

Mieczysław Madaj, Roman Nir

The Polish Parish Organization in Chicago

Rocznik Kolbuszowski 16, 237-253

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The Polish Parish Organization in Chicago

The title „Polish Parish Organization in Chicago”, must be explained and its extent adjusted for our purpose here. „Polish Parish Organization” means the establishment of parishes for Americans of Polish descent both Catholic and non – Catholic. Although I am reasonably sure of the situation outside of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I am certain that in Chicago and its metropolitan area the only parishes are those of the Roman Catholic Church and those of the Polish National Church. Polish Americans may belong to congregations of other denominations but there are no special parishes for them in the other persuasions. The word, „Chicago”, in the title is expanded here to include the metropolitan area of the city; more specifically this means the Archdiocese of Chicago.

According to the 1975 edition of the Official Catholic Directory there were 2,466,294 Catholic in the Archdiocese of Chicago which consists of Cook and Lake Counties in northeastern Illinois. To serve all these people there were 455 parish churches, 5 missions and 345 chapels. At that time there were still 57 parishes and 2 missions that were considered Polish. In the same manner as these parishes are no longer exclusively Polish the remaining 399 parishes also include Poles among their members. The national lines were held rather firmly until World War II, but following it these became increasingly obscured. Not only in territorial parishes but also in what are still loosely considered Polish parishes one finds Blacks and Hispanics among the members. The change is due to a shifting population in the city of Chicago and also in the suburbs. More and more Poles are leaving old Polish neighborhoods and moving into sections with better homes and surroundings. Even before the last big war there were not enough parishes exclusively Polish; hence many Polish speaking Catholics joined territorial parishes. Taking into consideration census and other tabulations as well as the opinions of pastors in parishes throughout the Archdiocese it would

be safe to assume that the nearly 400 non – Polish parishes have anywhere from 5 percent to 50 percent of their membership of Polish extraction or birth. Sixty of these parishes definitely have congregations, each of which consists of 50 percent either Polish born members or who are of Polish descent. To accommodate these parishioners most of these pastors with a heavy percentage of Polish parishioners introduce some Polish traditional customs during Christmas and Easter¹.

Although this paper will not concern itself in detail with the Polish National Church, it might be well to mention something about it in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Within the boundaries of the Archdiocese there are 7 Polish National parishes, which upon thorough investigation are not very large, their largest being equal in size to an average Roman Catholic parish. From the various data assembled by this author it might be safe to assume that the total membership of these parishes can be conservatively estimated somewhere between ten and fifteen thousand².

Limiting the discussion here to Polish Roman Catholic parishes it will be my purpose to give general location of these parishes, the reason for their establishment and some of the statistics pertaining to them. At this juncture a word of caution might be given regarding the statistics cited in the United States census in reference to the Poles. According to the Census Bureau third generation Americans of Polish descent are no longer considered Polish but American. This is quite inconsistent since a Hispanic American remains a Hispanic American no matter what generation he is because his or her surname remains Latin. Furthermore, Hispanics are not distinguished according to the various countries from which they come. The Blacks also have a distinct advantage according to the Census Bureau standards because they always remain Black and because neither are they enumerated according to the countries in which they originated. Following this method of enumeration by the Census Bureau it would be more equitable either to list the Hispanics by the countries from which they came and also the Blacks or to include the Poles with the rest of the Slavs in the United States. It is commonly conceded that there are about thirty million Slavs from various countries together with their descendants.

The basic or general reason for the establishment of the 57 Polish parishes in the Chicago Archdiocese is the settlement of immigrant Poles

¹ *The Official Catholic Directory. Anno Domini 1975*, Published P.J. Kennedy, New York 1975, p. 1325.

² *Polish National Catholic Church of America*, Department of Commerce, Washington. Census of Religious Bodies: 1926 p. 1-3; P. Fox, *The Polish National Catholic Church*, Scranton. Penna. 1953, p. 23, 63.

and their descendants in the different parts of the metropolitan area. The numbers of immigrant Poles to Chicago and vicinity were so great during the years of the great East European immigration that they could not possibly be contained in a ghetto – like area, but had to be scattered in different sections. Rather than repeat the same story monotonously for each parish, the parishes will be separated into clusters and each cluster will be discussed. The reasons for settling in the separate neighborhoods were slightly different. If a particular parish was established for a special reason this too will be pointed out. The three principal thorough – fares along which most of the Polish neighborhoods arose were Milwaukee Avenue, Archer Avenue and the Kennedy Expressway³.

