaus Kostka. Father Dembinski extended the facilities of the parish to the convention, and it opened with a solemn Mass, attended by many bishops and clergymen and a huge crowd of the faithful. The convention and its work was placed, by resolution, under the aegis of Our Lady of Czestochowa, and following the directive set forth by Archbishop Mundelein that numerical strength and unity are their strongest bargaining agents, the convention through discussion and workshop analysis developed a policy and platform for effective action. The newspaper accounts of the convention do not indicate any notable differences of opinion among the delegates, or any disagreements about tactics and procedure, but if there were any, these were definitely ironed out at the last session, when Providence supplied a leader to the movement, a veritable messiah.

The most widely-known Pole in 1918 was the concert pianist, Ignace John Paderewski. His personal influence throughout the world was inestimable. He was a man of high talent and stature, an incomparable artist and a Polish patriot who had pledged his talent and wealth to the Polish cause. His statemanship had not emerged in the fullest as yet, but everyone thought it was very appropriate and fitting that he address the convention in its closing session. Moreover, he was considered an orator and a very fine public speaker. Much to the surprise and disappointment of the thousands of people who ardently wished to attend, Paderewski insisted that his address

be given in closed session with only the clergy present. Some of the clergy attributed this to the eccentricity of an artistic temperament, but after his address was given, they realized that it was the more expedient thing to do.

Paderewski's address extended for more than two hours, and in it he outlined the political, religious and historical background of the Polish nation, its present status and a plan of procedure based on past experiences that too frequently showed up the impulsive credibility of the Poles. His oratorical and literary style, his personal magnetism and his evident patriotism made a lasting impression on his audience, and many years later, those who had the good fortune to have been present, insisted it was the most memorable address they ever heard. His closing remark was a solemn pledge to devote himself, his influential contacts and all his possessions in a ceaseless effort for the cause of Poland.

In the interim between the convention at St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish and the final realization at Versailles, a great deal of superhuman effort was spent by the National Committee on a countrywide level and by the clergy and the local organizations on the parochial level. Paderewski's personal and intimate friendship with Presidential Aide, Colonel Edward House, opened the doors of the White House. Paderewski and a representative group from the National Committee, Bishop Paul Rhode, Father Ladislaus Zapala, C. R. and banker, John F. Smulski, were luncheon guests of the President on several occasions, and were able then to plead their case. Finally they were able to report that they received a Presidential assurance that their cause would be strongly supported by the United States.

After the freedom of Poland became a reality, many historical analyses were published and claims of credit were made by political factions and individuals. But the one unimpeachable fact remains that without the intervention and support of the American President, Poland would not have had an advocate at Versailles. An achievement in international politics calls for a multitude of intricate and diplomatic moves. The Poles carried on this type of political effort for more than a century, but it finally was the genius and statesmanship of Paderewski that pinpointed the solution and provided the key, when in his address at St. Stanislaus Kostka he stated emphatically: "We must direct all our efforts to convince the President of the United States that a free Poland is a necessary condition to save the world for democracy." He reached the President, convinced him and freed Poland.

On the local scene at the parish the war years were years of much activity. Almost a thousand young men from the parish served in the various branches of the military, and the parishioners shouldered their share of the war effort in defense work, purchase of war bonds and especially in prayers and church services for peace. In the midst of such abnormal times the parish celebrated its golden jubilee of existence, with all the pomp and solemnity that befits such an occasion.

The Golden Jubilee was observed on November 4, 1917. The Jubilee Mass was solemnized by Archbishop Mundelein, with many bishops, priests, members of religious orders and lay people participating. That evening a banquet was held in the parish auditorium with many distinguished representatives of the church, city government and fraternal organizations present. The pastor, Father Dembinski, in his address expressed the feeling of all the parishioners when he declared that the parish had now come of age. A commemorative jubilee book was issued, authored by Karol Wachtel, Editor of the Polish Daily News. He was aided in the research work by Mitchell Starzynski and John Pawlicki. The former became a priest in the Congregation of the Resurrection

and served for many years as Editor of the Polish Daily News. As for the golden jubilee book, in the field of Chicago historical writings it is considered a collector's item.

A noteworthy historical item from the year 1918 was the death of Archbishop Joseph Weber, C. R., on March 24th. He was the major superior of the Resurrectionist Fathers and had resided at St. Stanislaus for many years. He was loved and respected by both clergy and laity. When old St. Stanislaus College High School was renamed in 1930, it became Weber High School, to honor this man of God.

