

ABOUT US

Saint Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church



(Picture of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church shortly after construction)



(Picture of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church in what is now the Church Hall)



HISTORY OF THE POLISH PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN CITY

And

SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA PARISH

Emigration involved not a nation as a whole but a restricted part of it. High tides of emigration originated from and were confined to a definite and relatively small geographic area. For example many Polish immigrants came from one area, the Province of Posen.

Actually, emigration was associated with many phases of European Life. One reason may have been a change in military obligations or perhaps a change in the system of land culture. He may have been part of a religious movement or a victim of the social revolution of 1848. Whatever the reason, the story was usually the same, starting with the pooling of family resources. The funds were usually just sufficient to send only one member across the Atlantic. The eldest son left his European village, where his ancestors had contentedly dwelt and departed for America, and the great adventure was underway.

Poles leaving north and central Germany went by barge over the Elbe or Weser rivers to Hamburg or Bremen. The Poles having first gone by canal to Berlin and then boarding the barges. Bremen was an important tobacco center and ships returning to America would land its emigrants at a tobacco port. There was nothing glamorous about the hardships of steerage; and when travelers disembarked, most blindly followed the path of least resistance. The son settled in the east and found employment. In a year his savings paid for the passage of his sister. Within 2 years their combined savings brought over the parents and other children. During one of the money crises of 1819, 1837, 1842, 1857 and 1873, the family joined in the westward movement.

Before the days of the railroads, the journey from the seaport to the interior was as difficult as crossing the Atlantic and often lasted as long. The great natural highways were the Hudson River, the Mississippi River, the Ohio River and the Great lakes. Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Chicago and Saint Louis were important immigration distributing centers.

Religious ties, involving language and social customs as well as spiritual needs played an important part in settlement. Polish immigration was first noted in 1835 with the arrival of 235 Polish army officers in exile who sought to obtain land in the Chicago area for a Polish township. The grant never came through. Today the Polish represent the area's largest ethnic group. Chicago has more Poles than any other city in the world except Warsaw, Poland. Also involved was the migration of European institutions, and they thrived in the American atmosphere, among these were the Polish Falcons. The stories behind these organizations contain a wealth of early history.

The Catholic Church was international, and the traditional policy was to employ the speech of the particular country and to draw its personnel from the people. In the early United States however, administrators and priests had to be obtained where and when they could be found, with the result the historic practice could not always be followed and the language appropriate to the congregation could not always be used. At the time when Catholics consisted principally of Irish and German immigrants, Frenchmen were numerous among the clergy. When the Bohemians and Poles constituted the bulk of Catholic

immigrants, German and Irish were Bishops and priests. Toward the close of the 1880's the divergence between the shepherds and the flocks was most striking. Factions within the Church demanded that each immigrant congregation be cared for by priests of its own nationality. This fostered a mosaic of churches each having its own language and customs.

Education was not neglected and parochial schools were founded. To mention one, only because it was unusual, Saint Ambrose Academy, a beautiful convent and school located in the mansion of Chauncey Blair, 4th and Wabash Streets, and purchased by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1871.

Inside were marble fireplaces and frescoed ceilings. As Hoosier Slide became denuded of timber, sand drift formed ridges on the grounds and the place was sold to Haskell and Barker before the Academy became completely covered with sand.

The next migration went further east for its foundation and the Polish influx began. Most came to America for dual reasons: to escape political oppression and to find their fortunes. The first wave came over after the abortive uprising against the Russians in 1830-31. Many had been sent to Siberia and immigrated to America when released. These political refugees often worked in Pennsylvania coal mines before pushing westward toward Michigan City where they became, for the most part, factory workers, mill workers and small merchants.

Other waves followed and the economic crisis of 1850 and the second rebellion against the Russians in 1863-64. LaPorte County was well suited for the Poles and the Poles were well equipped for LaPorte County. The majority entering this county were from the Province of Posen. Their destination was Otis, a region not unlike their native land of Posen. Like Posen, LaPorte County was broken by innumerable small lakes and marshes, and fertile crop fields for growing wheat, barley, oats, corn, hops and beets. The towns of the county like the province of Posen had large and important industries, providing outlets for the crafts the men had learned in Poland, such as furniture factories, mills, breweries, distilleries, metal and flour mills. Posen, unlike Otis, was the center of Polish culture and politics. So from Posen and especially the villages of Kycnia, Szubin and Krolikowa came the first settlers of Otis, to be followed by their relatives and friends.