Before the first wave of the Great Immigration no one of the new nationals, who came in such large numbers later, made up as much as one percent of Chicago's population from 1850 to 1870.¹ The German States, Ireland and the rest of the British Isles, and the Scandinavian countries had made up the main source of the foreign – born population in the city in the 1850's and 1860's. They continued to predominate, but in the course of the 1870's and 1880's they slowly gave way to the newcomers who arrived in increasing numbers. Within the 1890's they were to make Chicago, of all the American cities, the home of the largest number of Poles, Bohemians, Croatians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Italians and Greeks. By 1890, 77.9 percent of the city's population was of foreign parentage, and every year additional thousands swelled their numbers even more.² There were so many foreign – speaking home owners in Chicago that in 1894 water bills were made out also in different languages.³ Hull House became the receiving station of most non – Polish immigrants⁴.

In this new wave of mass immigration to the city a respectable percentage of Poles was included. Tens of thousands of Polish immigrants were caught in the swift current of newcomers drifting to the fast rising metropolis of Chicago⁵. The less than one percent of the Poles among Chicago's foreign – born in 1870 grew to 2.7. percent within the decade,

³ J. Parot, *Polish Catholics in Chicago: A Religious History, 1850-1920*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press 1981, p. 23-45; S. Zahajkiewicz, *Księża i parafie polskie w Stanach Zjednoczonych Północnej Ameryki*, Chicago, Illinois, pp. 37-87.

⁴ B. Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, Chicago 1957, pp. 22, 34, 56.

⁵ These were not the first Poles in Chicago. According to Miecislav Haiman, the pioneer historian of Polish Americans, the first Pole arrived in Chicago in 1834. He further wrote that two Poles voted in the mayoral election of 1837 and by the time of the Civil War there were nearly five hundred Polish residents in the city. „*The Poles in Chicago*”, *Poles of Chicago, 1937*, Chicago, Polish Pageant, Inc., (1937), pp. 8, 9. Cf. Eleanor C. Rawlings, *Polish Exiles in Illinois*.

and by 1890 this percentage had doubled as will be shown in detail later. The several colonies of Poles clustered about the Roman Catholic church and parochial school: they formed a unitary cultural segment of Chicago's cosmopolitanism. The oldest of the Polish settlements was on the northwest side of the city, the area around Division Street, Milwaukee and Ashland Avenues; it grew around St. Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic church at Noble and Bradley Streets (now Noble and Evergreen), immediately adjacent to the Kennedy Expressway, the main route to O'Hare International Airport from the center of the City. Gradually the Poles together with the Scandinavians pushed out the predominantly German population in the old fourteenth ward whose boundaries about 1890 were starting from the North Branch of the Chicago River south along Ashland Avenue to North Avenue, west on North Avenue to Crawford Avenue (now Pulaski Road, the city limits until 1889), south on Crawford Avenue to Chicago Avenue, east on Chicago Avenue to Ashland Avenue, south on Ashland Avenue to Ohio Street and east on Ohio to the Chicago River⁶.

For almost a century the „Main Street” of Chicago's Polish American Community was Noble Street, whose residents up to about 1925 were almost exclusively Poles. Three generations of them called this their home since 1867, when about 150 families lived in what was then a prairie settlement. And for almost a century this, the Stanislaus district (Stanislawowo), was the Polonia of Chicago⁷.

Anthony Schermann – Smarzewski was the first Polish settler to establish the area as a trading center; he arrived in Chicago in 1851 with his wife and children. In 1867 he built his own home on Noble and Bradley Streets, where he operated a grocery store for the convenience of twenty – four Polish families in the vicinity. By 1873, Noble Street had become the principal trading center of the Polish community in Chicago with little shops popping up along the street⁸.

On the same street Wladyslaw Dyniewicz began publishing the first Polish paper, the *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette), a weekly, in 1867; here he

⁶ F. Houtart, N. Lacoste, *The Parishes of Chicago 1843-1953. Historical Evolution, Geography, Population, Ecology*, Chicago 1953, pp. 70-93.

⁷ M. Inviolata, Sister, S.S.J., „Noble Street in Chicago”, *Noble Street in Chicago*, „Polish American Studies”, XI, 1-2 (January – June, 1954), pp. 1-3. In the course of the years Noble Street changed considerably until it was completely disfigured in the most recent urban renewal program. According to the *Street Guide and Transportation Directory of 1950*, Chicago, pp. 12,15-17, Noble Street ran North and South at 1400 West from North Kinzie Street to 1600 North, North Avenue.

⁸ *Scherman Antoni (1818-1900)*, w; *The Polish American Encyclopedia*, Edited by James S. Pula.

later opened a Polish publishing house. Very in its history the street boasted both a Polish pharmacy and a Polish physician. Peter Kiolbassa was one of the more prominent Poles who made his abode here; he figured in the organization of St. Stanislaus Kostka parish, the first Polish parish, and he was also active in local politics⁹. Later there came John F. Smulski, lawyer and banker, the founder of the two Northwesterners banks that collapsed in the depression of 1929. The father of Congressman Daniel Rostenkowski, Joseph P. Rostenkowski, was born in this area and attended St. Stanislaus School; the elder Rostenkowski's children were also born and raised here. Congressman Rostenkowski still represents this district in Congress¹⁰.

