

STANISLAUS A BLEJWAS (Bristol, Co.)

## THE EVOLVING POLISH PARISH IN THE UNITED STATES: ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA, BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT

The Polish American parish is commonly considered a crucial element in the institutional infrastructure of American Polonia<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1855 when a parish was organized in Panna Maria, Texas, Polish immigrants by the 1940s organized 831 Roman Catholic and some 150 Polish National Catholic parishes in the United States<sup>2</sup> During the next two decades some 300 of the Roman Catholic parishes will mark their centennials, but under profoundly changed circumstances. The early urban villages, where Polish was the *lingua franca* of daily life, are no longer. The descendants of the original immigrants range into the fourth and fifth generation, are assimilated, and, in the years after World War II, migrated to the suburbs. Many inner city parishes are now closed. The influx of political emigres and soldier exiles after World War II deflected, but did not fundamentally alter „Old” Polonia’s continuing assimilation and Americanization. Nor did the revival of ethnic nostalgia among third and fourth generation white ethnic Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which was hailed as an ethnic renaissance, coalesce into a viable and influential political movement<sup>3</sup> Thus as many Polish American communities and parishes approached their 75th or 100th anniversaries, one asks what is the future of the Polish ethnic parish in America<sup>4</sup>.

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\* This work is offered to Rev. Boleslav K u m o r in honor and recognition of his scholarly efforts to recover and to record the history of God’s polish people in the State of Connecticut. *Ad multos annos!*

<sup>1</sup> H. S i e n k i e w i c z, *Portrait of America: Letters of Henryk Sienkiewicz*, New York 1959, p. 26; W. K r u s z k a, *Historia Polska w Ameryce*, Milwaukee, Wi. 1905, vol. 2, p. 3—81; W. I. T h o m a s, F. Z n a n i e c k i, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York 1958 (originally published in 1918—1920), vol. 2, p. 1523 ff.

<sup>2</sup> S. T a r g o s z, *Polonia Katolicka w Stanach Zjednoczonych w przekroju*, Detroit, Mi. 1943, p. 3—5. For figures on the PNCC see; H. K u b i a k, *Polski Narodowy Kościół Katolicki w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki w latach 1897—1965. Jego społeczne uwarunkowania i społeczne funkcje*, Wrocław...Kraków 1970, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> On the white ethnic renaissance see Michael N o v a k, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics. Politics and Culture in the Seventies*, New York 1971.

<sup>4</sup> On the history of American Polonia before 1939 see Andrzej B r o ź e k, *Polish Americans 1854—1939*, Warsaw 1985; for the 20th century: John J. B u k o w c z y k, *And My Children Did*

If the Polish American parish is examined from the perspective of the past, the picture is pessimistic. The teeming, linguistically unified Polish immigrant neighborhoods are largely a thing of the past, while assimilation and migration took their toll. These long-term sociological developments diluted the ethnic profile of surviving Polish American parishes, many of which no longer regularly conduct Polish language liturgies. Does this mean that there is no longer a need for Polish parishes in the United States.

As is often the case in the history of immigrant-ethnic communities, events in homeland affect and shape developments within the diaspora. Four influxes of Polish migration have reached the United States since 1948, and their impact awaits further analysis. In the years following World War II, a generation of political emigres and self-exiled soldiers who refused to return to a communist Poland, left Europe. Some 140 000 Poles settled in the United States between 1945 and 1959<sup>5</sup> This generation was followed by a consumer emigration numbering 95 000 between 1960 and 1979, and driven by a desire for goods unavailable in Poland. Solidarity gave its name to the migration between 1980 and 1989. Only a portion of this migration were true political exiles and refugees. However, the feeling of hopelessness generated by martial law and a politically controlled economy justify the term Solidarity emigration. Finally, the consumer and Solidarity migrations must be placed against the broader background of the large number of Poles visiting the United States as „tourists” and „vacationers” while working as illegal aliens.

