

A TIME OF TRANSITION

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## A Time Of Transition

The final decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century were a period of great turmoil for thousands of Polish immigrants who settled in small and large pockets across the United States. The pain of leaving family, friends, the familiar surroundings of village or town was exacerbated by the equally traumatic fears concerning settlement in an alien environment. This process of settlement was manifold in its dimensions. Aside from the pressing need to find work and a place to live, the immigrants were forced by circumstances to bond with virtual strangers to form a new community structure. An essential element in the lives of most of these Polish immigrants was religion, their religion, Roman Catholicism. Despite the fact that they were strangers, these immigrants had a common religious heritage. The establishment of parish churches by these Poles greatly expedited the difficult task of their coalescence into communities. They were Poles, they were Roman Catholics, they were members of a particular parish. The work of community consolidation and growth did not however, end with the establishment of a parish or the dedication of a church structure. The building of community and the efforts to realize parochial unity continued long after the laying of a cornerstone. At times these efforts bore fruit, at other times they resulted in discord and schism.

The purpose of this work is to examine closely a small portion of the early development of such a Polish parish



structure. The parish under consideration is Saint Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic Church, located in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. After a brief consideration of the circumstances surrounding the actual arrival of the first Polish immigrants in Baltimore, the milieu in which they settled, and the initial development of the parish itself, a closer examination will be made of the pastorate of the final diocesan rector of the parish, the events which led to his departure, the invitation extended to the Conventual Franciscans to assume care of the parish, and the administration of the parish by the first Franciscan pastor. Thus, the period under closer scrutiny falls between the years 1897 and 1914-15. It is hoped that the chronicling of the events of this brief period in the life of the parish will illustrate the ongoing challenges and difficulties faced by an immigrant community seeking both unity and identity amidst a plethora of internal and external pressures and tensions.

The Polonia, or the first settlement of Poles in the city of Baltimore, came into existence with the arrival of Polish immigrants around the year 1868. In that year a group of Polish exiles embarked from the port city of Bremen, Germany and landed in Baltimore at the Broadway pier in an area of the city known as Fells Point. The transport ship that carried these settlers to America was itself on its maiden voyage. This ship, "The Baltimore," sailed under the auspices of the North German Lloyd

Steamship Company.<sup>1</sup>

Who were these Poles, these future parishioners of St. Stanislaus parish? In his work, The Baltimore Polish-American Community in the Mid-1980's, Thomas W. Simmons argues that the Poles who arrived in Baltimore between 1860 and 1890 came mainly from the more developed Prussian western part of Partitioned Poland. He further argues that this wave of immigrants to America included a significant number of educated, politically and nationality conscious people. "It was the 'Prussians,'" he contends, "those coming from the Duchy of Posen or the Poznanski, who took the lead in establishing organizations and institutions."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to note that despite the fact that a significant number of Poles coming in this wave were educated,

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<sup>1</sup>St. Casimir Roman Catholic Church, Fiftieth Jubilee Record Book of St. Casimir Church, Baltimore, Md. (Baltimore, Md.: 1952), "History of St. Casimir Parish," n.p.. Reference to this event can also be found in Thomas L. Hollowak, "The Emergence of a Baltimore Polonia" (Senior Thesis, University of Maryland, 1982), p. 1. It should be noted at this point that the Centenary Jubilee Book of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish published in 1980 by the parish, contains only meager and sketchy details concerning the early history of the parish.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas W. Simmons Jr., The Baltimore Polish American Community in the Mid-1980's: A Case Study (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of State Foreign Service Institute, 1985-6), pp. 2, 9. It should be noted that while this work does provide some useful historical information, the reader is severely handicapped in that none of the information contained in the work is footnoted. Furthermore, much of the information contained in the work is gathered from interviews of descendants of the original Polish settlers or of those who have moved into the area of Baltimore's Polonia. Much is hearsay, a useful source of what is remembered or heard third-hand, but at times questionable as a critical source.

they still remained a minority.<sup>3</sup> The second wave of Polish immigration originated mainly from Austrian and Russian Partitioned Poland. This new wave of immigrants were overwhelmingly poor and illiterate peasants.

What were the reasons for this mass migration of Poles to America? Simmons suggests several factors as operative: slow economic development, rapid increase in population due to three generations of relatively peaceful existence, political and religious oppression, the gradual decrease in the size of family farms, which resulted indirectly from the emancipation of the peasants.<sup>4</sup> Some Poles came to America with the intention of remaining, others sought only to earn enough money in the United States to be able to return to Poland and purchase additional land for their family. Such were the future parishioners of St. Stanislaus, and such were some of the reasons that brought them to Baltimore harbor.

