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POLISH RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

I. INTRODUCTION

Till 1948 only a few thousand Poles had settled in Australia. It is hard to talk about the Polish presence in the Australian Catholic Church before that year. There was, however, a Polish parish set up at Sevenhill in South Australia, which was accepted by the Catholic Church of that time. The faithful became members of the Australian Catholic Church in a natural way – through the process of time. Their transition from one Catholic tradition to another was gentle without any great psychological trauma. Thus they became good and faithful Australian Catholics. Out of this small Polish flock came an Australian priest who later became a bishop.

Today, as a consequence of mass Polish migration to Australia after the Second World War, there are about 100,000 Australian Catholics of Polish origin out of about 4 million Catholics in this country. This is quite a substantial number. However, there are few Australian priests of Polish origin and the chances of one of them becoming a bishop are rather slim.

In the past forty years the Australian Catholic Church has absorbed the second generation of Polish Catholics; but the method of absorption has killed their identities. It is hard to call such Catholics good Catholics.

II. POLISH CHRISTENDOM

In Poland Latin Christianity was introduced in 966. Today Roman Catholicism is the faith of about 95% of the population which is estimated at 37 million. Several Protestant Churches have about 200,000 adherents and the Polish Orthodox Church claims over 400,000 members; but its members are mainly of Byelorussian and Ukrainian ethnic origin.

Pope John Paul II, who is of Polish origin, stated in one of his speeches after his election:

I am the son of a nation that has undergone many experiences in history, a nation that has been condemned to death by its neighbours several times and yet has remained itself. It preserved its identity [...] not by relying on physical strength, but by solely relying on culture.

And since the 10th century, Polish culture has been dominated by Roman Catholicism. Poland became and is Catholic to its roots.

In the years 1795 to 1918, when Poland was occupied by Russia, Germany and Austria, Polish language and literature as well as the Roman Catholic religion helped to preserve and unite the nation. Even today, in an officially atheistic country, the Polish Catholic Church is still independent and influential. Every Polish parish is a powerful citadel of the faith under communist regime. This should be remembered while deliberating on Polish religious life in Australia.

III. POLISH CATHOLIC PAST IN AUSTRALIA

The first Pole, Ksawery Karnicki, was strolling the streets of Sydney already in 1791. However, till 1948 only a few thousand Poles settled in Australia.

The first large group of Poles who settled permanently in Australia were Polish people from German-occupied Poland who came to Australia during the German settlement of South Australia in the 1840s and 1850s. The majority of Poles settled in a place called Sevenhill. The eastern part of Sevenhill settled by them was later called Polish Hill River. It was the only Polish settlement in Australia.

Sevenhill was founded by the German settlers of Catholic faith who built a large chapel and, in the 1860s, a stone church. The church was a part of the Jesuit convent established in Sevenhill. The Catholic character of Sevenhill was the prime reason why Polish people who came to South Australia started to settle in its vicinity. Altogether there were about 50-60 Polish families in the area.

From the records of the church in Sevenhill, we know that on 8 March 1857 Simon Mlodystach was baptized as the first child of Polish parents and since that date the majority of the children who were baptized in the church were of Polish marriages. The number of Poles in the area grew so much that Fr Hinterocker, who spoke Polish, had to preach in Polish because the Polish people's German and English was poor. He worked to bring a Polish priest for the Polish community in Sevenhill. On 5 April 1870, vigorous and energetic Fr Leon Rogalski S.J. from Austrian-occupied Poland came to Sevenhill and till 1906 he was chaplain for the Poles in the area. Apart from Sevenhill, there

were small groups of Poles in Tanunda, Mintaro, Clare, Blyth, Terowie and Peterbour. In order to make contact with them Fr Rogalski published an article in Polish in Adelaide's paper „The Harp”.

It is due to Fr Rogalski work that Polish Hill River preserved its Polish character till the outbreak of World War I.

Soon after arriving, Fr Rogalski decided to build a Polish church and a Polish school. The Poles worked with enthusiasm, and on 30 November 1871 the Catholic bishop of Adelaide, Bishop Schiel, blessed and opened the church of St. Stanislaus Kostka. This small stone church was visited in 1873 by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Patrick Moran, the first Australian Cardinal. During his pastoral visit Archbishop Moran received from Fr Rogalski, who acted on behalf of the Polish community, a written homage which is kept in the archives of the Sydney archdiocese.

Next to the church of St. Stanislaus a school was opened which had about fifty pupils at that time. It was an Australian school but Polish was taught as a subject and religion was taught in Polish. The school was closed down in 1925; there were only eight pupils that year. The church, which was rarely used after Fr Rogalski's death in 1906, was also closed down in the 1920s. Among the descendants of the Polish settlers is Hon. Casey, the former South Australian minister in the 1960s.

Today Polish Hill River is a picnic ground for the several-thousand strong Polish community in Adelaide. The church of St. Stanislaus Kostka, which is a valuable relict of the Polish past in Australia, was handed over to the Poles in 1971 by the Archbishop of Adelaide, Rev. J. Gleeson, and was restored by them in the years 1971-1974. The church is now under the protection of the National Trust.