Attracted to the already existing Polish community and by the opportunities for employment in the immediate vicinity other Polish Americans and Polish immigrants gravitated towards this „Little bit of Poland”. As the Polish colony on Noble Street grew became more and more apparent that it needed a church of its own. For the time being the Poles attended the German churches of St. Joseph near Chicago Avenue and LaSalle Street (now at Hill and Orleans Streets) and St. Michael's at North Avenue and Cleveland (now at Cleveland and Eugenie Street). As a step toward establishing the first Polish parish the two pioneer gentlemen, Anthony Schermann and Peter Kiolbassa, organized the St. Stanislaus Benevolent Society. Mr. Kiolbassa with the help of the Rev. James Roles, the rector of Holy Name Cathedral, was able to convince the authorities of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Rome to send one of their priests to care for the newly forming parish of Polish Catholics. In preparation for this undertaking the Rev. John Wollowski preached a mission in April, 1869, at St. Joseph's Church. In October of 1869 the Rev. Joseph Juszkiewicz was appointed the first pastor; the Rev. Adolph Bakanowski, C.R., succeeded him in September, 1870. The most stimulating era for the parish and the Polish community began with the arrival on September 18, 1874, of the Rev. Vincent Barzynski, C.R., who directed the destinies of the parish and the Polish community for twenty – five years. Under his direction St. Stanislaus Kostka parish became one of the major focal points not only for the Chicago Poles but also for the Poles of the U.S. He built the present church edifice, opened the first parochial Polish school in 1874 with the School Sisters of Notre Dame in charge, cooperated with Father Gieryk in organizing the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, a national fraternal insurance organization, in 1890 he

⁹ H. Busyn, *The Political Career of Peter Kiolbassa*, „Polish American Studies”, VII, 1-2 (January – June, 1950), pp. 8, 9.

¹⁰ E. Kantowicz, *Polish-American Politics in Chicago 1888-1940*, The University of Chicago Press 1975, pp. 210-219.

founded the *Dziennik Chicagoski* (Chicago Polish Daily News) a newspaper that ceased publication in 1971, and was instrumental in founding a half dozen other Polish parishes in Chicago¹¹.

The new Polish parish grew rapidly, its membership reaching 50,000 by 1899. The school, which began in 1874 with about 400 pupils, had to be remodeled periodically until eventually in 1907 a new building was constructed with 54 classrooms to be used for the elementary school and a two – year business course for girls¹². The high school was expanded into a four – year high school preparatory for college first limited to girls only and later opened to boys also; never reaching an excessive enrollment it will be closed in June, 1978. Innumerable societies (at least fifty) for adults, young people and children clustered around the church. Like other Polish parishes that were founded later it was the hub of all neighborhood social, cultural, artistic, intellectual and political activities.

Eventually seven additional parishes and one mission developed from St. Stanislaus Kostka parish, the cradle of the Polish American Community in Chicago. They are: St. Fidelis, St. Hedwig and its mission, St. Helen, Holy Innocents, Holy Trinity, St. John Cantius and St. Mary of the Angels. All these parishes still exist nominally as Polish, but due to the changing neighborhoods they are also accepting Black and Spanish speaking Catholics, thus changing their complexion somewhat from the original one.

Before moving on to the next group of Polish parishes it might be well to pause briefly to consider the early history of the second Polish parish in Chicago, Holy Trinity. With the ever – increasing numbers of people crowding the church of St. Stanislaus and the possibilities for future growth looking very bright, Father Bakanowski, with the permission of Archbishop Patrick A. Feehan, established the parish of Holy Trinity in 1873 on Noble Street almost a half mile away. Its beginnings were shaky due to a misunderstanding regarding the title to the church property and the administration of the new parish¹³. Once these difficulties were ironed out the parish was

¹¹ *Złoty jubileusz 1867-1917 najstarszej polskiej parafii Świętego Stanisława Kostki w Chicago*, Chicago, Illinois 1917, p. 372; *Centennial, 1867-1967, St. Stanislaus Kostka Church*, Chicago, Illinois 1967, pp. 32-36.

¹² The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1875, p. 80-102.