A review of Polish immigration statistic to the United States between 1948 and 1990 is revealing. During those years 434 950 Poles settled in the United States as immigrants, while 115 462 entered the country as nonimmigrants. The years 1973 to 1990 are even more interesting. During this time 133 241 Poles entered as immigrants, and 804 178 as nonimmigrants, for a total of 937 419 individuals. Of those who entered as nonimmigrants, 602 434 were temporary (*turyści* or *wakacjusze*) and 35 131 [1982 to 1990] refugees<sup>6</sup>

The appearance of nearly a million persons over the span of just under two decades impacted American Polonia, including the existing Polish parishes in the United States. Both immigrants and nonimmigrants used these parishes for religious, cultural, or social services. In so doing, they placed new demands upon both pastors and parishes while older congregations and Polish American priests were assimilated and americanized. Intergene-

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*Not Know Me. A History of the Polish-Americans*, Bloomington, IN 1987; and for recent research: H. Kubiak, E. Kusielewicz, T. Gromada, eds., *Polonia Amerykańska. Przeszłość i współczesność*, Wrocław 1988.

<sup>5</sup> D. Mostwin, *The Transplanted Family: A Study of Social Adjustment of the Polish Immigrant Family to the United States after the Second World War*, Columbia University (Unpublished PhD Dissertation) 1971.

<sup>6</sup> See H. Znaniecka-Łopata, with a new chapter by Mary Patrice Erdmans, *Polish Americans*, New Brunswick, NJ 1994, p. 38—44.

rational and ethnic (Polish American vs Polish, American vs Polish, American vs Polish American) tensions surfaced in some parishes.

Analysis of the consumer and Solidarity migrations to the United States, whose numbers equal ten percent of the 9 366 156 Polish Americans counted in the 1990 U.S. Census, is just beginning<sup>7</sup> Danuta Mostwin surveyed Polish immigrants who arrived between 1974 and 1984. While Mostwin found that this generation possessed a strong Polish national identity, she also noted that this was a cohort reared in the now-defunct communist Polish Peoples Republic, arriving in America with attitudes and values reflecting that life experience. Accustomed by the socialist economy to free medical care, education, and a constitutionally guaranteed job, some found the transition to a capitalist economy frustrating. When signs of social disintegration appeared, this new generation, unlike the pre-World War II Great Peasant Emigration, was more willing to „go on welfare”, indicating a decided shift in shared community values. This was a consumer emigration, and the majority came from the cities, although many were the children of the first generation of workers and peasants educated in Peoples Poland. This was an emigration of workers and artisans possessing professional training. Nearly all have completed secondary education, while nearly 40% possess some higher education. Over 90% arrived without a knowledge of English. Nevertheless, this was a young (46.4% were between the ages of 29—39), family emigration (83.5% were married), nearly 90% of whom were employed, but only 20.3% in their professions or trades<sup>8</sup>

The attitude of the new immigrants toward the Polish parish is significant. Mostwin found that 60.14% of those surveyed joined Polish parishes, expecting advice and assistance in trying to address their personal (job, English language instruction, apartment, counselling, loneliness, need for legal advice and money to get started), family (medical care and advice about psychological counselling), and ethnic („Polish” church with a „Polish” priest performing a Polish-language liturgy, a Polish cultural life) needs<sup>9</sup>

Among the interesting revelations of Mostwin’s study is the dissatisfaction with „Polish priests” and „Polish parishes” The new arrivals, somewhat like their predecessors in the Great Peasant Emigration, expected the priest and parish to provide for more than just their spiritual needs, and harshly criticized both for, from the emigrants’ perspective, failing to do so. In the extreme, the new arrivals expect the Polish American parish to be as „Polish” as a parish in Poland, and the priest to be fluent in Polish, deliver

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<sup>7</sup> See M. P E r d m a n s, *Emigres and Ethnics: Patterns of Cooperation between New and Established Organizations in Chicago’s Polish Community*, Northwestern University (Unpublished PhD Dissertation) 1992. On Solidarity activists who settled in the United States see Andrzej K r a j e w s k i, ed., *Region USA. Działacze „Solidarności” o kraju, o emigracji, o sobie*, London 1989, and Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s, *American Polonia: The Next Generation*, „Polish American Studies” 49:1992 p. 81—86.