Having now seen what these immigrants had left behind in the "old country," it would be beneficial to consider for a moment what these souls found when they disembarked at Baltimore harbor. Despite the fact that compared with other Eastern cities

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 2. One can note that there remains a weakness in Simmons's argument in that he assumes that his generalization applies to the Polonia of Baltimore. He offers no statistical evidence to support his assumption.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Hollowak suggests as an additional factor the collapse of the Central European Grain Market in the 1860's. See Thomas L. Hollowak, "The Emergence of a Baltimore Polonia," (Senior Thesis, Dept. of History, University of Maryland, December 20, 1982), p. 2.



Baltimore had a relatively late beginning as a city, by the 1850's it had become one of America's leading commercial and manufacturing centers. Simmons observes that when German Lloyd opened its new passenger service between Baltimore and Bremen in 1868, one fourth of the city's 160,000 white inhabitants had been born in Germany, and half of the remainder were of German descent.<sup>5</sup> Poles who arrived and settled in Baltimore tended to cluster in the city's second ward, located on the lower harbor, in a neighborhood known as Fell's Point. This area was the site of considerable manufacturing, heavy industry forges, foundries, rolling mills and engine works. These industries, which were dependent on being close to the water, employed greater and greater numbers of unskilled laborers. And, as Hollowak rightly concludes, they drew Polish, as well as other immigrant groups to the area.<sup>6</sup>

As has just been noted, Poles were not the only or the

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<sup>5</sup>Simmons, Case Study, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup>Hollowak, "Emergence", p. 5. Hollowak's treatment of the demographic make up of the city is thorough, and quite useful, in that he employs statistics drawn from city records to plot the movements and settlement patterns of various ethnic and religious groups in the city during the early years of Polish settlement. A somewhat romantic picture of these first immigrants is painted by the unknown author of "History of St. Casimir Parish," Fiftieth Jubilee Book, who claims that they wandered aimlessly through "towns and villages." This same author does however offer some useful insights into Polish customs, which these settlers undoubtedly brought with them and handed down to their children. Simmons further adds that subsequent waves of Polish immigrants settled in other sections of Baltimore: Locust Point, across the harbor; Canton, along the harbor east of Fells Point; and in Curtis bay and Fairfield, on the south side of the Patapsco River, across from Canton. See Simmons, Case Study, p.9.

first immigrant group to settle in the Fells Point area. Even as the first Poles were arriving in Baltimore, a colony of Czechs or Bohemians were at work establishing an ethnic parish of their own. These first Polish immigrants joined Czechs who were making use of St. Michael German Roman Catholic Church hall for worship until they could acquire a church of their own.<sup>7</sup>

The stay at St. Michael was a brief one; for, Czechs soon were in possession of their own Church. St. Wenceslaus Church was dedicated by the archbishop on 26 May, 1872. It became a place where both Czechs and Poles could worship together.<sup>8</sup>

It appears that during the 1870's the number of Poles settling in Baltimore increased. Hollowak supports this contention in two ways. The first evidence in favor of this belief is the creation of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society Beneficial Society by the Poles of St. Wenceslaus on 1 June, 1875.

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas L. Hollowak, "Key Points of the Early History of the Polish Community in Baltimore," (Unpublished work, n.d.), p.1. Victor Greene observes that it was a typical phenomenon for Polish parishes in larger city settlements to emerge from neighborhoods which had a clearly German or Bohemian character. Generally, Poles enjoyed a pacific relationship with the Czechs or Bohemians of these areas. The author cites numerous examples to support his contention. Victor Greene, For God and Country, (Madison, Wis.: The State Historical Society, 1975), pp. 32-3.

<sup>8</sup> Hollowak, "Emergence," pp.3-4. Simmons notes in passing that the Poles preferred to associate with the Czechs at St. Wenceslaus rather than attend the Irish Catholic Church of St. Patrick, which was in fact nearer to their homes. Simmons, Case Study, p.9. It would seem that they felt a closer bond of kinship with their fellow Eastern Europeans. Perhaps also they had some understanding of the Czech language because of the Partitioning.

Its membership was composed entirely of males.<sup>9</sup> The second argument rests in the appointment of Rev. Piotr Koncz as the new pastor of St. Wenceslaus in 1878. One of the factors which influenced his appointment as pastor was his ability to speak both Czech and Polish.<sup>10</sup> If such was the case, then the number of Poles at St. Wenceslaus must have been increasing.