Documents show that in the years 1895-1896 the majority of Poles in Sevenhill and Polish Hill River took up Australian citizenship. The process of assimilation ran its natural course: the Poles blended into the Australian environment. But at the same time they preserved their Catholic faith.

The same cannot be said about the larger groups of Poles which have settled in other parts of Australia, especially in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Many of them not only assimilated into Australian community but also, because they were without a Polish priest, they lost their Catholic faith. The majority of them became Anglican. That is why the Polish presence in the life of the Australian Catholic Church before 1948 was almost without any importance. Before that year we see only two Australian Catholic priests of Polish origin: one was Fr James (Jakub) Bieronski, who till his death in 1940 was priest of the Port Augusta diocese in South Australia and Fr Francis Augustin Henschke,

who became the Roman Catholic bishop of Wagga Wagga in New South Wales in 1939.

New Guinea, which was administered by Australia, became in the 1930s a field for the missionary work of the Polish members of the Divine Word Missionaries. Some of them, like A. Kasprus, B. Skibicki, A. Nicke and W. Sagan, also worked for many years in Australia.

IV. POST SECOND WORLD WAR EMIGRATION

Since the end of World War II the Australian government has introduced mass immigration programmes as a major contribution to national development. In the years 1947-1955 Australia accepted 71,721 people who had been born in Poland. 60,000 of them came to Australia as refugees after 1945 from displaced persons camps in Germany. Thus a strong Polish community developed in this country in the 1950s.

In the so-called second wave of Polish emigration, which was family re-unions and took place in the years 1957-1966, 14,890 Poles came to Australia mainly from Poland. As a consequence of the unrest in Poland over 15,000 Polish people have arrived in Australia since 1890. It is estimated that today are about 120,000 ethnic Poles of the first and the second generation in Australia.

A new history of Polish religious life in Australia had begun.

V. RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION

If we take Australian demographic data based on the 1981 Census, we will find out that the religious composition of the people who were born in Poland and now live in Australia is very interesting. As I have mentioned above, in Poland about 95% of Poles are Roman Catholics, but this is not so in Australia. Here only two-thirds of the people of Polish origin claim affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church. Of the 59,440 people born in Poland 39,692 stated they were Roman Catholics. There were also 1,587 Orthodox, 334 Anglicans, 172 Baptists, 724 Lutherans, 24 Methodists, 15 Mormons, 62 Presbyterians, 51 members of the Uniting Church of Australia and 1,794 other persons. The total number of Christians was 44,453. There were also 27 Buddhists, 7,069 Hebrews, 31 Muslims and 12 other non-Christians as well as 3,006 non-believers and 4,725 people who did not state their religious affiliation plus 119 people who inadequately described their faith.

Other Christians excluding Catholics number 4,853 people, constitute about 11% of the people of Polish origin in Australia. Polish Protestants are mainly the product of mixed marriages, but conversion to the Protestant Churches cannot be diminished. Melbourne has for instance, the single largest Polish Seventh Day Adventist community in the whole world. There are a thousand strong adherents with a well-organized community, which has three churches – in Oakleigh, Dandenong and Nunawading as well as churches in Adelaide, Sydney and Newcastle. The community publishes the „Polish Adventist News”.

Lutherans, the second largest Polish Protestants group in Australia (724 people), are scattered throughout Australia thus not organized; usually they are members of the Lutheran parishes of other nationalities. However, in Adelaide in 1952 Rev. Jan Winkler established the only Polish Lutheran Church in Australia (52 members), which lasted till 1967.

Polish Seventh Day Adventists and Lutherans living in Australia belonged to these religions in Poland. If we exclude them from the 2,948 Protestants of Polish origin (1976 Census), then it is possible to ascertain the number of Poles who changed their religion in Australia: 1,537 people or 2.7%, which indicates that only a small percentage of Poles changed their religion.

In the 1950s the Rev. Zlatkowski in Sydney and the Rev. Kamiński in Melbourne tried unsuccessfully to establish the Polish Orthodox Church in Australia. Their lack of success can be attributed to the fact that the members of the Polish Orthodox Church joined the Russian Ukrainian or Byelorussian Orthodox churches.

About 20% of the people who were born in Poland and lived in Australia in 1971 were Polish Jews. That is why there were 7,069 Poles of Mosaic faith in Australia in 1981. Due to the fact that the majority of Polish Jews had never considered themselves Poles and were alien to the Polish people in every aspect of life: they spoke Yiddish or Hebrew, were of different faith, had their own culture, customs and traditions, as well as social and political life, it is difficult to regard them as Poles.

Since the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not take into account the ethnic origin of a particular settler, but only his or her birthplace, it is difficult to determine the actual figure of ethnic Poles in Australia and their religious affiliation, both yesterday or today.

Some light can be shed on this subject by the data received from the 60,000 Polish refugees who came to Australia in the years 1949-1951 about their religious affiliation. Among them there were 83.3% of Roman Catholics, 6.8% Roman Catholics of Greek Rite, 6% Orthodox and 2.5% of Protestants. Only 0.9% did not state their religion and 0.5% were people of Hebrew faith.

Due to fact that the majority of Roman Catholics of Greek Rite were Polish Ukrainians and the majority of Orthodox were Polish Ukrainians and Byelorussians, the actual percentage of Roman Catholics among ethnic Polish refugees was closed to 95%, like the percentage of Roman Catholics among the people of Poland.