¹³ The parish was under a „cloud” due to the disagreement regarding the possession of the title to the parish property; in 1874 the parish committee transferred the title to itself. This condition prevailed until 1889 (March 3) when Fr. Simon Kobrzynski, C.R. was appointed pastor. Since the people accepted him only reluctantly, he left the parish on September 1, 1889. On that day the church itself fell under interdict and remained in this condition until June 1893, when the Rev. Casimir Sztuczko, C.S.C.,

set on a firm footing in 1893 with the coming of the Rev. Casimir Sztuczko, C.S.C. He guided the development of the parish for more than a half century making it the center for all patriotic manifestations and cultural attractions. The patriotic observances always began with a mass in the church, while the parish auditorium became a Polish cultural center with performances of operas, concerts, drama and lectures. Like St. Stanislaus Kostka parish, Holy Trinity also had a school which opened in 1877 with 90 pupils and surpassed the nine hundred mark by 1900¹⁴.

As the city expanded and the suburban communities began to sprout the population kept pace, the immigrants, especially from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, arriving in progressively larger numbers. Since a large percentage of them, particularly among the Poles, were Roman Catholic more churches were needed. To serve the larger Polish – speaking population new parishioners had to be established in the areas where there was a heavier concentration of the newcomers. Because many of the recently arrived immigrants were employed on the south side of Chicago in the stockyards, meat processing plants, breweries, a quarry and related industries, they tended to establish their homes in the vicinity of 17th and Ashland Avenue. To take care of their spiritual needs a third Polish parish, St. Adalbert, was founded in 1873 at 17th and Paulina Streets. This became the nucleus for at least four other Polish parishes on the south side of Chicago¹⁵. The steel mills in South Chicago, later a part of the city of Chicago, attracted many Polish immigrants with the result that the fourth Polish parish was organized in 1882 under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception. The previously organized St. Vincent de Paul Society in this area took the initiative, Abp. Feehan gave his consent, and the new parish

was appointed pastor. After 82 years the Resurrectionists returned to take over the parish on July 1, 1975.

¹⁴ J. Wisniewski, CR, *Saint Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Chicago: Its Spiritual, Educational and Cultural Legacy To The 600,000 Americans of Polish Extraction 1869-1908*, De Paul University Chicago, Illinois 1964, pp. 58-73; *Kollegium Świętego Stanisława Kostki w Chicago, Illinois. Księga jubileuszowa*, 1915, pp. 90-156; *Pamiętnik parafii Świętej Trójcy w Chicago, Illinois 1893-1918 z okazji 25-tej rocznicy otwarcia Kościoła*, Chicago 1918, pp. 84-129.

¹⁵ *St. Ann Parish 1903-1978, 75th Anniversary, Diamond Jubilee, Sunday, October 1st, 1978*, Chicago, p.182; *St. Casimir Parish, Memoirs of The Seventy Fifth Anniversary 1890-1965*, Chicago p.128; *Good Shepherd Church, Chicago, Illinois 1907-1980*. H. Koenig, *A History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago*, 1980, pp.325-328; *Golden Jubilee of St. Roman Parish 1929-1979, 50th Anniversary*, Chicago, Illinois, p.123.

became a reality. Eventually there other parishes were formed within its original boundaries¹⁶. In each case a school was attached to the church.

By 1890, the Polish Community in Chicago was really there communities or neighborhoods, one on the near north side (nearest the center of the city), another on the near south side and the third on the far south side¹⁷. There were eight churches with as many schools and 3,800 pupils attending these schools. This was at a time when the population of Chicago passed the million mark and 77.9 percent of the people were of foreign parentage. The Catholic membership including the Unites totaled 262,047 with more than a hundred parishes¹⁸. Within the following decade Chicago became the home of America's largest number of Slavs, Lithuanians and Greeks. These minority groups incidentally surpassed numerically both the Irish and Germans resident in Chicago¹⁹.

Beginning with 1891 the number of immigrants coming to the United States increased steadily reaching the peak in the following decade. The same was true of Polish immigration, with the exception that the Polish immigration to Chicago reached its peak of almost 150,000 (149,622) in the decade ending in 1930²⁰. Twenty – five new parishes for Poles were formed between 1891 and 1920 in the various parts of the and 9 in the metropolitan area, raising the total of such parishes to 34 in the city and 45 in the archdiocese²¹. Such an increase in Polish parishioners represented a sizable increase in Polish population in the Chicago metropolitan area, even if it were only that of the Catholics. The Poles now had more national parishes than any other ethnic group. Besides the churches in the City of Chicago itself there were 34 parochial elementary schools, 2 high schools for boys and 1 for girls. The total enrollment was over 40,000 students in all the schools. In additional, the Polish Catholics supported 3 day nurseries for

¹⁶ *Diamond Jubilee: Immaculate Conception B.V.M. Parish, 1957*, Chicago, 1957, pp. 25-41. St. Michael the Archangel Church, South Chicago, Organized in 1892; St. Mary Magdalene Church, Organized in 1910, and St. Bronislava Church, Organized in 1920.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Directory*, Anno Domini 1890 pp. 234-254.

¹⁸ B. Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, 1957, vol. 3, pp. 20, 22, 423, 424.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.3, p. 33.