Soon after Koncz assumed the pastorate of St. Wenceslaus problems began to arise. In a letter dated 8 March, 1879, Koncz writes to Archbishop Gibbons and states that he can no longer serve his Bohemian congregation as pastor. He notes simply that all of his efforts to instruct the Bohemians have been in vain. In the letter he hints that his work at the parish has not been

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<sup>9</sup>Hollowak, "Emergence," p. 7. A further clarification of the goals of this society can be found in: Holy Rosary Roman Catholic parish, "History of the parish," The Seventy-fifth Jubilee Record Book of Holy Rosary Parish, Baltimore, Md., (Baltimore, Md.: 1964). The goal of this society is listed as laying ground for a Polish parish, where members could learn God's truths, sing pray and confess their sins in their native tongue. It is further noted that from the time of its inception members of the society began to collect funds for the purpose of building a church.

<sup>10</sup>Hollowak, "Emergence," pp. 7-8. Hollowak cites a letter from Rev. G. M. Gartner to Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley. From it he concludes that even during the administration of Bayley there was a search for a priest who could minister to Poles as well as other slavic peoples residing in the city of Baltimore. Piotr Koncz was born in 1840 in the Polish Province of Lithuania. From his youth he was determined to pursue a career as a priest. Accordingly he travelled to Rome to complete his priestly studies. After his arrival in the United States, he entered St. Francis Seminary, near Milwaukee. In 1871 he was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Henni. See Tomasz L Cholochwost, "Ignacy Wolinski and the Origin of Baltimore's Polonia," Maryland Genealogical Society Bulletin 2 (Spring, 1982), p. 157.



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After the writing of this letter events began to occur in rapid succession. Following his resignation as pastor of St. Wenceslaus, Koncz assumed leadership of the St. Stanislaus Society. The society then withdrew from the parish and, together with Koncz formed the St. Stanislaus Kostka congregation. Services were first held at a house which Koncz rented at 223 South Bond Street, in Fells Point<sup>12</sup>. This situation was not to remain so for long. The number of followers of Koncz had swelled from twenty to two hundred. On 13 April, 1880 Archbishop Gibbons purchased three lots at a total cost of four thousand dollars, located on the west side of Ann Street in Fells Point. The actual address of the property purchased was 700 South Ann Street. He did this with the intention of erecting a Polish parish Church. Two months later, on 13 June, the cornerstone was laid. On 26 June 1881, St. Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic Church was dedicated.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>This letter is cited by Hollowak. See further Hollowak, "Emergence," p.8 ff.

<sup>12</sup>Hollowak, "Emergence," p.8. There seems to be some disagreement in the sources as to the exact location of the house. St. Casimir Jubilee Record Book merely states that the house was located on the southwest corner of Bond and Fleet St.. Simmons, Case Study, argues vaguely that Koncz bought the land where the present parish now stands. Sources proven his conclusion inaccurate. Sources do agree that by the time of the withdrawal of the society from St. Wenceslaus they number of Poles in the parish had grown significantly.

<sup>13</sup>Hollowak, "Emergence," p. 14. In noting the date of the dedication and establishment of this parish Haas observes that it thus became one of the five oldest Polish national Roman Catholic parishes in the United States. See Rev. Roger Haas, A History of

One would imagine that with their dream fulfilled, the Polish pastor and congregation would grow and abide in peace. Such was by no means the case. In fact the inauguration of the parish was soon to be followed by internal dissention and strife which would last for many decades.<sup>14</sup> Struggles for power between various parish factions, between pastor and associates and between priests and their congregation would haunt the parish for many years.

Prior to the actual dedication of the Church, on 1 October, 1880, Rev. Josef Horbaczewski became assistant pastor of the parish. It seems that almost from the time of his arrival there developed discord between himself and the pastor. Arguments erupted on numerous occasions over points of Christian doctrine and dogma, specifically the nature and extent of papal infallibility which had been recently defined.<sup>15</sup> Despite the

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the American Province of St. Anthony of Padua of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, 1906-1982 (Baltimore, MD.: 1984), p.86. Cholochoost records the following description of the Church: "...plainly but solidly built of fine pressed brick, with stone trimmings, and is surmounted by a steeple. It has two stories with a frontage of about forty feet for school purposes, while the second is to be the Church proper. The building is unusually well planned, especially as far as light and ventilation are concerned. The cost is \$18,000. See Cholochoost, "Ignacy Wolinski," p. 160.