Today the Polish Catholic community in Australia has about 100,000 members, first and second generation.

VI. CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

1. *Its distribution*

According to the 1981 Census there were 13,101 Polish-born Catholics in New South Wales, 12,258 in Victoria, 5,330 in South Australia, 4,086 in Western Australia, 3,081 in Queensland, 1,092 in Tasmania, 680 in the Australian Capital Territory and 67 in the Northern Territory.

Sydney is the centre of the Polish Catholics in Australia. They are mainly settled in the western suburbs of Sydney: in Fairfield with its overflow into Bankstown and Blacktown. The first Polish Mass ever held in Sydney was conducted by Fr A. Arciszewski on 2 October 1949 at St. Vincent's Church in Ashfield.

Today Sydney is a seat of the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia and of the Polish religious order – the Society of Christ (about 25 members). The first Polish church founded in Australia after the Second World War was built in Sydney – in Marayong in 1966; there is also a Polish convent of Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. The only Polish Catholic paper in Australia – „The Polish Catholic Review” has been printed in Sydney since the late 1960s. Besides the Polish Church in Marayong, Polish Masses are celebrated in Ashfield, Bankstown, Blacktown, Cabramatta, Coogee, East Roseville, Fairfield, Kingswood, Liverpool, Mt. Druitt, Revesby, Riverstone, Rooty Hill and Villawood every Saturday or Sunday in the local Australian parishes by seven Polish priests.

Sydney, especially after the third wave of Polish immigration to Australia (since 1980), where several thousand young Polish people settled, recuperated its religious vitality of the 1950s. Young Polish people are seen in a large number at all Polish Masses in the city, especially in Ashfield and Cabramatta where baptisms today are greater than deaths. For example, in 1948 in the Ashfield Polish pastoral centre there were 40 baptisms, 20 weddings and 20 burials and in the Cabramatta-Fairfield centre there were 53 baptisms, 17 weddings and 22 burials.

In Melbourne, which is the second largest Polish Mass was conducted in January 1959 by Fr J. Krasocki. The „Polish church” was then St. Augustine’s Church in Bourke Street in the City. Soon after that Polish Catholics reached about 10,000 in number and the main Polish Mass was transferred to St. Ignatius Church in Richmond; in the 1950s up to 1,200 people attended the Polish Mass every Sunday. In 1959 there were three Polish priests working in Melbourne; in 1952 the first Polish convent of Sisters of Resurrection was opened in the Melbourne suburb of Essendon. Next to the convent a Polish church was built in the early 1970s which is now a thriving Polish Catholic centre. The church was blessed on 24 February 1973 by the then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Cracow. Besides the Polish church in Essendon, the Polish Masses are conducted in Ardeer, Dandenong, Nth Sunshine, Oakleigh, Ringwood, St. Albans and Yarraville by five Polish priests.

In Melbourne in the years 1954-1960 the „Polish Catholic Weekly” was printed by Fr K. Trzeciak and until 1965 by R. Gronowski. The Marian Sodality and the Association of God’s Mercy were founded in Melbourne in the early 1950s both, but especially the second one, played a big role in the life of Polish community at that time.

After the Polish church in Essendon, the biggest Polish pastoral centre is Yarraville-Nth Sunshine with about 750 Polish Catholic families. Its activity is shown by the following figures: in the years 1981-1986 there were 101 baptisms, 46 weddings and 195 burials.

Adelaide is the third Polish Catholic centre of greater importance. Polish Catholics are concentrated in the north-western industrialized areas of Enfield, Woodville and Port Adelaide. The first Polish Mass was conducted here by Fr J. Kuczanski in 1949. He also founded the Catholic association called Caritas whose membership reached 460 very quickly. In 1957 the convent of Sisters of Resurrection was opened in the city. The Adelaide Polish Catholic community in 1971 took over from the Archbishop of Adelaide, J. Gleeson, the Church of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Sevenhill (Polish Hill River) built by Polish migrants in 19th century and restored it in the years 1971-1974 (Fr T. Miksa). Since 1974 the pastoral duties for the Polish community in Adelaide were taken up by two priests of the Society of Christ who conduct Polish Masses in the churches in North Unley, Royal Park and Croydon every Sunday, and in Salisbury and Modbury once a month. Their work in the life of the above mentioned Polish Catholic centres is shown by these statistics: while in 1980 there were only 23 baptisms, 13 weddings and 41 burials in 1948 those figures rose to 47, 18 and 50 respectively.

In 1978 the first group of the priests (3) of the Polish order Resurrectionists came to Australia from Poland to work not only for the Polish but also for the

Australian Catholics. The Archbishop of Adelaide assigned them the parish church in Ottoway. After the old parish church was burnt down a new one was built which is dedicated to the Polish saint Maximilian Kolbe.

The other centres of some significance are in Brisbane and Perth and the following in Ballarat, Benalla, Canberra, Geelong, Hobart, Launceston, Maitland, Moe, Newcastle and Wollongong having less than 1,000 faithful, each has only one Polish priest.

2. Its life

Polish Catholic life outside Poland is not possible without Polish priests.