<sup>8</sup> D. M o s t w i n, *Emigranci Polscy w USA*, Lublin 1991, p. 51—55.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

sermons and services they were accustomed to in Poland, and not, in their opinion, to sit in the rectory indifferent to parishioner needs, but to go out and work among parishioners<sup>10</sup>

The dissatisfaction that Mostwin found among the 1974—1984 arrivals were, to a limited extent, confirmed by serious parish disputes that erupted in 1987 in Sacred Heart and St. Michael's parishes in New Britain and Bridgeport, Connecticut, and at St. Louis parish in Portland, Maine. The each case, immigrants from the Solidarity generation, together with soldier-emigre and consumer immigrants, united to demand that these long-established Polish American parishes be „Polish”, taking out their immigrant frustrations on American-born Polish American pastors, and, in the process, dividing their parishes<sup>11</sup>

Mostwin's findings and the subsequent parish disputes clearly suggest, in terms of parish life, the real and potential impact of the recent Polish immigration upon American Polonia. While the surviving Polish American ethnic parishes are populated largely by third and fourth generation Polish and other Americans, who cannot conceive of recreating the immigrant parish of their grandparents' era, younger and more assertive new immigrants expect these parishes to be „Polish”, fortresses of „Polishness” (*polskość*) with a Polish-language liturgy and Polish-language instruction for their children.

Considering these tensions and the potential for conflict, what is the role of the Polish American parish and of the pastor and priests serving these parishes? Is there a model for older Polish American parishes, which, because of the different emigrant generations at different stages of assimilation and americanization, are no longer mono-ethnic but in fact tri-ethnic parishes: Polish-American, Polish, and American.

The history and evolution of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Bristol, Connecticut, which in 1994 celebrated its 75th anniversary, may provide a model of the Polish American parish of the future.

Substantial Polish migration to Connecticut began in the 1880s as peasant immigrants arrived in search of work in the State's textile, brass and copper mills and hardware factories. By 1930, the U.S. Census counted in Connecticut 133 813 first and second generation Polish immigrants, 10% of the State's population. Like immigrants elsewhere, the immigrants organized themselves to overcome the economic hardships, cultural isolation, and the breakdown of traditional values that accompanied migration and transplantation. In Connecticut, Polish immigrants organized 24 Roman Catholic and 9 Polish National Catholic parishes, branches of the major insurance fraternals (Związek Narodowy Polski, Zjednoczenie Polsko-Rzymskie Katolickie, Związek Polek and Związek Sokółów Polskich) an Polish language

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 84—85.

<sup>11</sup> An extensive collection of newspaper articles on these disputes, and additional documents, are held at the Connecticut Polish American Archives and Manuscript Collection, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut.

press („Przewodnik Katolicki”), national homes [*dom narodowy*], citizenship and political clubs, businessmen associations, and cultural and sports groups<sup>12</sup>

Polish immigrants began arriving in Bristol, a town known for its watch-manufacturing and brass mills, in the 1890s. This was the decade in which Connecticut's first Polish parishes were organized, beginning in 1891 with St. Stanislaus B. & M. in Meriden<sup>13</sup> The first efforts to organize a parish in Bristol may have occurred as early as 1902, when the Tow. Św. Stanisława Kostki [St. Stanislaus Kostka Society] was founded. As in Polish immigrant communities elsewhere, it was the immigrants who initiated the organization of the parish. In 1912, representatives of the Tow. Tadeusza Kościuszki [Lodge 969 of the P.N.A.] and the Tow. Św. Stanisława came together to organize a parish corporation and conduct a census which counted 881 Poles in Bristol. It was these same immigrants who encountered the initial reluctance of the local Ordinaries, Bishops Michael Tierney (1894—1908) and John J. Nilan (1910—1934), to canonically erect a new parish<sup>14</sup> While the evidence is circumstantial, it may be that the existence of sentiment in favor of the independent Polish National Catholic Church finally persuaded Nilan to approve the establishment of another national parish in his Diocese<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See M. K i e r k l o, J. W ó j c i k, *Polonia w Connecticut* [Polonia in Connecticut], Hartford, CT 1966; B. K u m o r, *Kościelne dzieje Polonii w Connecticut (1870—1986)*, „Nasza Przeszłość” 73:1990 p. 191—289. Connecticut's Polish parishes are subject of a number of studies. The first survey was authored by Ks. L[ucjan] Bojnowski, (*Historja parafji polskich w Diecezji Hartfordskiej w Stanie Connecticut*, New Britain, CT 1939). On Bojnowski see Daniel S. B u c z e k, *Immigrant Pastor. The Life of The Right Reverend Monsignor Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, Connecticut*, Waterbury, CT 1974. For another outstanding Connecticut Polish American religious leader, see Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s, *Pastor of the Poles: The Second Generation*, in: Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s and Mieczyslaw B. B i s k u p s k i, eds., *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski in honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Ordination*, New Britain, CT, p. 1—19.

