



## **PARISH HISTORY**

Centennial 1895-1995 of St. Mary  
of Czestochowa Parish, p. 15-22; 29-30

St Mary of Czestochowa Parish goes back in its history to the late eighteen hundreds - to the days when Hawthorne was, literally, a prairie. Eighty-six pioneer families formed the nucleus of what became, in just a few decades, the largest parish in all of Cicero.

These pioneers settled in Hawthorne because of the ready opportunity of earning a livelihood. The Western Electric Company was not as yet established, but the large lime and stone quarry, at the sight of the present Bel-Air Drive-In Theatre, strongly attracted the Polish and German immigrants. Up to the year 1895, these devout Polish Catholics walked some three and a half miles to St. Casimir's, the closest Polish Church. Prior to 1890 they had to travel to St. Adalbert Parish, some five and a half miles away, where they could hear the Word of God spoken in their mother tongue. But they longed for their own church, where they might worship more regularly, as well as for their own school where they might have their children educated in the faith of their fathers. On March 27, 1892 these pioneers met for the first time to discuss plans to form a new parish. By May of the following year, they were able to purchase six lots at Linden Avenue (now 49th Avenue) and 30th Street, at a cost of \$2,250. A delegation of future parishioners was sent to the Archdiocese of Chicago to petition permission for the formation of a parish. In 1895, the group was recognized as a parish and the Rev. Casimir Slominski became its first pastor.

Rev. Slominski came to his flock as pastor on May 30, 1895. One of the pioneers, Mr. Stephen Bartoszek, transformed his hall on the northwest corner of Jesamine (now 48th Court) and 30th Street into a combination church and school. He offered the rear flat as living quarters for the pastor. In this temporary church, Rev. Slominski offered Mass and administered the sacraments until the first church was built a few months later. The parish school, a typical one-room schoolhouse where "all classes - all grades in one" prevailed was staffed by the first parish organist, Alexander Rodon until January 1896. Theodore Mlyniec, the second organist and teacher, began his devoted ministry to the parish on February 1, 1896. The parish school became known as "Mlyniec School."

In July of 1898, Rev. Slominski built a "Parish Hall," a small one-room frame building, behind the church. The "Parish Hall" then served as the Parish School.

In July of 1899, after four years of pioneering at St. Mary's, Rev. Slominski was succeeded by the Rev. Leo Wyrzykowski. Rev. Wyrzykowski carried on the work of his predecessor and ministered to the spiritual needs of his people for five years.

At the turn of the century, the Western Electric Company was established in Cicero. This was the beginning of many job opportunities for the people of the Hawthorne area for many years to come.

The first wedding was celebrated on October 21, 1895 - Andrew Chybiak (from Chicago) and Elizabeth Chałupka (Hawthorne). Andrew was the son of Joseph and Agnes (nee Szewczyk). Elizabeth was the daughter of Stefan and Louise (nee Grzeszkowiak).

In July of 1904, the Rev. Bronislaus Czajkowski came to St. Mary's as its third pastor. Immediately upon his arrival, Rev. Czajkowski saw an enormous task confronting him. The parish was growing in numbers; the school enrollment was increasing, and the frame church and school became quite inadequate. It was clearly time for expansion.

Father Czajkowski transformed the parish hall behind the frame church into two classrooms. He invited the Sisters of St. Joseph, TOSF, a newly formed congregation from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to conduct the school. Fifty-four pupils made up the first class.

In January of 1905, Father Czajkowski began the construction of a brick church and school combination building at a cost of \$63,000 on the southeast corner of Linden and 30th Street. In December of the same year, this church and school building was blessed by Archbishop Quigley. The church was located on the second floor of this building. St. Mary's now numbered 240 families.

In 1908, the present convent was erected for the Sisters, who up to that time had their living quarters in the combination building.

By 1914, all parish debts had been liquidated, and in addition, six lots were purchased on the corner of 48th Court and 30th Street for construction of the future new church building and rectory.