Due to the large emigration of Poles to Australia which started in 1947 the spiritual leader of the Polish Catholics abroad Bishop Joseph Gawlina, who lived in Rome, made an appeal to Polish priests in Western Europe, especially in Germany, to emigrate to Australia and serve the Polish migrants. As early as 1948 two Polish priests arrived in Tasmania with a large group of Polish ex-servicemen from the British Army. By March 1950 there were 13 Polish priests situated in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart, as well as in the Migrant Hostels of Bathurst, Cowra, Greta, Leeton and Nelson's Bay in New South Wales and Wacol in Queensland. By the end of 1950 seven more Polish priests came to Australia and another eleven by 1959. Among them there were ten Polish missionaries from China who were expelled by the new communist government. As well several Polish Franciscans from the United States came to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. By the year 1959 permanent Polish pastoral centres were established in Sydney, Maitland, Newcastle and Wollongong in New South Wales; in Melbourne, Ballarat, Benalla, Geelong and Gippsland in Victoria; in Adelaide; in Perth; in Brisbane, in Hobart and Launceston in Tasmania, and in Canberra.

In 1953 Rev. W. Dzieciol of Perth was appointed by the Archbishop Joseph Gawlina as Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia, a position which he held till 1975. Since then the Mission was transferred to Sydney; from 1975 till 1983 Rev. Z. Pajdak was the Rector of the Mission and since 1983 the position has been held by Rev. S. Wrona.

Since 1959 these pioneer priests, usually priests of advanced age, many of whom had survived Nazi or Soviet concentration camps have been replaced in greater numbers by priests from Poland. Today there are over forty Polish Catholic priests in Australia. Most of them are members of the Society of Christ. Some of them are now parish priests of Australian parishes.

There were more twenty active Polish priests in Australia in the 1950s. This meant there was only one priest for 3,000 Polish Catholics while at the same time there was one Australian priest for every 630 Australian Catholics. This signified that there was a serious shortage of Polish priests in the 1950s. The problem was deepened by the fact that larger or smaller groups of Polish Catholics were scattered throughout Australia. For example, only three Polish priests had to serve several thousand Polish Catholics living in a couple dozen towns in Western Australia. Even the casual help of several priests of different nationalities (Ukrainian, Czech, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Australian), who spoke Polish, could not solve the problem. That is why the pastoral work of Polish priests could reach and reaches only about 25% of all Polish Catholics in this country.

It affects not only Polish religious life but also Polish national activities in Australia. Usually, only those Polish centres that have a Polish chaplain in Australia are active. It is a fact that many Poles abroad without a Polish priest not only assimilate very quickly, but can also become religious indifferent or lose their faith. Polish priests took a very active part in the establishment of many Polish associations, Polish Houses, Polish Saturday Schools and even soccer clubs.

In the earliest days, especially, when so many of the Polish refugees needed so much care, quite apart their religious needs, [any Polish priest] became like a father, acting as interpreter and agent in their dealings with government and civil authorities, problems of employment, or health. He had to secure their civil rights in their dealings with employers and state authorities. It must be remembered that many of them had no English and were in a state of bewilderment in a country so different from their own, and in many cases were still shocked by their previous experiences and flight¹.

Today, when the secular life of the Polish community in Australia is well established, Polish priests concentrate mainly on pastoral work. They spend also a lot of time caring for the needs of Polish youth.

Polish Masses are conducted in Australian churches. However in Sydney (1966), Melbourne (1973) and Perth (1984) Polish Catholics have built their own churches. In Brisbane (in 1955) and in Adelaide (in 1976) Australian bishops handed over one church in order to serve as the church of the local Polish community. There is also a number of new Australian parishes which were built with the substantial help of the local Polish Catholics (e.g. church in Ardeer in Melbourne, and in Ottoway in Adelaide).

¹ D. O'CONNOR. *Josef Janus – Heroic Father*. „The Advocate” (Melbourne) 7 August 1980 p. 20.

There are also six Polish convents in Australia: Sisters of Resurrection in Melbourne (since 1952) and Adelaide (1957), and Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Brisbane (1952), Sydney (in Marayong two convents), Canberra and Perth. They were brought to Australia in order to maintain Polish children's homes which were badly needed in the 1950s when many marriages failed under the enormous strains placed on them. They also served in the 1950s and 1960s as teachers in the Polish Saturday Schools. Today Polish Sisters serve the Australian Catholic communities more than the Polish communities.

There are 19 Sisters of Resurrection (9 in Melbourne and 10 in Adelaide). In Essendon-Melbourne they run a primary school for 250 pupils. In five houses of Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth there are 39 sisters; they run five primary schools, one secondary school for 620 students, and a home for the aged Polish people in Marayong.

In Bathurst in New South Wales in 1949 Fr K. Trzeciak founded the first Polish Catholic paper the „Polish Catholic Weekly” which was later printed in Melbourne till the end of 1964. The paper with the circulation of 3,500 copies played a very important role in the life of Polish Catholics and Polish community life in Australia. The paper, which in 1965 became a secular paper, was replaced by the „Polish Catholic Review” which is printed in Sydney since 1967. It has the largest circulation of all Polish papers in Australia – about 3,500 copies. It is printed monthly and its editor is Fr M. Szura. In the years 1969-1971 Polish members of the Divine Word Missionaries who worked in Papua-New Guinea and Australia printed in Australia a Polish Catholic missionary magazine „Nasz Misjonarz” (Our Missioner). As well a number of issues of „Wspólnota” (Community in Faith) have been printed in Melbourne since 1976; it is a bulletin of the Polish pastoral centres in North Sunshine and Yarraville. In Canberra in the years 1962-1966 a Polish bulletin „Millennium” was printed by Fr K. Warzecha.