<sup>13</sup> Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s, *St. Stanislaus B&M. Parish, Meriden, Connecticut. A Century of Connecticut Polonia: 1891—1991*, New Britain and Meriden, CT 1991. On other Connecticut parishes see: Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s, *A Polish Community in Transition: The Origins and Evolution of Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut* (Reprint from Polish American Studies, XXXIV, No. 1 1977, p. 26—69, and XXXV; Nos. 1—2, 1978, p. 23-53); B. K u m o r, *Dzieje polskiej rzymsko-katolickiej parafii Świętego Krzyża w New Britain, Conn. [1927—1977]*, New Britain, CT 1979); B. K u m o r, *Dzieje parafji polskiej rzymsko-katolickiej Św. Józefa w Norwich, Conn. 1904—1979*, Norwich, CT 1979; B. K u m o r, *St. Cyril and Methodius Parish and the Hartford Polonia. 1873—1980* Bristol, CT 1985; B. K u m o r, *Początki osadnictwa i parafii polskiej w Suffield, CT* „Nasza Przeszłość” 1986, p. 199-236; Daniel S. B u c z e k, *Ethnic to American: Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford, Connecticut*, „Polish American Studies” 37:1980 no.2, p. 17—60; and John J. G w ó ź d ź, *A Place of Their Own. A History of St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut 1915—1990*, Manchester, CT 1990.

<sup>14</sup> For a positive, though controversial assessment of the attitudes of Hartford's bishops towards southern and east european immigrants see Dolores Ann L i p t a k, *European Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Connecticut, 1870—1920*, New York 1987.

<sup>15</sup> See Stanislaus A. B l e j w a s, *A Polish American Ethnic Parish: St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, Bristol, Connecticut. 1919—1994*, New Britain 1994.

The first parish Mass was celebrated by the newly-appointed pastor, Rev. Grzegorz [George] Bartlewski, on April 27, 1919 in the Old Town Hall<sup>16</sup> For the first time in Bristol, the word of God was announced in Polish to a formally recognized Polish congregation. Within a year a basement church, which was to serve as the parish church until a handsome new edifice was erected in 1954, was constructed and dedicated. Like Polish parishes elsewhere in the United States, St. Stanislaus both preserved the immigrants' national identity and facilitated their Americanization and assimilation<sup>17</sup> However, in the early years, the emphasis was upon the former. When the Church's mortgage was paid off in 1926, Fr. Bartlewski began collecting to build „a Polish school”, lest the immigrants' children become denationalized. When the new school was opened in September, 1930, „the parish was already complete. From that point on the young generation was under the care of the parish, it grew together with it, with the Polish church, and was not threatened by denationalization, with spiritual separation from its parents”<sup>18</sup>

The immigrant parish was more than a religious center: it was the heart of a community institutional infrastructure. Besides the fact that everyone spoke Polish and religious instruction was in Polish, St. Stanislaus was supported by 10 satellite societies which reinforced the bond between ethnicity and religion, as did numerous Polish patriotic observances. However, at the same time, the parish was instrumental in the immigrants' Americanization. In 1923 the Bristol Polish Americans Citizens' Club was organized, replacing an earlier Independent Polish Political Citizens Club. The Club's purpose was to secure American citizenship for its members, and a place in the political process. The Club purchased its own home in 1930, and became the center of secular community activities. Americanization was also reflected by the commemoration in 1929 of the 150th anniversary of Kazimierz Pułaski's death, and in 1931 by the organization of the St. Stanislaus Social and Athletic Club, whose members pursued American forms of leisure sports.

