



**American Czestochowa History: 1955-2005.**  
Golden Jubilee 1955-2005. CAP at Orchard Lake.

The inspiring story of the "American Czestochowa" began to unfold in 1951 when Father Michael M. Zembruski, a priest in the Pauline Order from Poland, arrived on American soil. For the first three years, he worked as a missionary traveling and preaching at various Polish parishes throughout the United States and Canada. During this time, he began to see a need among Polonia to strengthen and revive their Polish spirit and pride, as well as the need to show the richness of the Polish culture. Fr. Michael's dream was to build a shrine which would become both a religious and a cultural center.

On November 6, 1953, the Pauline Order received permission from the Holy See to establish a monastery in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Later that same year, John Cardinal O'Hara, Archbishop of Philadelphia, granted the required permission to establish a religious house, to open a chapel and to plan the building of a shrine-church. With assistance and support from several priests and benefactors he had met during his missionary work, Father Michael was able to purchase a forty-acre property, which included a farmhouse and a barn. Having received permission to establish a new monastery, a request was made to the General Superior of the Pauline Order, Fr. Alojzys Wrzalik, for more religious to be sent to Doylestown. On January 15, 1955, Fr. Stanley Nowak, who was nominated to be the first prior, arrived from Rome. On July 18th of the same year Bro. Casimir Pasnik, the first Pauline brother, joined Fr. Michael and Fr. Stanley, with a second brother, Bro. Mark Mitura joining them in 1956. In a short time, the farmhouse was renovated into a monastery and the barn was turned into a chapel, where the Image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, painted by B. Rutkowski, was placed.

On June 26th, 1955 Fr. Stanley Nowak blessed and dedicated the small barn chapel to Our Lady of Czestochowa and celebrated Mass, thus beginning the Pauline Fathers' spiritual mission of serving the Polish-American community in the United States. The dedication of the first chapel was a great success. It created a new center of Marian devotion and a place of pilgrimage. Many pilgrim groups started coming to this little Shrine. The first pilgrimage ever recorded came from St. Laurentius parish in Philadelphia on June 26, 1955 for the dedication ceremony of the barn chapel.

The news of the new Shrine to Our Lady of Czestochowa spread quickly throughout the community, with increasing numbers of pilgrims coming to visit and to pray for themselves and their families before the Image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Soon, the barn chapel proved too small for the needs of both the founders and the pilgrims. All eyes turned towards the nearby hilltop, the so-called Beacon Hill, and the idea to build a larger Shrine was conceived. With the date of Poland's Millennium (966-1966) approaching, the dream of a new Shrine was received with tremendous

support and enthusiasm by the Polish clergy and the faithful. On September 17, 1963, a solemn procession numbering several thousand people went up to Beacon Hill to place a cross marking the future site of the new Shrine. The following year, on August 23, 1964, on the Feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa, a groundbreaking ceremony led by Archbishop John Krol took place which marked the beginning of the laying of the Shrine's foundation. To the vast number of pilgrims, he said: "This place will be an expression of our gratitude for all the graces which came to us, and the millions of our countrymen who found themselves in this new Fatherland. We have something to be thankful for. This Sanctuary is an expression and monument of Polonia for our Fathers..."

With the symbolic turning of the first shovel of dirt by Archbishop Krol, the entire hill was soon transformed into a great construction site. In less than two years, a formidable Shrine and monastery were built. On Sunday, October 16, 1966, before a multitude of pilgrims, in the presence of the President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson and his family, representatives of the Catholic Church and State officials, Archbishop John Krol solemnly dedicated the new Shrine to the honor of Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Queen of Peace. Indeed, it was an historical date, "...a day to remember". The dreams of the Pauline Fathers and Polonia had been fulfilled. During the construction and even after the dedication of the new Shrine on Beacon Hill, the barn chapel remained at its original location. When it came time to pay off the loans incurred for the construction of the new church and monastery, the initial property purchased in 1953 was sold. In 1972, under the initiative of Fr. Edward Volz, the barn chapel was transported in its entirety by volunteers of the Shrine, who donated their time and talents to save the historic chapel and to take care of its preservation. The chapel was relocated to its current location found in the Shrine's cemetery. The National Cemetery of Our Lady of Czestochowa is located just behind the Shrine and is arranged in four sections: a general section dedicated to all Catholics; a section dedicated to the clergy and the monks; an Honor Section; and the War Veteran's section. Having received approval from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the cemetery was consecrated on October 25, 1964. The first burial was that of the famous painter Adam Styka, whose remains were re-interred in the new cemetery. In the process of the Shrine's construction, the Pauline Fathers faced many financial difficulties. As the work progressed, the costs also increased much more than had been originally planned or estimated. It led to a financial crisis. However, under the protection of our Blessed Mother and through the generosity of friends and benefactors who came to the Shrine's assistance, the Shrine celebrated its 25th Anniversary on June 28, 1980 with the debt paid off. The Shrine was saved.

As the years passed, the Shrine began to develop into a spiritual center for Polonia. Each year, more and more pilgrims arrived to partake in the Marian and Eucharistic processions. Though the Pauline community was initially small, the new Shrine thrived and grew in popularity. The cultural events, most especially those representing Polish traditions, attracted an ever increasing number of visitors. Pilgrims traveled in bus groups from all over the country. Drawn to the spirituality of the new Marian Shrine, they came to visit this holy place and to take part in the solemn church services.