Tragedy struck the Hawthorne area as well as that of Chicago when on July 24, 1915, the Eastland capsized in the Chicago River. Eight hundred employees of Western Electric died on their way to a company picnic in Michigan City. Twenty-nine of the dead were parishioners of St. Mary's. A memorial Mass was held in the combination church and school building. The picture from this memorial is the only available picture of the church as it existed back then.

In 1917 the construction of the present Gothic church building began and a new rectory was built for the priests of the parish.

On March 10, 1918, Archbishop Mundelein blessed the newly constructed church. The church was erected at a cost of \$132,000. Both the exterior of the church and interior are of Gothic architecture. Its seating capacity is 1,000. It was not until 1927, however, that the beautiful Gothic altars, pulpit and Communion rails, all of costly and precious Carrara marble, were imported from Italy and erected in the church. On the left side of the altar is a life size statue of St. Hedwig, Queen of Poland, while on the right side is the life size statue of St. Stanislaus Kostka, Patron of youth.

#### SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PARISH

In May of 1920, St. Mary's celebrated the 25th Anniversary of its founding. St. Mary's was now one of the largest parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. It numbered 800 families with 900 children in its school.

## CHURCH FIRE

On January 17, 1934, a tragedy came to St. Mary's. A fire broke out in the church as a result of crossed wires. It was some months before a new altar and rail were built in Carrara, Italy, imported to this country and set up to replace the ones damaged in the fire.

On July 18, 1940, the Rev. Theodore Langfort was appointed the fourth pastor. He had served here as an associate from January 1912 to July 1915.

## GOLDEN MEMORIES

After returning to St. Mary's as pastor, Father Langfort carried out a program of "reconstruction and renovation." He repaired and remodeled all the parish buildings to the extent of \$38,000. In addition, he redecorated the church in preparation for its Golden Jubilee, at a cost of \$18,000. He was able, nevertheless, to reduce the parish debt by \$22,000.

The Golden Jubilee of 1945 held many a memory for both the pioneer parishioners and the parish families. Yes, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, etc., had been on our minds at about that particular time. Many of our young men and women were in the services of our country, Red Cross unit participation, Gold Star sadness, food rationing, etc. - all memories, along with the spiritual activities of the 50th Anniversary of our parish. This was the year - 1945!

Starting another new parish year, Pastor Rev. T. Langfort fulfilled his duties at St. Mary's with the aid of assistant priests. It was during this year that Rev. Langfort started plans and a financial fund for the present Social Center structure.

Years of faithfulness were brought to a close when our organist, Mr. John Fabisz, passed away on May 21, 1954. He had been the choir director and parish organist during the Silver and Golden Jubilee years.

He was succeeded by Mr. Val Brodnicki who continued on through the Diamond Jubilee and retired in 1992.

The year of 1956 was a most sorrowful one for our parish lost Father Steven Bialas who passed away on January 6th; then on May 26th our prayers were for the repose of the soul of Father Michael Kaja, who served at St. Mary's for sixteen years.

Mourning was still with us, as on November 27th of the same year, our Pastor, Rev. Theodore Langfort was called to rest. His passing was a great loss to our parish.

## NEW PASTOR COMES TO ST. MARY'S

Rev. Ignatius Renklewski came to St. Mary's as pastor in February of 1957. Our new Pastor was warmly welcomed as he had previously assisted at our parish from 1923 to 1932 and was well known by many parishioners. He was named a Monsignor on February 7, 1960.

On April 7, 1959, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Aloysius Wycislo celebrated his 25th year in the priesthood. His Jubilee Mass was celebrated here at St. Mary's just as his First Mass was celebrated here on April 8, 1934.

Further honors came to St. Mary's when Rt. Rev. Msgr. Aloysius Wycislo, a St. Mary's graduate who was ordained to the priesthood in 1934, was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago on

December 21, 1960. Bishop Wycislo celebrated his first Pontifical Mass on Christmas Day of 1960 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Chicago.