<sup>14</sup>Hollowak notes in an apocalyptic vein the fact that the ceremonies for the laying of the cornerstone were interrupted by a sudden storm with strong winds and a heavy downpour. Those in attendance were forced to flee to nearby homes to escape the effects of the storm. Thus, began the turbulence associated with the parish. See further, "Emergence," p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>Hollowak, in "Emergence," p. 15 ff. treats the matter fully and with thorough documentation. The dispute led to a confrontation of the two before the diocesan rector, Rev. Thomas



support of diocesan officials Horbaczewski resigned as assistant of the parish and left the city of Baltimore.

During the same year as the Church building was completed two further events occurred which would influence the future course of the parish. On 7 June, 1881 the St. Stanislaus Society, the same society which had raised the money for the construction of the parish gained legal recognition by becoming officially incorporated. Later that year there developed within the parish a second mutual aid society, The St. Joseph Beneficial Society. It too was legally incorporated on 22 October 1881.<sup>16</sup> These legal corporations would cause Koncz much grief for the remainder of his pastorate.

It was less than a year when the first major war erupted in the parish. Hollowak records that on 29 May, 1882, 313 members of the St. Stanislaus Society forwarded to Archbishop Gibbons a formal request for the removal of Father Koncz as pastor of the parish.<sup>17</sup> This was but one manifestation of an intense power struggle going on for control of the parish. One

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S. Lee. The records of the proceedings show that financial arrangements and personality clashes were as much involved in the disagreement as was doctrinal irregularity. The records reveal Koncz to be a man of strong temper, not afraid to hurl barbs and insults at opponents.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19. Hollowak proceeds to examine the membership lists of these two societies. From this examination he concludes to the possibility that even at this time there may have been factions developing amongst the laity of the parish. Factions would clearly develop further in subsequent years. Supporters of Koncz would seem to prefer membership in the St. Joseph Society.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.20.

side was Rev. Koncz, supported by the St. Joseph Society. the other faction was made up of the members of the society which had founded the parish, St. Stanislaus Society. This latter society seems to have been in league with a Rev. Pawel Gutowski, whom they sought as a new pastor of the parish.<sup>18</sup> The dispute grew rapidly as delegations of St. Stanislaus society members repeatedly went to the archbishop seeking Koncz's removal. The local press became involved as did the pastor of St. Wenceslaus, who sided with the Society. Following an ecclesiastical investigation conducted by the archbishop, with both delegations present, it was decided that the Society's grievances were unfounded. Gibbons supported Koncz, and Koncz remained pastor.<sup>19</sup>

Following the conclusion of this affair one could not say that peace returned to the parish, only an uneasy truce. Just a short time later, 25 March, 1883, the members of the St. Stanislaus Society were again petitioning the archbishop for the removal of their pastor. In this case the Society charged their pastor with immorality. Hollowak cites a letter from the president of the society to Gibbons requesting an immediate

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 21. Hollowak notes that several days before the St. Stanislaus petition was forwarded to Gibbons, Gutowski had issued his own memorial, signed by members of the St. Stanislaus Society. In it he charged that Koncz, a Lithuanian could speak Polish only poorly. he himself would better be able to serve the parish as a preacher because he spoke fine Polish.

<sup>19</sup> As a result of this investigation, Gutkowski was denied faculties in the diocese, and subsequently left Baltimore. Father Videnka, the pastor of St. Wenceslaus who had supported the St. Stanislaus Society and Gutkowski, lost his pastorate of parish as a result of the final verdict. See Hollowak, "Emergence," pp. 23 and ff.

decision in the matter. He asserts that to prove their sincerity parishioners would be willing to march to the archbishop's residence accompanied by a band of musicians.<sup>20</sup> Gibbons refused to be intimidated and ruled in favor of Koncz. The threats were never carried out.

On a more positive note, that same year Father Koncz asked the Felician Sisters to come to the parish to educate the youth. They responded favorably to this request. They remained in the parish teaching in the school until they were replaced by the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph in 1926.<sup>21</sup>

The next year brought a renewed attack on Koncz by members of the St. Stanislaus Society. In a letter to Gibbons members accused Koncz of immoral actions with an eighteen year old girl, one Mary Kniesczyk. This time however, members asked that as an alternative to removal of Koncz they be allowed to establish a new parish. Angered by Gibbons refusal to remove Koncz, the St. Stanislaus Beneficial Society withdrew from the parish. Members of the Society returned to St. Wenceslaus

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.27. There were further threats that if Gibbons did not settle in their favor, members would take the story to both English and Polish newspapers.