The families soon numbered about 200 and their spiritual needs were ministered by Father Bartosz, a Pole, and pastor of Saint Joseph's Church in LaPorte. During the summer of 1871 Rev. Szulak, a Jesuit, was a house guest at the home of Jaco Lewandoski and suggested it was time the Poles in the region of Otis had a church of their own. Apparently they thought so too and in 1873 their church Saint Mary's of Otis was completed. This then was the first Polish Catholic parish in Indiana.

The flow of Poles to northern Indiana continued and parish records for 1876 reveal Poles of Rolling Prairie, Michigan City, LaPorte, New Carlisle, Terre Coupe and South Bend were affiliated with the Otis parish. With the growth of Studebaker and other plants a church was organized in South Bend which today supports four large parishes.

Bishop Aldering of the mother diocese of Ft. Wayne, named in 1890 Rev. Emmanuel Wrobel to start a parish for the Polish speaking people of Michigan City. Many had found work at the car shops and were moving to Michigan City. Temporary quarters were set up in Saint Mary's rectory in Michigan City and services were held on the second floor of the grade school. In January of 1891 Father Wrobel was officially appointed pastor of the new parish and the same year a two-story school-church and sister's convent was constructed. The Rev. Joseph Bolka became pastor in 1909 and served the parish until his death April 28, 1941.

Rev. E. J. Wrobel (First Pastor)

Pastor of Saint Stanislaus Catholic Church is a young prelate who possessed the love and esteem of his parishioners to a remarkable extent. He was born in Silesia in 1866 and came to the United States in 1881, locating in Chicago. He at once commenced his studies in Saint Francis Seminary and graduated in 1890, being ordained in June of that year. He was then appointed assistant priest to Rev. John Bleckmann, Pastor of Saint Stanislaus Parish, remaining with him until January 1, 1891, when he took charge of Saint Stanislaus congregation which was then holding services in St. Mary's hall. In September 1891, the present church and school were dedicated. Under his pastorate the parish has flourished in every respect and it is to Rev. Wrobel that much of its prosperity is due.

In 1892 he erected a two story building which served the purpose of church and school and Sisters residence. In 1906 he enlarged this building. He erected a two-story rectory also. In ill health, Father Wrobel left Saint Stanislaus Church in 1909 and died on February 14, 1920.

**Original Church/School building
Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church,
Michigan City, Indiana**

Rev. Msgr. Joseph Bolka

In 1926, when the Rev. Joseph Bolka, who succeeded Father Wrobel in 1909, built a very large church, the present church, with complete basement. Much of the church construction was done by parishioners.

Blessing of the Corner Stone of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church, Michigan City, Indiana

First, in 1938 Father Bolka built a most modern convent for the Sisters, which was occupied by the School Sisters of Notre Dame who took charge of Saint Stanislaus School, and two years later, in 1940 dismantled the old combination church and school and erected a most modern school.

Father Bolka adopted the policy, early in his ministry, of raising the full amount of money for building purposes before he even started to build. The church was paid for when it was dedicated as was also the convent. The school had so deteriorated that the State authorities urged him to abandon it. But he had nearly one half of the money needed. Hence the physical property of Saint. Stanislaus is practically new and the debt is small.

In July, 1940, Father Bolka was honored by being elevated to the rank of Papal Chamberlain; but on April 28, 1941, died after a brief serious illness.

Father Bolka was assisted by the Rev. Julian Doktor and the Rev. Chester P. Zurawiec, the former serving in the capacity of acting pastor by whom he was also succeeded. For many years prior to June, 1940, one of the assistants at Saint Stanislaus served as Chaplain at Saint Anthony Hospital.

Monsignor Joseph A. Bolka was born at Otis, Indiana, March 16, 1875. He prepared for the holy priesthood at Saint Francis Preparatory and Major Seminaries and was ordained by Archbishop Katzer, of Milwaukee, on May 28, 1899. He was pastor at North Judson for five years and pastor at Saint Stanislaus, East Chicago for nearly five years more. On March 10, 1909, he was appointed to the pastorate of Saint Stanislaus and served the parish for many years.

The Rev. Msgr. Julian F. Doktor, was born at Three Rivers, Massachusetts, October 29, 1893. He prepared for the priesthood at Ss. Cyril and Methodius College and Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary. He was ordained November 30, 1921 by Bishop Alerding. He was assistant for three years at Saint Adalbert's, Whiting, nearly four years at St. Casimir's Hammond, when he was made pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Gary, where he erected a new church and school. In July, 1925 he was made pastor at Terre Coupee, in April, 1932 he was made pastor of Saint Hyacinth's, Fort Wayne; and in July, 1940, was appointed acting pastor at Saint Stanislaus, Michigan City.