Not many Polish Catholic publications were printed in Australia. Only several books deserved to be mentioned: Marian Kaluski's *John Paul II the First Pole to Become Pope* (Melbourne 1979), *Father Joseph Janus, Jesuit Recollections* (Melbourne 1981) and *Hastening with Pastoral Service for their Fellow Countrymen* (Sydney 1985). The last one edited by Fr M. Szura of Sydney is the first attempt at writing the history of the work of Polish priests in Australia after the Second World War.

3. Its faith and traditions

The majority of the Poles who came to Australia in the years 1949-1951 were very young, in their 20s. They were young boys and girls when the German occupants of Poland took them by force to Germany to work at factories or farms during the Second World War. Their faith was not yet fully developed. Besides, the war demoralized many of them.

The editor of the „Polish Catholic Weekly” Fr K. Trzeciak wrote in the paper of 23 November 1950 that the Polish Catholic migrants in Australia can be divided into three groups. According to him only 2-3% of Polish Catholic migrants in Australia can be described as very good Catholics; about 20% as good Catholics and about 40% as very poor Catholics. The remainder represented so-called by him „retired Catholics” – people indifferent in religious matters, and a small group of nonbelievers.

The beginning of the Polish Catholic life in Australia looked very bad. Polish Masses at Villawood Migrant Hostel (in New South Wales), where in 1951 there were over 500 Poles, were attended by at most 150 people. The bishop of Wollongong, T. McCabe, in his sermon during the Polish Mass conducted on Polish National Day in May 1953 said that the Poles in Australia can sometimes evoke not only wonderment, but also true outrage among Australian Catholics by their negligence of religious matters.

With the passage of years and the work of Polish priests the religious life of the Polish Catholics in Australia was improved. It is shown by the following data: within the boundaries of the Polish pastoral centre of Yarraville and Nth Sunshine in Melbourne in the years 1975/76 – 1979/80 there lived about 550 Polish Catholic families. Polish Mass at St. Augustine’s Church in Yarraville was attended by 250-800 people every Sunday and Polish Mass at St. Bernardette’s Church in Nth Sunshine by 200-600 people. In Yarraville there were active two Polish rosary circles with 30 members and in Nth Sunshine three rosary circles with 45 members; in Yarraville there was a Polish church choir with 25 members and in Nth Sunshine a choir with 40 members; in Yarraville there were 12 Polish altar boys, and in Nth Sunshine 16 altar boys. 80 copies of the Polish Catholic review were sold in Yarraville and 70 copies in Nth Sunshine. The Polish Parish Committee organized many kinds of functions and printed five issues of the Parish Committee paper called „Wspólnota”.

The life and activities of most Polish pastoral centres is similar and today they stand much higher than many Australian parishes.

The examination of the data dealing with religion of Australian people and published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics proves that the above statement

is correct. In the 1971 Census 13% of the total Australian population and only 11.7% of Polish-born people (or 7,118 people) were either indefinite regarding their religious denomination, declared they had no religion or did not state their religion. At the 1976 Census this group of non-religious Australian had increased to 20.5% of the total population. At the same time, the percentage of Polish non-religious people rose only 15% (or 8,395 people), and at the 1981 Census the group of non-religious people among the Poles in Australia, dropped to 13% (or 7,731 people) which is astonishing. It is hard to guess the reason for this drop, but most likely the election of the Polish Cardinal on Peter's throne as well as the decrease of Polish-born Jews are responsible for this. The number of Polish-born Catholics which stood at 40,194 (or 66.2%) in 1971 dropped to 35,876 (or 64%) in 1976 and rose to 39,692 (or 66.8%) in 1981. The percentage of Protestants of Polish origin in Australia has remained stable – about 5% (or about 3,000 people) and is very low compared to the percentage of Polish Protestants in the United States and in Canada.

Marian cult plays a very important role in Polish Catholicism, and Jasna Góra (Częstochowa), where there is the miraculous icon of the Mother of God, has been for hundreds of years the spiritual capital of Poland. That is why the picture of this icon can be found in almost every Polish Catholic home in Australia and in every Australian church where Polish Mass is conducted, and special Polish Marian Masses in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne in 1973 and 1983 attracted about 3,000 people. Polish religious traditions are observed by the majority of Poles in Australia.

The Polish Church as well as Polish Catholics in Australia are rather traditional. For example, it is still a sin for Polish Catholics in Australia to eat meat on Fridays which is not the case for Australian Catholics; at Polish Masses, communion is not given out by lay people as well there is still a distance between bishops and lay people. Religious knowledge is poor and the least devout are the *intelligenza* of whom many belong to freemasonry. The former president of the Federal Council of Polish Organizations in Australia, Colonel A. Raciński, wrote in Sydney's „Polish Weekly” of 12 December 1978 that: „The Chairmen of our organizations attend Polish masses only on special occasions, because they feel it is their duty to represent the Polish community on such occasions”.