²⁰ J. Wyrwal, *America's Polish heritage*, Detroit, Endurance Press, 1961, p. 322.

²¹ *The Catholic Directory*, Anno Domini 1920, pp. 220-234. The location of the additional parishes outside the City of Chicago were: Blue Island, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Cicero, Evanston, Harvey, North Chicago, Posen and Summit. The parish in Summit had two missions at this time which eventually developed into St. Blase parish in Argo and St. Camillus parish in Chicago. Two other locations outside the city might be mentioned at this time; they are Downers Grove and Kankakee both now within the Diocese of Joliet in Illinois.

daytime care of children of working mothers, a home for working girls, an old people's home, an orphanage and a hospital.

In Chicago proper the parishes were scattered throughout the city showing that the Poles spread to various sections of it. There was a cluster of Polish parishes in the original near north side location (Division, Milwaukee Avenue and Ashland); another on the near south side (17th and Ashland); South Chicago had three parishes; Town of Lake, Three; Bridgeport, two; the far south, two; Brighton Park, one; Jefferson Park, one; Avondale, two²². Other parishes were isolated singly throughout various parts of the city.

It is most difficult to arrive at the precise number of Poles in Chicago. The official sources do not have the exact figures since for a long time Poles were included among the German, Russian and Australian population depending upon the region of their origin in Poland. Many times the census takers did not put the question of national origin correctly or at least very obscurely. Finally, there were always some people who for reasons best known to themselves refused to reveal their national background. Church statistics are not always reliable. For instance, Abp. Feehan in his report to Rome in 1883 gave the number of Poles as 15,000 in his Archdiocese with 15 parishes; The Catholic Directory for 1884 lists only 4 Polish parishes in Chicago from a total of 50. A report of the comptroller of Chicago published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, November, 1892, gave the number of Polish Catholics in the city as 60,000. The Rev. Wenceslaus Kruszka in his *Historja Polska w Ameryce* (History of Poles in America) wrote that the mayor of Chicago, Carter H. Harrison, assured him in writing in 1903 that there were a quarter million Poles in the city. That figure must be taken with more than a grain of salt when one considers its source²³. If additions to the population between 1900 and 1920 given in the work of Justin B. Galford be added to the number of Poles already in Chicago the total could be somewhere around 400,000 by the end of 1920²⁴.

Although this is not the place to discuss at any length the reasons for the rise of denominations or parishes independent of the Roman Catholic

²² Ibid.

²³ Feehan, Patrick A., Abp. of Chicago, copy of report sent to Rome in 1883, Chicago Archdiocesan Archives; Catholic Directory, 1884; *La Civiltà Cattolica*, November 1892, pp. 635,636; W. Kruszka, *Historja Polska w Ameryce (A History of Poles in America)*, Milwaukee, Kuryer Polski, 1905, vol.1, p. 94; W. Kruszka, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908. Part 2, The Poles in Illinois*. Edited by James S. Pula, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC., 1994, p. 288.

²⁴ Wyrwal, op.cit., p. 322, quoting Justin B. Galford, *The Foreign Born and Urban Growth in the Great Lakes, 1850-1950. A Study of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee*, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1957.

Church, a brief treatment of the matter might be in order. Poles complained that the American bishops were forcing Americanization upon them by prohibiting the use of Polish exclusively in their parish churches and by refusing to establish more Polish parishes. Sometimes it was a question of the ownership of church property. Poles also complained that they had no clerical representatives in the policy – making echelon of the American Catholic Church; they demanded proportionate representation in the hierarchy and equal opportunity for priests of Polish descent. On occasion an independent parish was organized, because the Roman Catholic bishop of Chicago delayed or refused to establish a Polish parish; conversely, sometimes a Roman Catholic Polish parish was founded because of a threat of an independent parish²⁵. Moreover, much of the difficulty was due to a lack understanding on both sides and a lack of meaningful dialogue. The American bishops did not understand the Polish psychology and background; the distressed Poles, on the other hand, suspected the bishops of suppressing their nationalism and customs, not understanding the pressures to which the American bishops were subjected. The two questions of language and representation in the hierarchy still rankle in the breasts of Polish Americans. This is true despite the fact that since the ordination of the first Polish bishop in 1908, Paul Rhode, the Poles until 1977 witnessed several more such ceremonies with the result that today numbered among the American Catholic hierarchy are one cardinal and nine bishops of Polish heritage²⁶.

In the period from 1920 through 1940 the development of the Chicago Poles reached its peak. During this time the community became consolidated and reached its peak. During this time the community became consolidated and reached its maximum in depth. Polish neighborhoods still remained intact and the Poles continued for the most part to live in the city. Their institutions and their social life took on the appearance of a mature and stable society, American in character but with Polish overtones.