#### BEGINNING OF ST. MARY'S YOUTH CENTER

Msgr. Renklewski and his ardent parishioners continued to carry out Father Langfort's dreams of building a youth center. The Chancery Office approved plans for a youth center on November 13, 1960, to be erected on the grounds of the old Hawthorne School, 31st Street and 50th Avenue. The dream was coming true for our youth! The one story building, 108 feet long by 106 feet wide, was ours to plan. Proceeds from carnivals, raffles, and offerings were used to help our dream become a reality.

The year of 1961 meant progress to all parishioners, as this was "it" for the youth center. The corner stone was laid for the St. Mary's Youth Center by His Eminence Cardinal Meyer on Sunday, February 19, 1961. Since then our Youth Center has been serving the youth of our community with the finest of facilities.

Roller skating, basketball and volleyball tournaments, gym classes for our school children, and open gym for young adults were some of the first activities offered at the Center. Gradually new programs were started. Unique about the Youth Center was the fact that it was managed by volunteers and board members - the same people who were instrumental in building it!

Monsignor Ignatius Renklewski went to his eternal reward on May 16, 1965.

The Center continued to expand its programs under succeeding pastors. Today, in 1995, programs range from Tiny Tots to Senior Citizens, Prayer Groups, SPRED Program, and other adult groups. Because the Center is used by so many multi-age groups, it was necessary to change the name from Youth Center to St. Mary of Czestochowa Social Center. The name change occurred in the 1980's.

Returning now in history we find the next pastor, Rev. Joseph Przybyłowicz facing the burden of great debts. He also had to prepare the parish for the celebration of its Diamond Jubilee.

#### ST. MARY'S RECEIVES A NEW PASTOR

Rev. Joseph Przybyłowicz was appointed by Cardinal Cody to the pastorate at St. Mary's on March 18, 1966. During his tenure, Father Joe worked zealously to reduce the parish debt after its extensive renovation. In 1967 St. Mary of Czestochowa School welcomed Sister M. Magdalene Kabat, SSJ, as principal. Sister Magdalene worked with Fr. Joseph for thirteen years and continues, with the support of Fr. Ted Makuch, in her leadership role in the school at this time.

The 1960's brought many reforms in the church and school. The greater participation of lay leadership emerged. In the midst of many changes Father Przybyłowicz led his parish through its Diamond Jubilee.

#### ST. MARY'S DIAMOND JUBILEE

On the occasion of our Diamond Jubilee, the Most Rev. Aloysius Wycislo D.D. presented his "Home Parish" with an exact replica of the original painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa. This painting was presented on behalf of the Hierarchy of Poland and Polish refugees during the observance of the Polish Millennium of Christianity in 1966. This painting now adorns our Marian Shrine. In 1990, a beautiful picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe was added to the shrine.

The Diamond Jubilee festivities began with a religious celebration on Sunday, October 11, 1970. A con-celebrated Mass was offered in thanksgiving for the past 75 years. Bishop Aloysius Wycislo was the main celebrant for this joyous celebration.

The civic observance of the Diamond Jubilee was a commemorative Dinner Dance honoring the faithful parishioners of our parish. It was held at the Richard's Banquet Room on Sunday, October 25, 1970. The Dinner Dance concluded the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee.

#### PASTOR RETIRES

After thirteen years of dedicated service, failing health forced Rev. Przybylowicz to retire from his pastoral duties on December 31, 1978. He resided at St. Mary's as Pastor Emeritus until 1987. Father Joe passed away in April of 1992.

#### ARRIVAL OF A NEW PASTOR

After the retirement of Rev. Przybylowicz, Cardinal Cody appointed Rev. Thaddeus Makuch as the seventh pastor of St. Mary's. Fr. Makuch arrived in January, 1979 and was faced with the renovation of all parish buildings.

Father Ted, as he became affectionately known, organized volunteer cleaning crews and thus a "Clean-Up Campaign" began! The church building was interiorly renovated and reinforced exteriorly (tuckpointed). The school was painted; and new, modern windows replaced the old windows. The Social Center even took on a "new look;" after twenty-five years it was thoroughly cleaned up and painted! At this time, there was also a "change of guard" at the Social Center; the founders turned over their leadership to the younger generation of the parish.