On the eve of World War II, St. Stanislaus was a Polish immigrant parish very slowly evolving into a Polish American institution. World War II

<sup>16</sup> George [Grzegorz] Bartlewski was the oldest of the six children of Kajetan and Justyna [Nastyn] Bartlewski. Born in Sanoczek on February 3, 1892, he migrated with his parents to the United States when he was six years old, settling in New Britain's thriving Polish community. Ordained at the University of Fribourg on August 1, 1915, he served Polish communities in Suffield and Meriden before being assigned to Bristol. Bartlewski served as pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka until his retirement in 1968. He lived to celebrate the 75th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, passing away on October 20, 1991 at age 99 („Bristol Press” October 21 and 24, 1991; „Hartford Courant” October 22, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas I. M o n z e l l, *The Catholic Church and the Americanization of the Polish Immigrant*, „Polish American Studies” 26:1969 no. 1, p. 7—9.

<sup>18</sup> *Krótki rys historyczny parafii św. Stanisława Kostki w Bristol, Connecticut*, in: *Pamiętnik z okazji srebrnego jubileuszu parafii św. Stanisława Kostki w Bristol, Connecticut, 1919—1944*, Bristol, CT (n.p.).

would accelerate the transformation. Parishioners did contribute to Polish war relief through the Rada Polonii Amerykańskiej and participate in the founding of the Polish American Congress in 1944<sup>19</sup> However, during the war, parishioners purchased American war bonds, and over 700 male and female parishioners served in the great military melting pot, the U.S. Armed Forces. For the first time, there was a Sunday English-language service in the parish. In the post-war years, the parish population reached 3715 in 1962. This figure reflected both the post-war population boom and the growing presence of the second and third generation in the parish family. During these same years new, non-ethnic parish organizations and societies appeared (Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts, Catholic Youth Organization, a retreat league), reflecting the de-ethnification of American Catholicism. Furthermore, while enrollment in the parish school peaked at 567 in 1956, the majority of parish children attended other schools<sup>20</sup>

Demographic changes underlay the parish's evolution from an immigrant into an ethnic community. Polish customs were still maintained in Church and in the home, and the Millennium of Poland's Christianization was celebrated with great ceremony in 1966. Such celebrations, however, were just as much an occasion to celebrate the parishioners' achievements as Polish Americans. In 1966, parishioners were serving as the Mayor of Bristol [Henry J. Wojtusik], as a U.S. Congressman [Bernard F. Grabowski], and in the State Legislature (Philip V. Rokosa). And three years later when the parish marked its 50th anniversary, it boasted of its emerging professional elite which, together with the community's small businessmen, constituted an ethnic middle class<sup>21</sup>

The first pastor, Fr. (now Monsignor) Bartlewski retired in 1968 after 49 years of service. Over the next quarter of century, Revs. Marian T. Karwacki (1968—1980), George Ziezulewicz [1980—1987], and Brian Shaw (1987—present) served as St. Stanislaus' pastor. Karwacki oversaw the introduction of the liturgical innovations mandated by Vatican II, but also grappled with a declining parish population and school and catechetical enrollment, and rising financial costs<sup>22</sup> These stressful trends culminated during Ziezulewicz's tenure, when financial exigency forced the closing of the

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<sup>19</sup> See Donald E. Pienkos, *For Your Freedom Through Ours. Polish American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863—1991*, Boulder, CO 1991; Stanislaus A. Blejwas, *The Local Ethnic Lobby: The Polish American Congress in Connecticut, 1944—1974*, in: Frank Renkiewicz, ed., *The Polish Presence in Canada and America*, Toronto 1982 p. 305—325.

<sup>20</sup> In 1965, the 905 parish children were receiving catechetical instruction. For further statistical information see: *St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish. Annual Parish Reports, 1945—1969*. Located at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Hartford (= AAH).