²⁵ Two such examples are St. Hyacinth and St. Pancratius parishes. The foundation of the former was quickened when it became known that representatives of the newly organized Polish national Church were in the area attempting to organize a Polish congregation. The latter was cut off from Five Holy Martyrs parish for people who lived too far from the church. The representatives of the Polish national Church were willing to accommodate the dissatisfied people by forming a congregation of their persuasion.

²⁶ The American bishops of Polish descent in 1977 are: John Cardinal Krol (Philadelphia), Alfred L. Abramowicz (Chicago), Stanislaus J. Brzana (Ogdensburg), Norbert F. Gaughan (Greensburg), Arthur H. Krawczak (Detroit), Daniel E. Pilarczyk (Cincinnati), Kenneth J. Povish (Lansing), Gilbert I. Sheldon (Cleveland), Thaddeus Shubsda (Los Angeles), Edmund C. Szoka (Gaylord), and Aloysius J. Wycislo (Green Bay).

The Polish community was still distinguishable as such and the people living in the various Polish neighborhoods seemed to have become a part of mainstream America – again, with Polish overtones.

The number of Poles did not increase appreciably at this time because the immigration laws beginning with the one passed over President Wilson's veto in 1917 became more stringent until the provision of 1927, which further reduced the number of eligible immigrants to a total of 150,000 each year; this number was to be divided proportionately among all the nations sending immigrants according to the national origins of the United States inhabitants in the country in 1920²⁷. Consequently, the number of immigrant Poles coming to Chicago was reduced notably. Without a significant amount of new Polish blood the Polish identity seemed to wane in the 1930's until rejuvenated once again by a flow of displaced persons and refugees following World War II. In parishes English was introduced gradually where none was heard before; in Polish parochial schools more and more English subjects were taught and the Polish language was falling into gradual disuse. By 1940, very little Polish was heard in the churches and hardly any was used in the schools.

Due to an increase and shift in the Polish Catholic population in the city between the two great wars, new Polish parishes were established and two non – Polish parishes were transformed into Polish congregations. Old St. Stephen's at Sangamon and Ohio Streets, adjacent to center city, previously a territorial parish, and St. Wenceslaus on De Koven Street, formerly a Bohemian parish, were added. Six new parishes were established – all away from the inner city – and located in newer sections on the northwest and southwest sides of Chicago. At the same time not the whole story, because a heavy influx of Poles moved into non – Polish suburban parishes. This meant that the Polish people were improving their lot economically and were able to afford newer homes in better sections of the city, where they established new Polish neighborhoods or enlarged those already existing close by. Although clusters of Poles settled in appreciable numbers outside of Chicago they were unable to establish ethnic neighborhoods similar to those in the city itself.

The shift in population was especially noticeable in the school enrollment shortly before World War II. The over – all population in Polish parochial schools was about half that of 1926, leaving many empty class-

²⁷ J Higham, *Strangers in the Land; patterns of American nativism, 1860-1925*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1955, p. 205; G. Shaughnessy, *Has the immigrant kept the faith? A study of immigration and Catholic growth in the U.S., 1790-1920*, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1925, p. 273.

rooms in the large Polish Catholic parochial schools. The sharp decrease of student in Polish parochial schools meant that younger Poles with school children were moving into non – Polish parishes or simply sending their children to public schools²⁸.

Even before World War II began there was a tendency among the Poles of the second and third generations to move away from the old Polish neighborhoods. The most obvious reasons for such a move were the deterioration of the old neighborhoods, the desire for newer homes and better surroundings, and the loss of interest in the old customs combined with the desire to become more Americanized. The prosperity at the time of World War II furnished a great impetus for the move. With the ever – increasing number of college – educated Poles there came the desire to leave behind the parochial mindedness of the old communities and neighborhoods and to taste the nicer and more cultural things in the larger American community.

The influx of Polish refugees and later of displaced persons failed to stem the tide. As a matter of fact, many of the newly arrived Poles preferred to live in a mixed or a totally American community rather than a Polish ghetto. No exact figure for the new arrivals is available, but from the numbers that joined Polish parishes and from the number of those who participated in the life and activity of Chicago Polonia the total could easily reach into the tens of thousands. These newcomers were an entirely new breed of Polish immigrants. They were younger and more attuned to our times; they were better educated; among them were many professionals, scientists, university professors, and literary people. They were more articulate and more aggressive than the Poles of the mass immigration before World War I. Hence, they understood the value of higher education, of cultural events, of professionalism and, most of all, of Americanization. However, many of them either gave up their Catholic faith or were lukewarm practitioners of it. Therefore, despite the vastly increased numbers of Polish Catholic in the Archdiocese of Chicago no additional Polish parishes were founded. The need for such parishes, or at least for Polish speaking priests, reaches almost critical proportions around Christmas and Easter when the newly arrived Poles would like to confess in Polish but are unable. People who formerly were accustomed to receive the sacraments frequently limit this practice to once or twice a year.

