



Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

Church festivals in the fall have always been a mainstay of Polish parishes and uniting us all in faith and family. Young and old work together to follow closely held recipes that provide thousands of meals. It takes huge numbers of individual efforts to make these festivals successful. It also is a time of fellowship and reunions that bring members of the community back for these homecomings. In this newsletter, we include pictures from Falls City's Labor Day Weekend picnic which has been going strong for 116 years! May God continue to bless these wonderful celebrations.

Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, PACT president and PHC Board member, has led the three-year Sister Cities initiative to develop a relationship between the Texas cities of Bryan and College Station and the city of Toruń, Kuyavian-Pomeranian in Poland. This sets a regional model for other provinces in Poland to follow.

The official signing ceremony brought together the Governor and other officials of the province along with the mayors of Toruń, Bryan, College Station and

university officials. Programs which were announced at the ceremony include a joint master's degree for Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń with the TAMU Bush School of International Affairs, cooperation with the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Institute in Houston, and high school exchanges between Toruń and Bryan/College Station. Kudos to Dr. Jim. We've included pictures from the Sept. 6 event.

Please join us at the Polish Heritage Center as we keep our founder Bishop John W. Yanta in our thoughts and prayers. Bishop would have celebrated his 93rd birthday on October 2. Now he's celebrating his new life in the spirit.



| Day Trippin' at the PHC

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

Imagine my surprise and excitement when I received an email from Teresa Crone, production manager for Hogaboom Road, Inc., asking if the Polish Heritage Center would like to be featured, along with the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church and the Panna Maria Historical Society, in a future episode of The Day Tripper, which is a popular travel documentary. This six-time Emmy Award winner features one-day adventures exploring Texas and its people, their cultures, history and delicious food. The show will be starting its 15th season in October. Chet Garner is the executive producer, writer and host of this extremely popular series, and he wants to ensure that each episode showcases a different part of Texas, enticing viewers to get out and explore this big, beautiful state.

Chet and his crew arrived at the PHC on August 21st, and it was evident from the moment they walked in that they were completely in awe of the Center. After getting a brief history of Bishop Yanta and his vision for the PHC, the crew took pictures in each area, checked lighting, and completed sound tests. Then it was time to start filming.

My role was to act natural, "not an easy feat", meandering through the Center and answering random, impromptu questions – or as Chet put it, "two friends walking through each area sharing a conversation." Let's just say, there were lots of bloopers, both mine and his, and a great deal of laughter.

Chet has a wonderful, charismatic personality, and he is perfect as the host of The Day Tripper. His goal for this episode is to depict Panna Maria and the Polish Heritage Center as the historic and national treasures they are.

After filming at the PHC, the crew visited the Panna Maria Historical Society, interviewing Joyce Rives, who provided a guided tour of the church and St Joseph's, the first Polish school. She shared the history of the Polish immigrants and this first settlement.

Our episode will air sometime in February 2025. For the San Antonio area, you can view this on KLRN, channel 9 on Saturdays at 9:30 am. We will notify our readers in the January newsletter. For other areas in Texas, check the website of The Day Tripper which will provide a complete listing of areas, channels and viewing times.



| Education Outreach for the New School Year

By: Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

It's that time again! The 2024-25 school year has started, and the Polish Heritage Center is expanding its Education Outreach Program to include four new school districts. Poth ISD, Stockdale ISD, Yorktown ISD, and Runge ISD are very excited to be included in our expansion. Along with these new districts, Falls City ISD and Karnes City ISD will continue their relationship with the PHC and help us expand our program to high school, American History and Government students.

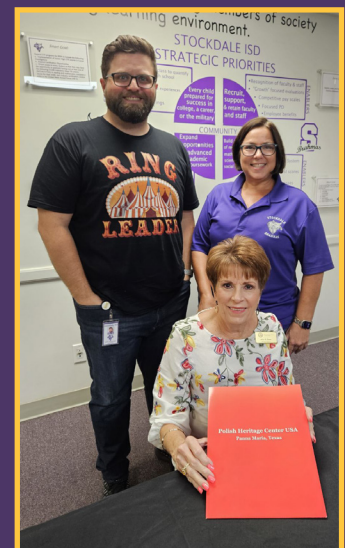
Meetings with each superintendent took place throughout the month of September, as I shared information about our beautiful cultural treasure that is located right down the highway from them. The story of the early immigrants arriving in Panna Maria, their challenges and successes, along with the story of Bishop John W. Yanta and his vision for the Center intrigued each of them. Dr. Lee Byrom from Poth ISD and George Nixon from Yorktown ISD spent an afternoon exploring the Center for themselves.