<sup>21</sup> There were 29 teachers, 2 physicians, 5 dentists, 1 optometrist, 3 lawyers, and 3 military officers (*Fiftieth Anniversary St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, Bristol, Connecticut, Sunday, April 20, 1969*, p. 57).

<sup>22</sup> See St. Stanislaus Kostka. Annual Reports, 1968—1980 (AHH). See also „Sunday Bulletin” Parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka, 1968—1980, Parish Archives.

parish school in 1986, a traumatic event which caused much ill-will between pastor and parishioners and which led to Ziezulewicz's departure<sup>23</sup>

The school crisis occurred at a time when the aging parish was into its sixth decade. In 1981, the Bristol Press ran a series of articles which asked „What is the future of Polish American community in Bristol?” Considering the successes and inroads of Americanization and the immigrant's integration into American life, was the community's ethnic identity now threatened? There were, just before the parish school closed, no longer Polish language classes; the Polish order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis no longer staffed the school; the Bristol Polish American Citizens Club no longer offered Saturday language classes, nor demanded that a member be Polish; and few college-educated youth returned to Bristol or to Polish American organizations<sup>24</sup> According to the 1980 U.S. Census there were 3996 Polish Americans in Bristol of single ancestry, and another 3796 of multiple ancestry<sup>25</sup> At St. Stanislaus there were 2171 parishioners, not all of whom possessed Polish ancestry. At best, only 28% of Bristol's Polish Americans belonged to the institution that was the community's original heart. The cohesive urban village created by the immigrants at the beginning of the century was a thing of the past. At best, there existed only a tenuous ethnic bond. And even this bond appeared threatened because of the reduction of Sunday Masses in Polish to one, and the moving of the Polish Mass, traditionally the *suma*, from the 10:30 am to 8 am time slot [May, 1986]. Was this aging Polish American parish fated to endure a complete erosion of the remaining traces of its Polish profile?

The appointment of the parish's fourth pastor, Rev. Brian Shaw [of both Irish and Polish extraction] was a turning point for St. Stanislaus. Shaw, well-trained in theology and psychology, and who learned Polish on an earlier assignment, arrived hoping to restore the fabric of the parish community and to prepare the parish for the future. Recognizing the declining number of priests and the increasing demands for ministry, the new pastor, in accordance with the spirit of Vatican II [especially the documents *On the Church* and *The Church in the Modern World*], increased lay participation in parish administration through the election of a new Parish Council and the creation of a Parish Finance Council to deal with financial management and expenditures. His goal was to „develop a highly-trained core of people drawn from the organizations and the Parish at large to begin meeting these needs now”<sup>26</sup> While the two Councils were limited to „aiding” and to „advising” the pastor, thus preserving the hierarchial administrative principle fundamental

<sup>23</sup> For the statistics see: *St. Stanislaus Kostka. Annual Reports, 1980—1986* ( AHH). For reaction to the school closing see „Bristol Press”, June 12 and 14, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> „Bristol Press” February 18 and 19, 1981.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing. Census Tracts. Bristol, Conn. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), Table P-8.

<sup>26</sup> „Sunday Bulletin” December 6, 1987.



to Roman Catholicism, the pastor intended that every parish position, appointive or elective, carry real responsibility and corresponding authority. The pastor's goal was for the parish to see itself as a „Common Good” and, therefore, „a community which provides through work and donations a place to meet the spiritual, educational, and social needs of its parishioners”<sup>27</sup>

To fill the vacuum created by the closing of the parish school, Shaw launched several educational initiatives, including a Montessori School, English-language instruction for recent arrivals and Polish language classes for adults and children. Sunday morning catechism classes that allow parents to attend Mass while their children attend religion classes, and proposed math center. These initiatives, combined with the remaining organizations, offered programs for all age groups, thereby emphasizing the parish's family-orientation. The pastor also established trust funds to ensure the Parish's financial future.