Liturgical and lay leadership programs grew as the shortage of priests and nuns was taking place in 1990. St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish remains the only parish in the western suburbs to provide Polish ministry. An influx of the Hispanic population into the Cicero area began and many new Hispanic families were welcomed into the parish.

With great charity, the amalgamation of several Cicero area churches and schools took place. Despite a neighborhood change, St. Mary's Parish under the leadership of Father Ted, still boasts of 1,350 registered families and Sister M. Magdalene principal for the past 27 years, administers a viable parish school with an enrollment of 240 students.

In 1991, Rev. Ted Makuch began making plans for a costly project - to paint the church for the Centennial celebration. Our Lady of Czestochowa proved her love for her church dedicated to her name. Mary Jane Rich was inspired to make a bequest in her will to the benefit of our parish in memory of herself and her late husband, Theodore Rich. The generous sum of \$49,889 was received and Fr. Ted wasted no time to begin the painting project and organ renovation in the church in preparation for the Centennial. While the renovation of the church was being completed many other generous parishioners gifted the parish with sizable donations which helped Fr. Ted see the painting project to its completion.

In 1993, John Jania left a bequest of \$14,000 to the parish which Fr. Ted disbursed as needed for the parish.

PRIESTS WHO HAVE BEEN ORDAINED  
FROM ST. MARY OF CZĘSTOCHOWA PARISH

Rev. F. Modrzewski	December 24, 1922
Rev. B. Witkowski O.F.M.	May 24, 1925
Rev. B. Stangwila	April 11, 1931
Most Rev. A. Wycislo	April 7, 1934
Rev. E. Jawaraowski	April 20, 1935
Rev. C. Malyszka	April 27, 1935
Rev. T. Walenga	April 18, 1936
Rev. W. Zajac	June 29, 1938
Rev. S. Dudziński	April 15, 1939
Rev. J. Górski	April 15, 1939
Rev. A. Janiak	May 2, 1942
Rev. M. Borowczyk	May 2, 1942
Rev. A. Gozdzia C.R.	December 19, 1942
Rev. F. Biestek S.J.*	June 13, 1945
Rev. N. Czajka	May 1, 1961
Rev. J. Antiporek	June 6, 1981
Rev. S. Kosiński	July 11, 1981

SISTERS WHO HAVE COME  
FROM ST. MARY OF CZĘSTOCHOWA PARISH

	BAPTISMAL NAME	ORDER
Sister M. Regina	Kazmierczak, Harriet	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Serafika	Wojciechowski, Estelle	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Richard	Sobczak, Gertrude	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Loyola	Kwiatkowski, Mary	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Loyola	Ficht, Veronica	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Barnaba	Rakowski, Lottie	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Narcyza	Bergier, Salomea	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Koncepta	Kurawski, Gertrude	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Ernestine	Matlas, Barbara	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Inviolata	Ficht, Frances	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Albina	Sumeracki, Lottie	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Mildred	Sylwestrzak, Genevieve	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Elaine	Harast, Harriet	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Augustine	Matylewski, Anne	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Amadea	Wolak, Mary	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Ambrosine	Gembara, Mary	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Gladys	Mroz, Lottie	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Amadeus	Blazejak, Adeline	Order of St. Joseph
Sister M. Teresille	Garncarz, Maryann	Order of St. Joseph

Sister M. Louise  
Sister M. Rosemarie  
Sister M. Claudia  
Sister M. Anne  
Sister M. Justus  
Sister M. Humilitas  
Sister Teresa Frances  
Sister M. Nikodema

Gembara, Genevieve  
Wesołowski, Mary Louise  
Janiak, Mercedes  
Piatek, Josephine  
Szplit, Maryann  
Zienty, Pearl  
Węgrzyn, Stephanie  
Wójcik, Mary

Order of St. Joseph  
Order of St. Joseph  
Order of St. Joseph  
Felician Order  
Felician order  
Felician Order  
Carmelite Order  
Resurrection Order