Unfortunately, in the years following World War II no new Polish parishes were founded; rather, Old St. Stephen's and St. Wenceslaus on De Koven Street were dissolved. In their places, though not in the same

²⁸ The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1940, pp. 110-134.

location, two mission parishes were established; the two could be termed subsidiaries: one of St. Hedwig parish, the other of St. Hyacinth, both located on the northwest side. Therefore, the number of Polish parishes in the strict sense of the word was reduced to 58 out of a total of 455 Roman Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The number of parish priests of Polish descent, both diocesan and religious, in these parishes rose to 208 but by 1970 it declined to 175. It might be interesting to note here that 82 priests of Polish descent were stationed in non – Polish parishes and in various other assignments in 1970²⁹. In 1975, the practice of placing priests of Polish descent in non – Polish parishes and other assignments was even more widespread. The most prevalent reasons for this move were that Polish speaking priests were needed in non – Polish parishes with a heavy Polish membership and that many of the younger priests knew little Polish or none at all.

One interesting observation is that the number of pupils in Polish parochial schools went up from that of 1940; in 1965 it was 30,002 while in 1940 it was 24,361. However, the number of teaching Sisters went down considerably in 1965 as compared with 1940: from 880 to 654; on the other hand, the number of lay teachers increased by 240. The lower number of teaching Sisters in the parochial schools in 1965 is accounted for by the fact that the Polish Sisterhoods began to offer their services to non – Polish parishes in the archdiocese for several preceding years; in 1970 and 1975, the numbers of Sisters teaching in Polish parochial schools went down even further, because, like other religious communities, the Polish communities also suffered the fate of other sisterhoods in those years. Whereas in 1940 there were 5 parish and 5 central high schools conducted by Polish religious communities, in 1965 there were 9 of the former and 7 of the latter³⁰.

The shift in population was so drastic between 1965 and 1970 that ominous changes took place in the Polish Community in Chicago and vicinity. Two parochial grade schools were forced to close (Holy Trinity and St. John Cantius) and the others suffered a marked decrease in student, down to 24,473. The number of teaching Sisters declined to 451 while that

²⁹ The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1965, pp. 184-196; Anno Domini 1970, pp. 220-248.

³⁰ The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1940, 1970. In 1940 there were 3,245 pupils in 13 parochial schools in the suburbs. In 1970 the statistics for the 15 suburban Polish parishes were: 14 pastors, 4 pastors emeriti and 11 associate pastors; 93 teaching Sisters; 63 lay teachers; 14 schools; 5,261 pupils.

of lay teachers rose to 281. Parish high schools went down to 6, but central high schools increased to 8³¹.

In comparison to 1901 the Polish Roman Catholic in the Chicago Archdiocese had come a long way by 1965. For instance, of the 129 parishes in the city proper the Poles had 16 in 1901. Furthermore, there were 40 priests, 15 schools, 155 Sisters, and 11,567 pupils. St. Stanislaus College (later Weber High School) was operating under the direction of the Resurrection Fathers; an Academy (Holy Family) was open to girls and an Industrial School for Girls was directed by 4 Nazareth Sisters. The same community of Sisters had by that time opened St. Mary of Nazareth Hospital (now St. Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center); and the Franciscan Sisters of St. Kunegunda (now know as the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago) were in charge of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum and St. Joseph's Home for the Aged³². Despite the numerical decline of parishes, schools and institutions that the Polish American Catholics could boast of during the years immediately preceding World War II, in 1975 they still could be proud of the advance and contributions they made to the life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The Official Catholic Directory for 1975 gives the following statistics: 56 parishes, 54 parochial elementary schools plus 5 high schools, 250 priests of Polish heritage with Polish names, 26 Brothers, 671 Sisters serving in Polish institution, 304 lay teachers, 19,088 elementary school pupils, 11, 315 high school students (including students from 8 central high schools), 3 hospitals, 2 day care centers, 4 homes for the aged and 3 cemeterias³³.

One might argue that not all the students and teachers are of Polish heritage. That is quite correct, bur the percentage of non – Poles in the above – given statistics hardly makes up for the numbers of Americans of Polish descent who are not connected in any way with a Polish institution or parish. As mentioned before, most territorial parishes have Polish Americans among their members, at least 47 of them having a number significant enough to employ Polish speaking priests on occasion to hear confessions

³¹ The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1940, 1965, 1970. In 1965 the following parish high schools existed: St. Ann, St. Barbara, St. Casimir, Cardinal Stritch (St. Constance parish), St. Joseph, St. Mary of Perpetual Help, St. Michael, and St. Stanislaus Kostka. The Catholic Directory for the same year shows that the following Polish central high schools were in operation: Good Counsel, Gordon Technical, Holy Family Academy, Holy Trinity, Lourdes, Madonna, Resurrection, and Weber. By 1970 Cardinal Stritch and St. Michael high schools were phased out.