Renewal was not just a question of administrative reorganization, new initiatives, or marketing. It also rested upon recognition of and acceptance of the Parish's diverse ethnic character and composition. St. Stanislaus by the 1980s was a tri-ethnic parish. Besides the second and third generation older Polish Americans, who constitute the parish majority, a significant number of Americans [i.e., parishioners with no Polish background] had moved into the Parish. Finally, there was also a significant number of Polish-born members who arrived after World War II, political emigres and soldier exiles. They were followed in the 1970s and 1980s by a consumer immigration seeking America's material rewards<sup>28</sup>

The recently-arrived Polish parishioners felt alienated at St. Stanislaus. They read the reduction of Sunday Polish Masses to one, and the shift of that Mass to the early morning, as an indication that Polish language services were eventually slated for elimination. Rightly or wrongly, the Polish-born minority, many of whom were not fluent in English, felt like second-class citizens, their feelings accentuated by their exclusion from any significant role in parish organizational life. On the other hand, the Polish Americans found the Poles clannish, reluctant to socialize beyond their own circle of acquaintances, and not contributing much to the Parish. The issue, therefore, was how to integrate the Polish minority into an aging Polish American parish.

The pastor's response was to organize a Polish liturgical group [Grupa Narodowa Liturgiczna] to plan the Polish liturgy and to discuss community building<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter, this group, invoking the name of the long-deceased, original, parish society, renamed itself the Towarzystwo Św. Stanisława Kostki, and entered parish life by seeking a place on the Parish Council. The Towarzystwo as the „new” St. Stanislaus Society came to be popu-

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> The precise numbers are not available, but the Polish-born probably constitute at least 10% of the parish population.

<sup>29</sup> „Sunday Bulletin” March 8, 1987.

larly known, expanded its responsibilities to include „all programs which develop and support Polish language, culture, and history” The Towarzystwo defined its areas of interest as the Polish liturgy, an English and Polish language school for adults and children, social activities, and programs affecting Polish cultural and intellectual life<sup>30</sup>

In addition to promoting the new society, the pastor also restored the Polish *summa*, made greater use of Polish in the „Sunday Bulletin”, expanded Polish language services, devotions, and retreats, and recast traditional events, replacing the annual parish picnic with a *dożynki* (harvest festival). And it was through participating in the organization of the *dożynki* that mutual suspicions and stereotypes between the older parishioners and the Polish newcomers began to break down.

The new Tow. Św. Stanisława Kostki was integrated into parish life, and became a major organizer of parish activities. Both the Polish Americans and the newcomers credit the pastor with bringing the groups closer together and with engendering a mutual feeling that St. Stanislaus is „our parish” As one Polish American put it, the Parish is more of a family than at any time since the days of the first pastor, and the Poles concur in this view of the Parish as a family. Older Polish American parish leaders agree with that the pastor was correct in recognizing that the Poles will help the Parish to grow, and acknowledge that „they are the future of this parish”<sup>31</sup>

Statistics lend support to this optimistic assessment. Since 1987, St. Stanislaus has grown from about 870 families and single persons to just over 1383 in 1993, providing the parish with a total population of 3872 souls. The recent success of this tri-ethnic parish is due in part to the recognition of its ethnic composition and to the blending of these three dimensions — Polish American, Polish, and American — into a whole cloth called a parish community. St. Stanislaus challenges third and fourth generation ethnic Americans who argue that ethnicity — in this case „Polishness” — is on the way out. A tolerant, accommodating to parish administration is more fruitful than stripping a parish of the vestiges of its ethnic past simply because not everyone speaks the ancestral language.

When Fr. Shaw first served in a Polish parish, the historian of that parish noted that the priest was the first curate not entirely of Polish origin. Viewing the future of ethnic parishes in America with some pessimism, he wrote that the „appointment is more than a symbol: it states the reality facing every ethnic parish in America”<sup>32</sup>. What the pastor has done at St. Stanislaus is to demonstrate that ethnicity is more resilient than some think, and that it adds a dimension to parish life, providing cohesion between generations and an intimate sense of family values. St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Bristol, Connecticut is not the immigrant parish of 75 years ago, but ne-

<sup>30</sup> *Protokoły Tow. Św. Stanisława Kostki*, IX / 20 / 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews with parishioners, September 29, October 6, and November 10, 1993.