The Rev. Chester Zurawiec was born at Hammond, Indiana, on October 7, 1912. He made his ecclesiastical studies at Saint Mary's Orchard Lake, and St. Meinard Seminary. He was ordained June 3, 1939 by Bishop Noll. One month later he was appointed assistant at Saint Stanislaus Church.

The source of the following information was obtained from Baptismal, Marriage and Death Registers of Saint Stanislaus Parish, Michigan City, Indiana on March 10, 1971.

The first date listed is that of January 13, 1891, the marriage of Joseph Wochalski, son of Frances to Catherine Jankowski, daughter of Jacob Jankowski. Witnesses were Francis Wentlent and Carol Zak -- Rev. E. Wrobel.

Baptism of Veronica Grochowalski (born January 13, 1891) parents, Joseph and Hedwig (nee Owczarczak) Godparents: Matthew Gondek and Anna Zebrowski -Rev. E. Wrobel.

PASTORS



Rev. Joseph E. Wrobel - 1891 - 1909



Rev. Msgr. Joseph Bolka - 1909 - 1940



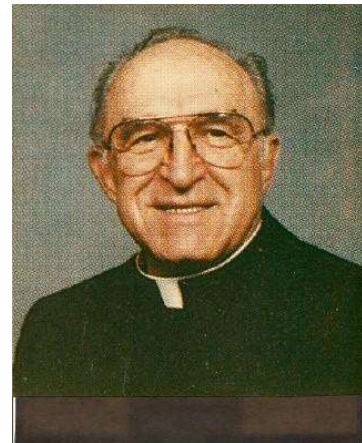
Rev. Msgr. Julian Doktor - 1940 - 1965



Rev. Msgr. Louis Michalski - 1965 - 1969



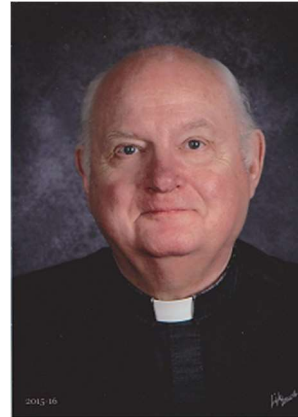
Rev. Stanley Dominik - 1969 - 1984



Rev. Louis Wozniak - 1984 - 1988



Rev. Emil Block - 1988-1990



Rev. Walter Ciesla - 1999 to Present



Rev. Msgr. Michael Tomaszewski - 1990-1999



Rev. John Kasprzykowski - Founder of the Saint Joseph Young Men's Society

ASSISTANT PASTORS

Rev. Joseph Karpinski - September 26, 1909 - April 11, 1910

Rev. Ladislaus Kwiatkowski - July 7, 1910 - August 28, 1910

Rev. M. Swidirski - December 22, 1910 - April 18, 1911

Rev. J. Bleckman - May 2, 1911 - May 22, 1911

Rev. J. Chylowski - December 26, 1911 - December 28, 1912

Rev. Michael Swiatkowski - December 3, 1913

Rev. Ligman - February 15, 1914 - May 7, 1914

Rev. Saborosz - August 13, 1914 - May 5, 1917

Rev. John Biernacki - July 22, 1917 - November 20, 1921

Rev. Joseph Zobel - February 5, 1922 - November 8, 1931

Rev. August Koudziela - April 21, 1927

Rev. Joseph Smith - May 1, 1930 - March 23, 1940

Rev. Francis Nowak - June 25, 1936 - April 23, 1939

Rev. Chester Zurawiec - August 8, 1939 - January 11, 1946

Rev. Julian Doktor - July 1940 - May 14, 1965

Rev. Andrew Topor - June 16, 1946 - October 27, 1946

Rev. Roman Wojcicki - June 5, 1947 - January 25, 1953

Rev. John Bargielski - September 19, 1949 - May 31, 1959

Rev. John Cibor - May 6, 1956 - November 15, 1960

Rev. Henry Smartz - July 19, 1959 - September 11, 1960

Rev. Henry Kryszinski - September 25, 1960 - August 5, 1962

Rev. Leonard Kronkowski - July 30, 1961 - August 15, 1964

Rev. Julian Jercha - September 16, 1962 - May 12, 1963

Rev. Joseph Zajdel - July 7, 1963 - May 9, 1965

Rev. Michael Tomaszewski - May 9, 1965 - November 3, 1968

Rev. Paschal Grigus, O.F.M. - September 19, 1965 - September 15, 1966

Rev. Vladimir Janeczek - September 15, 1966- October, 1974

Rev. Dennis Teles - December 1, 1968 - October 1, 1969

Rev. Stanley Staniszewski - 1974 - 1979

Rev. Stephen Kosinski - 1988 – 1990

Rev. Walter Rakoczy 1989 – 1990