³² The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1901, pp. 124-178.

³³ The Catholic Directory, Anno Domini 1970, pp. 189-210; Anno Domini 1975, pp. 179-201.

in Polish. On the other hand, it is also true that at least 6 of the Polish parishes have services in Spanish and most likely will eventually become Spanish speaking parishes. Here, too, the Polish American Catholics thus far made a valuable contribution: a good number of priests and Sisters of Polish heritage administer to the Hispanics in fluent Spanish. A few of the Polish parishes were caught in the population shift and most likely will become Black parishes in time; it is too early to guess the number.

Finally, one thing must be made clear. The Polish immigrants and their descendants have accomplished this magnificent example of perseverance practically without any external help. Not having been blessed with wealth they had to depend on numbers. Slowly and persistently they established one parish after another and built one institution after another to preserve their faith in the new land and also their culture. The sum total of institution in the Archdiocese bearing the Polish American mark would be sufficient for a separate diocese. Surely, nowhere in the United States is there anything comparable to the phenomenon in Chicago, perhaps not even in the world. Here there is a unique situation. Truly, Chicago is the capital of the Poles outside of Poland, both ecclesiastically and statistically.

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Streszczenie

Organizacja polskich parafii w Chicago

W 1975 roku „Oficjalny Informator Katolicki” podał, że archidiecezja chicagowska liczyła 2.466.294 katolików i obejmowała swym zasięgiem powiaty: Cook i Lake. Organizacyjnie posiadała 455 parafii, 5 misji i 345 kaplic, w tym 57 parafii i 2 misje polskie. W 366 parafiach zarejestrowani byli Polacy. 50% Polaków było urodzonych w Polsce, w tym 25% na Podkarpaciu.

Największa imigracja Polaków do Chicago miała miejsce w latach 1850-1870. Polacy osiedlali się w północno-zachodniej części miasta, na ulicach: Division, Milwaukee, Ashland, Noble, North Avenue, Crawford, Pulaski. Centrum życia Polaków stała się pierwsza parafia św. Stanisława Kostki założona w 1867 roku. Na Stanisławowie W. Dyniewicz założył pierwszą polską gazetę pt. „Gazeta Polska” w 1867 roku. Tu znajdowały się polskie sklepy, banki, apteki. Tu mieszkali polscy politycy jak Kiolbassa, Rostenkowski. W 1870 roku osiedli Zmartwychwstańcy, którzy ponad 150 lat byli liderami duszpasterstwa polskiego. Powstawały organizacje katolickie i narodowe jak Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie, Związek Polsko Narodowy, działające do dnia dzisiejszego.

Chronologicznie polskie parafie powstawały w następujących latach: Święta Trójca (1873); Św. Wojciech (1873); Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP (1882); Wspomożenia Wiernych (1882); Św. Jozafata (1884); Św. Józefa (1887); Św. Jadwigi (1888); Św. Kazimierza (1890); Św. Michała (1892); Św. Stanisława B i M. (1893); Św. Jana Kantego (1893); Św. Jacka (1894); Św. Piotra i Pawła (1895); M. Bożej Anielskiej (1897); Św. Anny (1903); Św. Floriana (1905); Świętych Niewiniątek (1905); Św. Jana Bożego (1906). Dalsze bardzo liczne powstawały w XX wieku.

W 1903 roku według ks. W. Kruszki w Chicago było 250.000 Polaków, a w 1920 roku 400.000. W 1908 roku pierwszym biskupem polskiego pochodzenia został ks. Paweł P. Rhode, urodzony w Polsce, co miało ogromne znaczenie dla pracy duszpasterskiej. Był więc biskupem dla całej polskiej grupy etnicznej w Stanach Zjednoczonych.

W 1975 roku pod względem statystycznym było 57 polskich parafii, przy których było 54 szkoły podstawowe plus 5 gimnazjów, 250 księży o polskich nazwiskach, 26 braci zakonnych, 671 sióstr pracujących w polskich instytucjach kościelnych, 304 świeckich nauczycieli. Do szkół podstawowych uczęszczało 19.088 dzieci, do gimnazjów 11.315 studentów, wyłączając polskich studentów uczęszczających do 8 katolickich gimnazjów prowadzących przez diecezje i zakony innych grup etnicznych. Nazaretanki prowadziły 3 szpitale, 2 dzienne domy opieki i 4 domy dla starców oraz były 3 cmentarze polskie w Chicago i największy św. Wojciecha w Niles, na którym spoczywa ponad milion Polaków.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół Katolicki, parafie, Polonia, Stany Zjednoczone.