<sup>21</sup> Rt. Rev. O. B. Corrigan, D.D., V.G. The Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Baltimore: A Study in Diocesan History (Baltimore, Md.: St. Mary's Industrial School Press, 1924), p. 153. These same facts are recorded in Golden Jubilee Album of St. Anthony of Padua Province: Order of Friar Minor Conventuals: 1906-1956. (1956), p. 52. This source also notes that classes were conducted in a small house across the street from this first parish Church. Prior to the arrival of the sisters, classes were conducted by a layman.



Church.<sup>22</sup> The loss of so many members of the parish was quickly recovered because of increased immigration of Poles to Baltimore.

One might imagine that the departure of the St. Stanislaus society would end with internal feuding. This was not to be case. Within four months battle would began. It would appear that the unknowing catalyst was a priest who came from distant Wisconsin as a guest preacher during the octave of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>23</sup> Impressed greatly by both his fluent Polish and by the style with which he preached, the parishioners wanted Rev. Piotr Chowaniec for their parish. Delegations requested Koncz to accept this man as an associate, or to find a man with such talents and make him an associate. Koncz refused. The St. Joseph Benevolent Association now petitioned Gibbons to come to their aid. As on past occasions, Gibbons sided with Koncz. As Hollowak observes, this was the final battle for Koncz. A year after this request was made Rev. Piotr Koncz was dead.<sup>24</sup> The forty-seven year old priest died on 8 February, 1886, at St. Joseph Hospital, after an illness of eight weeks.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hollowak, "Emergence," p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 32 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> The question of the circumstances surrounding the death of Piotr Koncz remain shrouded in uncertainty. Hollowak has investigated this point in some detail. He notes that reports indicate that at least four different stories circulated at the time of his demise. The Baltimore American reported he died as a result of a blood disease. The Catholic Mirror and Sun attributed his death to bronchial troubles. The actual death certificate attributed his death to scurvy. In an interview with Mr. Hollowak, he revealed that city records indicate that no

Because the parish then possessed no cemetery, the remains of Father Koncz were laid to rest in the cemetery of St. Alphonsus Church, Holy Redeemer Cemetery on Belair Road.

Following the death of Father Koncz, the Rev. John Rodowicz succeeded him as pastor of St. Stanislaus parish in 1886<sup>26</sup>. Rodowicz had been a friend of Father Koncz. It was he in fact, who originally recommended to Father Koncz that he accept Father Josef Horbaczewski as his assistant pastor. Father

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one else in Baltimore had died of scurvy for many years prior to or after Father Koncz's death. For detailed citations concerning Koncz's death see Hollowak, "Emergence," p.7 of notes, n. 95. Perhaps the darkest of all reports concerning the death of Rev. Koncz is that which circulates most popularly. That account of his death indicates that the priest met his end at the hands of assassins. The story tells of the priest being lured out on the pretext of a sick call one night in February, 1886. The priest was assaulted, and died as the result of a fatal blow. Several sources accept this account as definitive. Among them is Simmons, Case Study, p. 10. Both the Golden and Centenary Jubilee Record Books of St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church accept this account as definitive. Having recorded this fact the writer of the history of the parish in the Golden Jubilee Album (1930), comments: *Lecz jak wiadomo, ze Pan Bog msci sie na tych, ktorzy w sposob swietokradzki podnosza reke swoja na osoby poswiecone Jemu, tak tez i ukaral tych ludzi, bo mowia inni, ze kazdy z nich prowadzil nedzne zycie i nedznie kazdy zeszedl z swiata, otrzymujac zasluzona kare na tym swiecie, za swietokradzka zbrodnie.* That is, this author states as firm belief that God will not forget those who have laid hands upon his holy and anointed one. It is written that such a one will know no happiness in this life, and will receive a just sentence in the life to come. It would appear from even a cursory consideration of the various arguments that the question of the cause of the death of this priest is far from cut and dry. There are reasons to favor several of the above given possibilities. However, the consideration of these arguments would extend beyond the scope of this survey of the parish history.

<sup>26</sup> The unknown author of "History of St. Stanislaus Parish," Centenary Jubilee Record Book St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, simply notes that Father Rodowicz was an elderly man when he assumed the role of pastor of the parish.

Rodowicz served as pastor for a period of ten years, until his death in 1896. Several significant events mark the decade in which Father Rodowicz served this Fells Point congregation.