Since post-war emigration there have been very few Polish vocations to the priesthood (about 10) and convents (about 15) in Australia the opposite to the picture in Poland. For example, for forty nuns of the Polish order of Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Australia in 1971 thirty came from USA, three from Poland and seven were from Australia (plus two novices). Almost all of the Australian priests of Polish origin do not serve the Polish Catholic commu-

nity. The crisis in the Church did not avoid the Polish priests in Australia: several of them retired from the priesthood.

The most important event in the history of Polish Catholic life in Australia was Pope John Paul II's meeting with the Polish community at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 28 November 1986. About 30,000 Poles from all over Australia came to see the „Polish” Pope. This meeting gathered at least ten times more people than any other previously organized Polish religious events. Only at the opening of the Polish church in Marayong was there more than 3,000 people.

VI. THE POLICY OF ASSIMILATION

The Polish clergy soon after arrival to Australia sought recognition as chaplains. The first seven Polish priests came here as two-year contract workers. It was only after pressure from the Adelaide Archbishop M. Boevich that they became chaplains for Polish migrants. However, their recognition was never complete and never extended so far as to give any sense of autonomy or permanency.

Till 1947 the Australian Catholic Church was an Irish monolith. The mass immigration of Catholics of many nationalities into Australia since that year had to be seen as a threat to that monolith. Australian Catholic bishops did not know how to deal with the arising problem for their Church. Some of them or their prelates went to America to seek advice from the American Hierarchy. As a result of this advice it was decided not to allow the establishment of ethnic parishes. The work of the Polish (and other) chaplains was strictly controlled by the local Australian bishops, and, according to the memoirs of F K. Trzeciak, who stayed in Australia in the years 1949-1960, was to be some kind of a tool in the process of assimilation which was accepted as the only policy towards migrant Catholics. Fr Trzeciak stated that in the first place Australian bishops were not willing to accept migrant priests in a large number regarding them as the second-rate priests. For example, the Polish priest Fr Z. Lewandowski was assigned in 1950 as vicar of the Australian chaplain in the Nelson's Bay Migrant Centre in New South Wales; the Australian priest could not speak any other language besides English.

What is more, they knew that many migrant Catholics may lose their faith without their priests, but as one bishop from Queensland said: „Let them fall away from the Church so long as they send their children to Catholic schools.

We will lose one generation [of people whom we will not be able to assimilate] but we will gain further generations who will assimilate by this way”².

In 1952 the Vatican published a new Papal constitution *Exsul Familia* which dealt with the need of migrant Catholics in their new homelands. This constitution which supported the idea of establishing ethnic parishes was strongly opposed by the Australian Catholic bishops. They were supported by the Apostolic Delegate for Australia, Archbishop Carboni who, during his meeting with the migrant chaplains in Sydney in May 1954, criticized the Papal constitution forcing them to abandon any thoughts about establishing ethnic parishes³. This coupled with the small number of ethnic priests and lack of interest or rather little understanding of the constitution by migrants resulted in there never being any ethnic parishes in Australia.

Today the Australian Church acknowledges that

All migrant chaplains have had a difficult task, and in the earlier days there was little support for them in the local Church. Frankly, they were regarded often as a nuisance, as people often are when they do not fit in with the established pattern or when their territory extends regardless of the established territorial boundaries. Instructions from Rome scarcely filtered through the resistant barriers of the establishment.⁴

Although the official internal policy of the Australian Hierarchy was one of assimilation, opposition to the migration of ethnic priests and non-agreement to the establishment of ethnic parishes, individual bishops and clergy showed more understanding towards migrants. While the Archbishop of Perth, R. Prendiville, refused to allow regular Polish Masses for over a year, Archbishop P. O'Donnell in Brisbane on the other hand said Mass for Poles and even learnt some Polish prayers. The Archbishop of Melbourne, D. Mannix, bought cars for three Polish priests in his archdiocese so they could use them in their pastoral work among scattered Poles.

It was the same with Australian priests, brothers and nuns. In the early 1950s over 1,000 Polish Catholics settled in Geelong. As there were not enough Polish priests at that time in Australia Geelong had no Polish priest. The local parish priest, Fr Joseph Kelly, learnt Polish so that he could serve his Polish parishioners. At the same time in Brisbane the parish priest of St. Mary's church, Fr Thompson, was kind and helpful not only to Polish Catholics but

² K. T r z e c i a k. *Recollections from Australia*. Polish-Australian Historical Society. Manuscript No. 5. (Text in Polish).

³ W. S o j k a. *Polonia Past...* „Migrant Echo” (San Francisco, USA) Vol. 5 No. 1-2 January-June 1976 p. 56.

⁴ O' C o n n o r, op. cit. p. 20.

also to the local Polish community. On the other hand, in July 1953 Polish Masses were cancelled in St. Theresa's church in Albion (Melbourne) by the Australian parish priest; they then had to be conducted in St. Albans Hall.