November 11, 1918, World War I came to an end and the parish looked forward to the return of its "doughboys" from overseas. Before their return, however, there was a farewell to a large number of volunteers who had joined the corps of the Polish Army being organized all over the world. Its purpose was to return to liberated Poland and carry on the war against the invading Bolshevik Russia. This was the famous Gen. Haller's Army that defeated the Russians in 1920, in the battle now known as the Miracle of the Vistula. General Joseph Haller visited the parish in 1923 and emphasized the fact that his Chicago volunteers had been sent off from St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish. He decorated the pastor with the Veterans' Medal as an acknowledgment to the parish for all the work done on behalf of the Polish cause.

1920

The most important event of the year, in 1920, was the double jubilee observance in Chicago, the Diamond Jubilee of the Archdiocese and the Silver Jubilee of Priesthood of Archbishop Mundelein. A very impressive parade was staged on Lake Shore Drive, from Navy Pier to Lincoln Park. All the parishes of the archdiocese took part in it, and one of the largest and most elaborate contingents was from St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish.

Near the end of the year Father John Obyrtacz, C. R. was appointed pastor of St. Stanislaus. A farewell banquet was tendered in honor of the outgoing pastor, Father Francis Dembinski, C. R., who had served the parish for more than five years. He endeared himself to the people with his priestly and fatherly manner, and put the parish on a strong financial basis with his competent administration. In November, 1920 Father Felix Ladon, C. R., was buried from St. Stanislaus. For many years he resided at the parish and distinguished himself as an educator and an author. He published many textbooks, catechetical and secular, a magazine for children and drew up a plan of studies and courses for the school sisters who had not had a formal high school education. His plan was put into use at St. Stanislaus College where the sisters attended classes on Saturdays.

1923

On September 8, 1923 Father Thaddeus Ligman became pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka. The Polish Roman Catholic Union, the largest Catholic fraternal organization among the Poles in America, and originally founded here at the parish, collaborated its golden jubilee, November 18, 1923 at St. Stanislaus.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame observed the golden anniversary of their work at the parish on February 3, 1924, and to commemorate the event three stained glass windows were dedicated and placed in their chapel, in the sisters' convent.

Father Ligman remained at St. Stanislaus less than two years but in that short time he accomplished much in restoring the outward appearance of the church building. The church had been finally completed and dedicated in 1882, and now showed signs of age and wear. Since the building was well built and the foundations strong, it was the logical thing to do, to cover the outer walls with a veneer of Indiana limestone. He also built an entrance that enclosed the stairs at the church entrance, and over the stairs leading into the school-yard, erected the Veteran's Memorial Arch. All this was well synchronized and improved the appearance of the church frontage. The heavy expenditure was well warranted because it is serving its purpose to this day. In September, 1925, Father Ligman returned to the work he loved best, education, as rector and principal of St. Stanislaus College. Father Siatka who had served as pastor of St. Stanislaus from 1912 to 1915 returned here as pastor.

In the middle twenties the number of parishioners decreased. Many were joining the westward movement to the outskirts of the city and even to the suburbs. It was an era of prosperity and change, the frenzied years before the onset of the great depression. Immigration was almost at a standstill, due to the quota system, and there was no one to replace those who had moved on and out. It remained, however, a large parish because many of the elderly parishioners who lived far away from the parish still kept their membership in the parish and supported it in some fashion, and almost always expressed the wish that they be buried from this church. This phenomenon prevails even today.

1929

Father Siatka was followed in the pastorate by Father John Drzewiecki, C. R., who came to the parish in 1929. He stayed on as pastor until 1935 and his task was not an easy one. These were the years of the infamous depression. The financial crash came in October of 1929, and soon thereafter people found themselves not only unemployed but in dire circumstances and actual poverty, in want. Father Drzewiecki extended more than the minimal aid that was being doled out in other parishes, and with the help of a dedicated group of men who then comprised the parochial chapter of the Vincent de Paul Society, was able to tide them over the roughest years, until the situation was alleviated by Franklin D. Roosevelt's social legislation and welfare programs. Father Drzewiecki built the present rectory and did it well with limited funds. He was an admirable administrator and a man of great heart.

1935

On January 5, 1935 the Reverend Bruno Lazarowicz, C. R. was appointed pastor, and served in this capacity for more than thirteen years. They were rather memorable and important years because of the events at the parish, and especially so, because they also included the historically important years of World War II.

St. Stanislaus College, now known as Weber High School, founded at the parish in 1890, celebrated its Golden Jubilee in June, 1940. The Jubilee opened with a pontifical Mass attended by a strong representation of the hierarchy, hundreds of graduates, both clergy and laymen, and a great number of the faithful. The parish auditorium and school facilities were used for alumni luncheons and symposiums. The finale was a banquet at the Palmer House, a resplendent gathering that was not outdone until the Diamond Jubilee of the school. It is a striking and pleasant fact to be noted, that

the first bishop-graduate, the Most Rev. Stanislaus Bona, D. D., Bishop of Green Bay, Wisconsin, was one of the speakers at both jubilees.