The first significant event to occur during the decade of 1886-1896 was the establishment of Holy Rosary parish as the second Roman Catholic Church to serve the Poles of Baltimore city. It will be recalled that following their unsuccessful attempt to have Rev. Koncz removed as pastor of St. Stanislaus parish, the majority of the members of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Beneficial Society left the parish and returned to St. Wenceslaus parish. It would seem that these parishioners were determined to have a Polish Roman Catholic Church of their own. Accordingly, they requested the same Rev. Piotr Chowaniec who had preached so successfully at St. Stanislaus parish to collaborate with them in establishing a second parish for the Poles of Baltimore.<sup>27</sup> A former Protestant church a few blocks from St. Stanislaus Church, at Eastern and Bethel Streets in Fells Point, was acquired for twenty thousand dollars and transformed into a Catholic Church.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Seventy-fifth Jubilee Record Book of Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church, (Baltimore, Md.: 1964), "History of the Parish," p.2. This account of the history of the parish fails to truly speak of the turbulence which preceded the founding of the parish. It merely attributes the origin of the parish to the increasing numbers of Poles who were settling in this section of the city. This was indeed an important factor, but not the only one. This parish record records Father Chowaniec as coming from Poland to serve in the parish. More accurately, this Polish priest came from Detroit to take up his role as first pastor of the parish.

<sup>28</sup> One might note here that the St. Stanislaus Society must have had quite a substantial financial reservoir to make such a purchase in so few a number of years after it had paid for the



The erection of this Church was approved by Cardinal Gibbons. The Church began to function as the first "daughter" parish of St. Stanislaus when the first Mass was celebrated there by Father Chowaniec, ironically, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 1887. Chowaniec was quick to establish a parish school opened 1 March, 1888.<sup>29</sup> Within two years he had acquired land and established a parish cemetery. Sadly, Father Chowaniec died in May of 1892, after only five years of service in the parish. At length, he was succeeded by an immensely talented priest, Rev. Melvin C. Barabasz.<sup>30</sup> This man had left

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erection of St. Stanislaus parish church. The church itself was purchased from the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. See Corrigan, Catholic Schools, pp. 153-4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. The school was staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. In 1891 they were succeeded by the Felicians.

<sup>30</sup> It would seem that the period following the death of Father Chowaniec was also a time of great turmoil for Holy Rosary parish. The details of these events are difficult to piece together into a clear picture. Evidence indicates that problems arose from the interference of certain members of the St. Stanislaus Society in the naming of a new pastor. In an obviously conciliatory tone, an article in the newspaper of the archdiocese records resolutions of the St. Stanislaus Society, apologizing for the problems it has caused the archbishop and his officials. The article indicates that members of the society had been involved in the rejection of a first candidate to replace Chowaniec, a Reverend Swenarski. These recalcitrant members were now no longer affiliated with the society. See "Holy Rosary," Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 3 September, 1892, p.5. In a subsequent article there is recorded the events of the installation of the second pastor of the parish, a Rev. Felix Sigismund Szulborski. Both Fathers Rodowicz and Skretny attended this ceremony, which was presided over by Cardinal Gibbons himself. The address delivered by Gibbons seems significant, as if it were made by a beleaguered pastor to an unwieldy flock. The article records, "He spoke of the dignity of the priesthood, they are the representatives of Christ. They received their power from Him... He then dwelt upon the obligations of the people toward the priest, and he exhorted the people to receive

his responsibilities as instructor and publisher at the "Polish Seminary" in Detroit to assume leadership of this parish.

Father Rodowicz did not remain idle during the ten years in which he served as pastor. At first he worked to develop and beautify the church he had inherited as pastor, while also striving to enhance the devotional life of his congregation. A note in the Baltimore Catholic Mirror attests to this. It states, "Mgr. Rev. Colgan officiated at the blessing of the new stations of the cross just placed in St. Stanislaus Church, on South Ann Street. Father Rodowicz preached an appropriate and instructive sermon in the Polish language."<sup>31</sup>

However, during the latter part of his tenure it became increasingly clear that the newly built parish church was simply inadequate to serve the needs of the growing Polish population which was settling in Fells Point. Therefore he began the arduous task of preparing for the construction of a larger and more sound church edifice. The Centenary Jubilee Record Book of the parish records:

During his ten year term, which ended with his death in 1896, [Rodowicz] had the first church torn down and rebuilt. Increased membership in the congregation and a need for a sturdier foundation and stronger walls

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their new pastor as his representative, or rather as that of Christ." See "The New Pastor at Holy Rosary," Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 10 September, 1892. It is interesting to note that this pastor spent less than a year at the parish. What happened to him, or where he went is unclear. The Diamond Jubilee Record Book of Holy Rosary Church does not so much as acknowledge the existence of the above events. It merely states that Rev. Barabasz succeeded Chowaniec as pastor.