The Shrine has also been honored with the visits of many distinguished guests, such as U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H.W. Bush. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla visited the Czestochowa Shrine on two occasions: the first time in 1969 and then again in 1976 while attending the Eucharistic Congress held in Philadelphia. Two years later, he was chosen to the Throne of Saint Peter as the 264th Pope of the Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Warsaw, Jozef Cardinal Glemp has been a guest at the Shrine many times, participating in many celebrations and preaching the Word of God

to the pilgrims. Adam Cardinal Maida, Archbishop of Detroit and the spiritual leader of Polonia, is a frequent guest of the American Czestochowa, as is Henry Cardinal Gulbinowicz, from Wroclaw, Poland. Archbishop Szczepan Wesoly from Rome, including other archbishops and bishops from Poland, the Vatican and the USA, has also visited the Shrine.

During the past decades, the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa has welcomed many individuals, some unknown, who have left traces of their presence... In the main church we can see many priceless objects and interesting places. The most valuable of all is the Miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, which was blessed by Pope John XXIII on February 10, 1962 and is located in the main nave of the church. The Icon of Our Lady is part of an amazing bas-relief which hangs behind the altar in the main nave and depicts the Holy Trinity. God the Father, with His arms stretched out like the wings of a large bird, enfolds Jesus Christ and all God's people. Above them is shown a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Below them, a choir of angels, with their golden horns, extol the glory of God. In the rear of the main church, on either side, are two very large stained glass windows. Considered two of the largest in the United States, they measure fifty feet by fifty feet. On the East side, the stained glass windows depict the history of America. On the West side, the windows show a thousand years of Polish Christianity. There is a magnificent pipe organ which is used not only for church services, but also for various concerts and other occasions. The organs are dedicated to the memory of Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko, a Polish priest murdered on October 19, 1984, by the Communists for his support of the Solidarity Movement. The Stations of the Cross, as well as the unique mosaic work found around the main church, are added accents which attract the faithful who visit. The Shrine is also a spiritual center for many organizations, like the Polish Scouts and Brownies, who throughout the year visit the Shrine and take part in many of the solemn ceremonies and Eucharistic celebrations. Throughout the years, the Shrine has been the venue for special celebrations, such as the Ordination to the Priesthood of Father Michal Czyzewski in 2004, or the special Mass for Polish Soldiers Day when all gather to pay their respect to the Polish Soldiers who sacrificed their lives during World War II.

During the development and growth of the Shrine, the Pauline Fathers in Doylestown were blessed with the leadership of several Provincials: Fr. Gabriel Lorenc, Fr. Zdzislaw Kikowski, and Fr. Lucius Tyrasinski. Each one left his mark and contribution to the growth of the Czestochowa Shrine. The last major contribution was on February 27, 2000, when Fr. Lucius led the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Visitor Center and Retreat House. Thanks to his initiative, outside Stations of the Cross and several new chapels were added. Most significant and considered the heart of the Shrine is the Chapel of Our Lady of Czestochowa, located in the lower part of the church. It is a replica of the chapel found at the Jasna Góra Shrine in Poland. Found in the center of the presbytery of this chapel, is a copy of the Miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, blessed by Pope John Paul II. Likewise there are other chapels found to either side of Our Lady's Chapel. These side chapels are dedicated to: Saint Paul the First Hermit (patron of the Pauline Order); Mary of Nazareth; Divine Mercy; and Our Lady of Guadalupe, where an actual size replica of the Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is located. Just outside the chapel, is the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa has grown to become a favorite place of pilgrimage for thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the United States and Canada. Moreover, throughout the year, the Shrine celebrates the major liturgical feasts, holy days and other religious events. One such event is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, which occurs on October 7th. Thousands of pilgrims

come to take part in the outdoor candlelight procession around the Stations of the Cross while reciting the Rosary in several different languages. On November 2nd, the Church observes All Souls Day. On this day, large numbers of the faithful, come to visit the graves of their loved ones - to pray and to light candles in their memory. Another important day is the Feast of Mary, Queen of Poland, which is celebrated in May on the same day as Polish Constitution Day. The Feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa, observed at the end of August, is the largest celebration for the Shrine, including a procession. Each year in August, the Shrine welcomes groups of walking pilgrims, who following the Polish tradition of the foot pilgrimage, come to give thanks to Our Lady and to pray for Her intercession on their behalf. The tradition of the foot pilgrimage on American Soil began during the Marian Year (1987-88) when a group of 17 pilgrims departed from Great Meadows NJ on August 12th, walking to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, arriving here on August 15th - Solemnity of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The number of pilgrims who now participate in the yearly walking pilgrimage has exceeded three thousand. The first Sunday following Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday - is one of the largest yearly celebrations held at the Shrine. This day was chosen by our Lord, Jesus Christ, as the day God's unending forgiveness and mercy will flow down upon the entire world.

The Golden Jubilee is a special time to give thanks to Our Lady of Czestochowa for Her presence here at this Shrine during the past fifty years. It is She who chose this place. Looking back in perspective of the past years, we see Her unending help and motherly intercession. The Jubilee is a time to take account, to reflect and to ponder upon the years that have passed; a time enriched by various religious and cultural events, while also a time to look to the future.

The Pauline Fathers together with all the pilgrims are joined in prayer before the Icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, giving thanks to our Almighty Father for the great gift of the Shrine. Throughout the years, there were many generous and good hearted friends who supported the Shrine, offering their time and talents to help build this holy place. Their names may be written in stone here on earth, but they are eternally engraved on the Heart of our Blessed Mother. In celebrating the Golden Jubilee, we wish to thank them all for the years of hard work, sacrifice, devotion and love for this place. In thanking God, Our Lady of Czestochowa, benefactors, we look to the future, that She who was present with us during the past fifty years will guide us through the next century.