On December 7, 1941 came the attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into World War II. At the parish it was a repetition of the same things that had occurred in 1917. Most of the young men went into service, and the fears and anxieties for their well-being were allayed only through prayer and the many devotions and services that took place in the parish church. War production and its resultant prosperity again brought on the departure of many parishioners from the vicinity of the parish.

1942

The Congregation of the Resurrection which had staffed the parish almost from the very beginning observed its Centennial in 1942, and the observance naturally was centered at St. Stanislaus Kostka. Archbishop Stritch presided at the Pontifical Mass and the numerous attendance of the members of the hierarchy, the clergy and laymen was a telling testimonial to the work of the Resurrectionist Fathers. The Jubilee closed with a civic observance, a banquet at the Stevens Hotel, with more than a thousand persons participating.

Later in the year the parish observed the Diamond Jubilee of its existence, and although the war placed a mute on all "celebrations, in a true spirit of thanksgiving, the parish celebrated its jubilee with dignity and proper solemnity. Over and above the church and civic observance, a memorial book was published and the jubilee was not only a grand success but also a morale builder in trying times.

1948

After World War II normal conditions prevailed at the parish for a number of years the gamut of parochial activity was at a high pitch. Father Lazarowicz was succeeded in the pastorate by Father Stanley Fiolek, C. R., and the regular routine of parish life continued. Father Fiolek renovated the church, rectory and school, and introduced devotions and services to Our Lady of Fatima and the Saturday devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The spiritual life of the parish was uplifted, and the parish was the center of many observances and activities that were of wider interest and range than the parish limits.

On June 20, 1948 the Very Rev. Ladislaus Zapala, C. R. was buried from St. Stanislaus Kostka Church. He died in New York City and the remains were brought to Chicago for burial. He was a former Father General of the Resurrectionists, a re-knowned speaker and missionary, and had preached at our church on many occasions. He was the preacher at the Diamond Jubilee Mass.

It was about this time that the first notions and ideas on urban renewal began appearing in the Chicago newspapers. People with foresight predicted that unless change and improvement started now, the old sections of the city, the so called "inner city", would end in complete deterioration. Father Fiolek subscribed to this school of thought, and through his talks and encouraging remarks was able to get some of the property owners in the vicinity of the parish to improve their houses and the neighborhood. This was not too widespread because it called for a heavy expenditure, and many of the older people did not have the means. Father Fiolek remained at St. Stanislaus for about three years and then was elected Provincial of the American Province of the Resurrectionist Fathers.

1955

The Rev. Valentine Lesiak, C. R. became pastor in July, 1951. It was during his tenure that major changes took place at the parish, and he had the difficult assignment of adjusting to the new set-up. The first step in Urban Renewal in Chicago was the planning and building of express highways. One of these, the Northwest Expressway, was a diagonal artery pointed from downtown toward the city's chief airport. According to the plans submitted to the authorities the clearance for the right-of-way cut through the parish property and called for the removal of the church and parts of the other buildings. This naturally created a furor. The opposition and strong pressure came from the city's Polish community that regarded St. Stanislaus Kostka as its very foundation. After a great deal of discussion and flexing of political muscle, it was finally agreed upon to move the highway eastward and reduce the removal of parish buildings to a minimum — the heating plant and a part of the school building. Bernard Prusinski was instrumental in setting up the plan that was followed. The parish was reimbursed by the State of Illinois, and after the reconstruction work was completed, work was to begin on a new high school building immediately south of the old school on Potomac Street.

1957

With the consent of the chancery office, Father Lesiak purchased the buildings on the south side of Potomac Street and some adjacent land needed for the new high school. These preliminaries and the drawing up of the plans took up some time, and when in 1957 he was succeeded as pastor by Father Casimir Polinski, C. R., the shapeup had been completed. Father Polinski had the difficult task of supervising the actual construction and deciding about various modifications that had to be made. There was a marked expansion of the original plans, but the entire project was completed before Father Polinski's departure in 1961.

The former pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka, the Very Rev. Provincial Stanley J. Fiolek, C. R. died on January 16, 1958 and was buried from our church. He was pastor for a relatively short time but is remembered well at the parish.

1960

The new highway was completed in November, 1960, and dedicated a few days before the Presidential election that brought John F. Kennedy to the Presidency. After his assassination in November, 1963, it was renamed the Kennedy Expressway. This road played an important role in the parish's makeup. It forced many of the parishioners to move away after the State had purchased their property for the building of the road. Others used this occasion to finalize their plans of moving to newer parts of the city or even into the suburbs. What at first seemed a bonanza, the payment made to the parish by the State, later became a financial nightmare. After the reconstruction work on the old school, the construction of the new high school, and the clearance of real estate had been paid for, the parish found itself burdened with a sizable debt. During the time of construction increases in labor and material cost had risen considerably, and there was no provision in the State allotment for this unforeseen item. Moreover, certain specific requirements for new schools, in keeping with educational policies, and not included in the original plans, helped to mushroom the final cost of the high school.