<sup>31</sup>Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 7 March, 1891.



necessitated the building of a new and larger church which still stands erect today on its present site.<sup>32</sup>

The Church itself was blessed in 1896.<sup>33</sup>

Father Rodowicz did not remain alone at St. Stanislaus parish during his tenure as pastor. Rev. Joseph Skretny joined Father Rodowicz as his assistant pastor in 1890.<sup>34</sup> This priest was well trained. Born and raised in Poland, he received his education at the Louvain.<sup>35</sup> Father Skretny served as Rodowicz's

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<sup>32</sup>"History of St. Stanislaus," Centennial Jubilee Record Book, n.p. It seems strange that a new building should have to be built after the old only stood for a decade The Golden Jubilee Album of St. Anthony Province offers a suggestion. The author observes that the land on which the original church stood was sandy and swampy. For safety sake it had to be heavily piled and shored. See Golden Jubilee Album of St. Anthony Province, p. 17. One might still wonder if there were other motives for the rebuilding of the parish Church. With the recent appearance of a second Polish Catholic Church in the neighborhood, might there have been a rivalry developing between mother and daughter parishes?

<sup>33</sup>Golden Jubilee Album of St. Anthony Province, p. 52.

<sup>34</sup>Record of Students Ordained for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1830-1921, Archives of Archdiocese of Baltimore (ABA), p.22.

<sup>35</sup>Father Skretny was born 23 October, 1865 in Posen Province of Poland. His initial studies were at Pile and Wagrowc. Afterward, he left Poland and pursued philosophical and theological studies at the Louvain, where he was ordained a priest 29 June, 1890. After ordination he came to Baltimore to work as a priest of the archdiocese. See Genealogy and Biography of the leading Families of the City of Baltimore and Baltimore County, Maryland, (Chapman Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 41-2. A letter from Father Skretny to Gibbons, dated 3 February, 1890 indicates his willingness to work in Baltimore. See Letter to Archbishop James Gibbons from Joseph Skretny, Louvain, Belgium, 3 February, 1890, (ABA 87D3). Skretny was devoted to his family. In a subsequent letter to Archbishop Gibbons, he states his intention to visit his family and celebrate his first Mass with them prior to departing for America. See Letter to Archbishop James Gibbons from Joseph Skretny, Louvain Belgium, 4 April, 1890, (ABA 87K4).

assistant for six years.

In 1896 the elderly Rodowicz ended his service to the parish with a peaceful death. He was buried 8 February, 1896. The congregation was not long left without a shepherd, for Archbishop Gibbons named the assistant pastor, Father Skretny, to serve as its rector.

John J. Bukowczyk describes the Polish immigrant community as both a place and a way of life. He observes, "There Poles prayed with other Poles, drank and danced with them. They loved and married other Poles and, when they died, were buried next to their countrymen and countrywomen."<sup>36</sup> Father Skretny observed a basic problem in his community, the parish lacked a cemetery of its own. Already its daughter parish possessed its own place of burial. It seems a safe assumption that the people of St. Stanislaus would have preferred their own place to bury the dead, rather than being forced to bury their loved ones in a cemetery attached to a neighboring parish. Accordingly Father Skretny worked to remedy this situation soon after he assumed leadership of the community. In 1897 he purchased land for the cemetery in an area several miles from the parish, a section known as Dundalk.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John J. Bukowczyk, And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of Polish-Americans, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U. Press, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> This piece of property was purchased by James Cardinal Gibbons in the name of the Archdiocese of Baltimore from William H. Kimberly with the intention of establishing a cemetery for St. Stanislaus parish. This property was subsequently transferred to the Conventual Franciscan Friars of St. Anthony of Padua Province