Similar examples of both helpfulness and opposition could be quoted further. The sisters in Catholic schools discouraged children from attending ethnic Saturday schools. In November 1960 the new headmaster of the De la Salle Brothers College in Bankstown (Sydney) refused the use of the schools' classrooms for the Polish Saturday School in Bankstown of 90 pupils; the Polish School used the College's classrooms since 1958. In Sydney's Polish weekly we read:

From the beginning of the existence of the Polish Saturday School, it was visibly felt the dislike and unfavourably attitude of the brothers. Various methods were used to discourage Polish children from attending Saturday School. In many cases the brothers forbade their pupils to attend Polish lessons. As in many cases this did not help, children were subjected to petty harassment.

On Monday mornings Polish children were called out to the front of the assembly, and placed in position of experiencing sneering and jeering by their peers, they were instructed to clean the classrooms as the implication was that Polish children had dirtied them. One of the brothers while going through a Polish pupil's school bag, found an exercise book with Polish homework, after scoffing at and abusing the pupil in front of the class, he tore exercise book and threw it into the waste paper basket. Gradually, more and more children afraid of further fardule ceased going to Polish Saturday School⁵.

The same happened to the Polish Saturday School in Yarraville (Melbourne) in April 1970. The Mother Superior of St. Augustine's Catholic School refused the use of the school's classrooms by the Polish School which had used the premises since 1958.

However, it should be remembered that at that time assimilation was not only the policy of the Catholic Church in Australia. It was also the official policy of the Australian government. For example, administrators of the migrant hostels in Karingal, Steelhaven, Chullora and Matraville in New South Wales refused to open up chapels for use by Polish migrants at those hostels.

The assimilation policy of the Australian Hierarchy went side by side with clever diplomacy. Australian bishops tried to avoid the mistakes made by the American Hierarchy. For example, the lack of understanding for Polish national aspirations and religious traditions by many American Catholic bishops of Irish and German origin resulted in the formation of the independent Polish National Catholic Church in America, which now has 350,000 adherents. The positive attitude of the Australian Catholic bishops towards Polish national

⁵ J. Karwicki-Dunin. „Polish News” (Sydney) 15 January 1961.

traditions (many Australian bishops have taken part in celebrations of Polish National Day) and Polish religious traditions not only prevented any heresy, but also brought Polish and Australian Catholics together, especially after dropping off the assimilation policy.

This happened in the early 1970s. The new policy is reflected by the following two statements:

The Church cannot afford to overlook the pastoral needs of even the smallest migrant group – said bishop Eric Perkins at the opening of a three-day cultural awareness course for priests which was held in Melbourne in 1980⁶.

And this was followed by a statement printed in the Melbourne Catholic paper „The Advocate”:

While it is necessary to help overseas born Australians to become participating members of their parish, their spiritual heritage must not only be tolerated but positively appreciated⁷.

Indeed it was a big step forward for the Church who was sworn to an assimilation policy.

In 1967, the spiritual leader of Polish Catholics abroad, bishop W. Rubin (Rome), established three Polish deaneries in Australia: in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. These deaneries were eventually recognized by the Australian bishops and their deans are recognized as co-ordinators of the Polish clergy for a particular area (in Melbourne since 1980). However, Polish churches built in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth did not obtain the status of parish churches.

Several Australian Catholic bishops, like E. Clency of Sydney, A. Fox of Sale, and L. Clarke of Maitland, have visited Poland. Archbishop of Hobart, G. Young, in 1982 blessed and opened in Rokeby a new Catholic church which is dedicated not to any Irish saint, but to a Polish saint. Bishop W. Murray of Wollongong in 1984 agreed to establish in Berrima the Polish-Australian Marian Shrine.

VII. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

What does the future hold for the Polish Catholic community in Australia?

⁶ *All Migrants Need Care*. „The Advocate” (Melbourne) 31 July 1980 p. 2.

⁷ *Welcoming Newcomers – a Task for all Catholics*. „The Advocate” (Melbourne) 20 October 1980 p. 10.

It is a fact that Polish immigrants, in any country, assimilate very fast. Of the 72,000 Poles who came to Australia just after the second World War already 30% are regarded as assimilated. Besides, the majority of first generation Poles in this country are about sixty years old and over. One can notice that phenomenon at every Polish Mass conducted in Australia.

Does this mean that the future of Polish Catholic life in Australia looks very bleak? I do not think so.

Since 1980 the Polish Catholic community in Australia has been strengthened by arrival of over 15,000 Polish refugees from Europe. This influx will help to maintain Polish Catholic activities in this country for many a more year. There is also a group of second generation Polish-Australians, numbering a few thousand, who are and will be involved in Polish Catholic life.

Almost the whole second generation Polish-Australians, numbering about 60 thousand, became a part of the Australian Catholic Church. However, there is one thing which differentiates them from other Australian Catholics – Polish Christmas and Easter customs, which are regarded by them as really beautiful and are observed by them.

Despite strong pressures of the policy of assimilation held by the Australian Catholic Church, Poles as a whole have not become a part of that Church. As the only result of such a policy was the fact that the second generation, which preserved its faith and religion, indeed became a part of the Australian Church, but lost its character which is specific for the Polish religious culture, and the richness of sacral customs and traditions.