1961

Father Marian A. Kaleth, C. R., the present pastor, received his appointment on July 23, 1961. The last six years of the parish's century witnessed a great change, in fact many changes, in both the liturgical and community life of the parish. When a status quo prevails, the pastoral management of a parish is a responsible but rewarding task. When, however, radical changes follow in rapid succession and delicate situations arise unexpectedly, there is a need for prudent judgment, forbearance and a realistic approach. These have been Father Kaleth's good points in most of the situations that arose, and it can be said in impartial judgment that he has carried well the burden of his office.

The liturgical changes brought about through the legislation of Vatican II were introduced at St. Stanislaus in keeping with the directives of the archdiocesan commission. Because of the language need, not only English but also Polish serves as the vernacular. The accoutrements for the Mass of the new liturgy were furnished for the upper and lower church, and although changes are accepted slowly, it seems that both the young and the elderly people of the parish accepted them and cooperated in a truly Christian spirit. The response of the laymen to the need of lectors and commentators was very gratifying, and they perform these liturgical duties with true dedication. Under Father Kaleth's leadership there has been created a fine spirit of community involvement. The changes that grew out of the progress of urban renewal brought on a greater interest in the locality and were crystalized in the Northwest Community Organization. A definite and decisive vote in planning and building for the future has opened new areas of civic activity and the parishioners have joined this movement enthusiastically. The parish has supported the N.C.O. with financial contributions and supplied physical and moral support to the various projects of this organization. The smooth routine of events at the parish was interrupted by a tragic fire on June 19, 1964. During the evening services there was a violent electrical storm and a heavy downpour of rain. Lightning struck the south tower of the church but nothing was externally visible, and evidently it affected the electrical wiring. About an hour before midnight the tower exuded flames and smoke. The fire department of the city responded at once, but the fire evidently had a good start of about three or four hours, and the top half of the tower was completely destroyed. Rather than rebuild at heavy cost, the authorities decided to level off the tower, and apply the insurance compensation and the donations of the parishioners toward lowering the parish debt.

On July 21, 1964, John Nering, K.S.G., one of our oldest and most esteemed parishioners, was buried from St. Stanislaus. He had served for more than fifty years on the parish committee and was a veritable pillar of the parish. In recognition on his outstanding work in the Polish Welfare Organization and the diocesan Catholic Lay Movement, on the recommendation of Cardinal Stritch, he was made a Knight of St. Gregory, by the Pope. At an impressive ceremony in our church, John Nering and Frank Brodnick were knighted by Cardinal Stritch.

1966

Poland's Millennium of Christianity was observed throughout the year, 1966, and the Poles and the Americans of Polish descent were joined by almost all the other ethnic groups of the Catholic Church in the celebration of this historical event. Since the City of Chicago has a tremendous Polish community among its citizens, it was only natural that the local observance was one of the biggest throughout the world. Political jousting prevented Cardinal Wyszynski, the Primate of Poland, from coming to Chicago, but he was represented by Bishop Ladislaus Rubin, Secretary of the Bishops'

Synod, and the planned observance was carried off as a huge success. The Millennium Mass at Soldier Field, on August 28, 1966 will long be remembered as one of the most important events in the annals of the Polish community of Chicago.

To open his visit to Chicago, Bishop Rubin celebrated Mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church and used this occasion to extend the thanks of the Hierarchy and Church of Poland for all the assistance they received from this side in the past twenty and more years. Before his departure the young and talented Bishop admitted, in an aside, that he was simply enchanted with Chicago and its people. He was the guest of Archbishop Cody and his impressions of Chicago hospitality were the best.

The end of the Millennium Year marked the opening of our Centennial Year at St. Stanislaus Kostka. On the feast day of our patron saint, St. Stanislaus Kostka, November 13, 1966, the pastor announced the opening of the Centennial, and soon thereafter a schedule of events was also announced, various committees were named to carry out these plans — the Centennial Mass on Christ the King Sunday, October 29, 1967, and the Centennial Banquet at the Sherman House, on Sunday, November 12, 1967.

A century is a long span of time, and it cannot be evaluated with a mere sprinkle of words. Countless thousands of people were involved in this centenary span of the parish's life, serving God and country, working out their salvation and passing on. The Almighty must have been pleased with this establishment, because it would not have endured without his tolerance and blessing. What the future has in store is an unknown quantity, but with full confidence in God, the parish looks forward to entering into the second century, and carrying on in the same Christian spirit that animated and moved it in its first one hundred years.