<sup>32</sup> B l e j w a s, *A Polish Community in Transition...* p. 77.

ither is it just another American parish. In retaining an evolving ethnic identity and by integrating the different groups in this tri-ethnic parish, the parish offers a unique and vital spiritual and cultural inheritance.

Are there lessons for aging Polish parishes in the United States in the recent history of St. Stanislaus, which is now three quarters of a century old?

Every parish functions in a specific set of circumstances. What proved successful in Bristol, Connecticut may not be applicable in Chicago, Illinois. Nevertheless, St. Stanislaus' recent history prompts reflection. It may be useful to reconceptualize our thinking about the social composition of older ethnic parishes. Rather than approaching them as mono-ethnic communities because the parish began as a immigrant-national parish, it may be more accurate and beneficial to devise a plan of pastoral care based upon the concept of the parish as bi- or even tri-ethnic. While the parish majority may share a common ancestral and cultural heritage, there are substantial generational differences which must be taken into account.

Ministering to a diverse congregation requires, as well, intelligent pastoral leadership, priests sensitive to the subtleties separating immigrant and ethnic generations. As Danuta Mostwin notes, the needs of the Polish community in America in the 1920s, 1930s and the 1980s are different from those of Polish society. The ideal pastor must be well-educated in psychology and sociology, a good organizer, bilingual, willing to minister all Poles — including those who are not parishioners, available, and a catalyst for united the various Polonia generations<sup>33</sup> The work of St. Stanislaus' pastor indicates that such priests are available, but the vocation crisis in the American church suggests that clerical staffing will continue to be a problem in the United States. Thus, as the pastor at St. Stanislaus has done, it is necessary to expand lay participation in all aspects of parish management and finances.

Finally, the experience at St. Stanislaus suggests the continuing value of ethnicity as an integrative factor in parish life. There will be no one model for the American ethnic parish of the future, but the experience of one aging Polish American parish is a reason for serious reflection.

ROZWÓJ POLSKICH PARAFII W STANACH ZJEDNOCZONYCH:  
KOŚCIÓŁ ŚW. STANISŁAWA KOSTKI, BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT, USA

**S t r e s z c z e n i e**

Parafie polsko-amerykańskie są powszechnie uważane za istotny element w infrastrukturze amerykańskiej Polonii. Jednakże, asymilacja, migracja na przedmieścia, oraz zróżnicowanie socjalne i ekonomiczne potomków pierwszych emigrantów zmieniły te starzejące się parafie,

<sup>33</sup> M o s t w i n, *Emigranci Polscy w USA...*, p. 64—67.

niektóre z nich powstały 75—100 lat temu, i postawiły pytania dotyczące przyszłości polskich parafii w Stanach Zjednoczonych.

Fala migracji polskiej do Stanów Zjednoczonych pomiędzy 1973 a 1990 rokiem przyniosła 937 419 emigrantów i nieemigrantów. Ta fala migracji zmieniła profil demograficzny niektórych parafii. Stały się one trójjetniczne: polsko-amerykańskie, amerykańskie i polskie. Przyjazd tej fali emigrantów spowodował konflikty wewnętrzne w niektórych polskich parafiach, lecz także zaskoczył proboszczów, wikariuszy i parafian nowymi wyzwaniem pastoralnymi.

Parafia św. Stanisława Kostki w Bristolu, Connecticut, jest starzejącą się polsko-amerykańską parafią, liczącą 75 lat (1919—1994). W ostatnich latach doświadczyła ona stresów związanych z przejściem na trójjetniczną polsko-amerykańską parafię. Integracja urodzonych w Polsce emigrantów w życie i administrację parafii okazała się sukcesem, co sugeruje kontynuującą wartość etniczną jako czynnika integrującego życie parafii i podkreśla ważność inteligentnego przewodnictwa pastoralnego w zarządzaniu trójjetniczną parafią, gdzie większość parafian, z różnych generacji emigrantów, ma wspólne korzenie rodowe. Kościół św. Stanisława może być w przyszłości modelem polskiej parafii w Stanach Zjednoczonych.