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POLSKIE ŻYCIE RELIGIJNE W AUSTRALII

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

Przed 1948 r. niewielu Polaków osiedliło się w Australii. Dopiero później na skutek masowej emigracji po II wojnie światowej, głównie z obozów dla uchodźców na terenie Niemiec, przybywa tu liczna grupa Polaków. Obecnie liczbę osób polskiego pochodzenia w Australii ocenia się na ok. 120 000.

Jeśli chodzi o religijny przekrój polskiej społeczności w Australii, to tylko 2/3 jest wyznania rzymskokatolickiego. Poza tym z innych grup wyznaniowych i religijnych należy wymienić: prawosławnych (1587 osób), luteranów (724), anglikanów (334), baptystów (172), prezbiterianów (62), metodystów (24), mormonów (15). Pozostała grupa chrześcijan innych denominacji liczy 1794 osoby. Z grupy Polaków niechrześcijan można wymienić: żydów (7069), buddystów (27), muzułmanów (31) oraz 3006 niewierzących.

Najbardziej prężnym ośrodkiem polskiego życia katolickiego w Australii jest Sydney, gdzie istnieje pięć parafii polskich. Znajduje się tu również siedziba Polskiej Misji Katolickiej oraz wyższego przełożonego Zgromadzenia Księża Chrystusowców. Pierwszy kościół polski wybudowany po wojnie w 1966 r. znajduje się w Sydney-Marayong. W Sydney mieści się także polski klasztor ss. nazaretanek i od 1960 r. ukazuje się polskie czasopismo katolickie pt. „Polski Przegląd Katolicki”.

Drugim pod względem wielkości skupiskiem Polaków w Australii jest Melbourne, gdzie Polacy mają również pięć ośrodków duszpasterskich. W 1952 r. otwarto w Melbourne pierwszy polski klasztor ss. zmartwychwstanki. W 1971 r. Polacy otrzymali od abpa Adelajdy, J. Gleesona, kościół św. St. Kostki w Sevenhill.

Po 1947 r. abp J. Gawlina, Duchowy Opiekun Wychodźców z ramienia Stolicy Apostolskiej rezydujący w Rzymie, zaapelował do księży polskich przebywających w Zachodniej Europie (zwłaszcza w Niemczech), by udawali się do Australii i tam służyli opieką religijną Polakom. W odpowiedzi na to wezwanie przybyła do pracy wśród emigrantów grupa ponad 30 księży. Od początku lat sześćdziesiątych księża ci, odchodzący stopniowo na emeryturę, zastępowani byli przez księży przybywających z Polski. Obecnie pracuje w Australii ponad 40 polskich duszpasterzy. Większość z nich to chrystusowcy.

Polacy w Australii byli i są nadal bardzo rozproszeni. W związku z tym tylko 25% otoczonych jest pełną i regularną opieką duszpasterską. W latach pięćdziesiątych jeden duszpasterz polski przypadał na 3 tys. Polaków. W tym samym czasie na jednego kapłana australijskiego przypadało tylko 630 katolików. Wobec dużego braku księży Polaków w duszpasterstwie emigrantów z Polski pomagali księża narodowości ukraińskiej, czeskiej, łotewskiej, litewskiej, węgierskiej i australijskiej, znający język polski. Zwykle tylko te polskie ośrodki, które mają polskiego kapłana, są społecznie aktywne. Księża polscy brali udział w zakładaniu szkół sobotnich, a nawet klubów piłki nożnej. W Australii istnieje 6 polskich żeńskich domów zakonnych. Pracują w nich zmartwychwstanki (w Melbourne od 1952 r. i w Adelajdzie od 1957 r.) oraz nazaretanki, które posiadają domy w Brisbane (od 1952 r.), Sydney, Canberze i Perth. Siostry prowadzą pięć polskich szkół podstawowych, jedną średnią i dom starców.

W 1949 r. ks. K. Trzeciak założył w Bathurst pierwsze polskie czasopismo katolickie pt. „Polski Tygodnik Katolicki” (istniał do 1964 r.) przekształcone w 1967 r. na periodyk świecki i zamienione następnie na „Polski Przegląd Katolicki”. W latach 1969-1971 księża werbiści wydawali polski magazyn misyjny „Nasz Misjonarz”. Ich staraniem ukazało się także kilka numerów biuletynu „Wspólnota”. W latach 1962-1966 ks. K. Warzecha wydał w Canberze polski biuletyn „Millennium”.

Pierwsi polscy księża przybywali do Australii na kontraktach pracowników fizycznych i nie mogąc początkowo pełnić obowiązków duszpasterskich, podejmowali pracę fizyczną. Dzięki staraniom i pomocy abpa Adelajdy, M. Boevicha, mogli następnie rozpocząć pracę duszpasterską wśród Polaków. Kościół katolicki w Australii nastawiony był w tym czasie na szybką asymilację imigrantów. Dzieci polskie zniechęcano do uczenia się języka polskiego. Polityka rządu była również asymilacyjna. Administratorzy hoteli migracyjnych odmawiali otwierania kaplic dla Polaków. Politykę tę zarzucono dopiero w latach siedemdziesiątych.

W 1967 r. bp W. Rubin ustanowił 3 polskie dekanaty w Australii. Obecnie istnieje tam 25 polskich parafii.