Each superintendent was especially excited about providing this unique experience to their students when they learned that the PHC provides a week-long curriculum with state approved standards, TEKS, to all 3rd – 8th grade History and Social studies teachers in these districts. After the weeklong study of immigration, history, customs and traditions, students will spend the day exploring the Center, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, St. Joseph's School and the church grounds, with pictures under the beautiful oak tree.

We were blessed in our first year to host nearly 1,300 students in our Education Outreach Program, and this number could double when adding four districts.

Volunteers are needed to serve refreshments, assist with making Polish crafts, and just visiting and sharing stories with the students. If interested, please contact the PHC at 830-310-8612.

Alice with Stockdale highschool principal Jason Cunningham and junior high principal Debra Theesfield.





Fall City Picnic 1908 and Falls City Picnic 2024



I Unsung Heroes from an Undersung Country (Part Three)

By: Joseph Pearce

The final unsung hero of Poland to be honored in this all too brief survey of that nation's heroes is Captain Witold Pilecki, a Christian warrior of a very different ilk from St. Andrew Bobola. As a teenager, Captain Pilecki fought in the Polish-Bolshevik War, which began in the aftermath of World War I when communist troops, commanded by Vladimir Lenin, invaded Poland. The war ended in Polish victory, the communists being forced to withdraw from the Polish territory they'd invaded.

Twenty years later, Captain Pilecki fought to defend his country from another foreign invasion, this time from the Nazis in the west. As the Polish army was defeated, he was one of the co-founders of the resistance movement, the Secret Polish Army. With astonishing courage, Pilecki volunteered to allow himself to be captured in order to infiltrate Auschwitz concentration camp. From within the concentration camp, he organized a resistance movement involving hundreds of inmates and smuggled out evidence of Nazi atrocities to members of the Polish resistance who shared the information with the Western Allies.

Captain Pilecki escaped from Auschwitz in 1943 and fought in the Warsaw Uprising a year later. Taken prisoner, he spent the remainder of the war in a German prisoner-of-war camp. At the end of the war, he returned to Poland and became part of the resistance movement against the communist government that had been put in place by the Soviet Union. He was arrested by the secret police in 1947 and, following a show trial the following year, he was executed. His body was buried unceremoniously and his remains have never been found.

Having sung the praises of some of Poland's unsung heroes, we'll conclude with a song of praise to the nation itself.

Poland's importance was encapsulated by G.K. Chesterton. "If Poland had not been born again," he wrote in 1927, "all the

Christian nations would have died." Echoing this viewpoint, Hilaire Belloc wrote at the outbreak of World War II that "the test is Poland": "The determination to save Poland, which is a determination not only to defeat Prussia but to oust the vile and murderous Communism of Moscow, is the moral condition of victory. If we waver we are lost."

Shortly after his return from a visit to Poland, Chesterton gave a talk in London which was advertised as "What Poland Is." He thought the title unfortunate. "[Y]ou can't define a living thing," he objected, "least of all such a living thing as Poland, one of the most living things in the world, because nothing can be so living as a thing which has risen from the dead."

Although he couldn't have known it, Chesterton was stating something more profound and more prophetic than he could have imagined. In the following decades, Poland would die twice more under both Nazi and Soviet occupation, only to rise again from both deaths.

Today, Poland is once more under attack, this time by the forces of globalism. These are powerful enemies. Perhaps they might succeed in killing Poland once again. If so, those with faith and fortitude will return once more to the catacombs to form the new resistance, fighting faithfully and prayerfully for the next resurrection.

Joseph Pearce is Visiting Professor of Literature at Ave Maria University and a Visiting Fellow of Thomas More College of Liberal Arts.

This article first appeared in Crisis Magazine (crisismagazine.com) and is published here with the author's permission.

This is the thirteenth in a multi-part series on the unsung heroes of Christendom.



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News from the Heritage Communities

Two Years of Renovations Completed in Falls City

By Roger Moczygamba

Holy Trinity Catholic Church just completed its second major capital improvement project on church facilities. The first project, in 2023, was the complete remodel of the interior of the church at a cost of \$700,000.

In 2024, we finished the remodel of the Parish Hall and Event Center (aka Diner) for \$300,000. This was a complete renovation of the building and restrooms, which are now ADA compliant.

Also included in this project was the addition of a large storage facility next to the BBQ Pavilion that will house various picnic event supplies. The project was completed just in time for the 116th annual Labor Day Weekend Picnic in 2024.



Correction to September PHC Newsletter:

Germaine Rakowitz is the owner of Scratch Sweets by Gerri in Floresville. Thanks again to her and husband Alfred for the beautiful cake at Bishop's celebration.

**Scratch Sweets
by Gerri**

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