Undoubtedly Father Skretny had many more plans for the parish. His biography indicates that, "He was known everywhere as a very popular priest and a great worker in his field of labor, the holy priesthood."<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, it would seem that this thirty-two year old rector may have suffered from poor health or a weak constitution. One source describes Skretny as, "...a true father to his parishioners; many a time he fulfilled his difficult pastoral duties at the risk of his own health...."<sup>39</sup> It would appear that at some point during the year that Father Skretny served as pastor, he gained an assistant pastor, Reverend Tomasz Morys.<sup>40</sup> During the course of Father Skretny's pastorship it is possible that as his health failed Father Morys assumed more and more of the responsibility for the management of the parish on a daily basis, and thereby slowly won the affections of the people of the parish. At length, as a result of failing health, Father Skretny died on 4 September, 1897, after only one year of service to the parish. Following an elaborate funeral ceremony and procession he was laid to rest in

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on 10 July, 1917. For details concerning the history of the cemetery, and its exact location and dimensions see Certified Copy of the Deed of Transfer of St. Stanislaus Cemetery, Baltimore, Md., (St. Anthony of Padua Province of the Conventual Franciscan Friars Archives [SAPPA], Baltimore, Md.), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Genealogy and Biography, p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> "The Late Rev. Joseph Skretny," Dziennik Chicagoski, 14 September, 1897.

<sup>40</sup> Little biographical background information on Father Morys was available.



the cemetery he himself had worked to establish.<sup>41</sup>

The death of Father Skretny came at a time of great unrest in the Polish community of Fells Point. The source of discord was again to be found with the St. Stanislaus Society, in Holy Rosary Parish. It would seem that members of this society wanted a greater say, if not control of the financial affairs of the parish they had worked to establish. An article in The Baltimore Catholic Mirror, dated 26 March, 1898, reveals that when these members sought to assert their control over the parish, Cardinal Gibbons, as official holder of title to the property, sought to regain rightful control of parish records through the secular courts. The article states:

Rev. Barabasz, pastor of Holy Rosary Church received a decree from the circuit court of Baltimore Saturday, confirming the verdict of the court in the suit of Cardinal Gibbons against Frank Morawski and others for the possession of Church property, which suit the cardinal won. The decree sets forth that the cardinal and his successors are to be the legal guardians of Holy Rosary Church perpetually, and orders that all books of accounts, papers and vouchers relating to the collection of pew rents, school fees and graveyard charges shall be turned over to Father Barabasz by the defendants, and that they in the future shall not meddle in the conduct of the affairs of the parish.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid. This account gives a very detailed account of the actual services. It might be noted here only that Cardinal Gibbons presided at the Church services, and that Father Barabasz played an important role in the events of that day. Also, the societies and parishioners of Holy Rosary parish took active part in the funeral.

<sup>42</sup>Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 26 March, 1898, p.12. Thomas Hollowak, archivist of the city of Baltimore, has researched this point in detail, examining the transcripts of the trial. In a conversation with him on 20 November, 1987, it was learned that the problem originated in the time when Father Chowaniec was pastor of Holy Rosary parish. Apparently, it was he who allowed

The above quote makes clear the nature of the problem. It was not a new one by any means. The issue of trusteeism had been one which had occupied the attention of American bishops since the days of John Carroll, the first bishop of Baltimore. Perhaps to emphasize the importance of the ruling, perhaps to reassert his own authority, and perhaps to further discourage interference by members of the St. Stanislaus Society in parish management, the next day Father Barabasz devoted his Sunday sermon to stressing the importance of the virtue of obedience in the life of Christians. To disobey the directives of bishops and archbishops as God's representatives is to rebel against His Church itself<sup>43</sup>

After such publicity it seems probable that the words of this pastor were attentively heard. Unfortunately, some members of the St. Stanislaus Society may have heard in them a challenge or dare. Within months 451 parishioners, including members of the St. Stanislaus Society left Holy Rosary parish to form their own independent church. Why did they leave? Simmons quotes:

...they could not tolerate the pressure imposed on them when they were denied representation in their quest for a part in the administration and were told by the Roman Catholic pastor of Holy Rosary parish that they were leaning toward a Church built by the devil and were devils themselves subject to arrest if they did not

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members of the parish, and of the St. Stanislaus Society to act as trustees of the parish. He thus established a precedent which his successors suffered with. The actual legal proceedings were begun in 1893, shortly after Father Barabasz assumed leadership of the parish. They dragged on for a period of five years.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

leave the premises of the rectory of the parish.<sup>44</sup>

These separated Poles then proceeded to contact the pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Church in Buffalo, Rev. Stanislaus Kaminski. This parish church had separated from the Buffalo Roman Catholic Diocese in 1895, and its pastor was consecrated a bishop by Joseph Rene Vilatte, an ecclesiastical wanderer who affiliated himself with the Old Catholic Church. Thus, this Polish Congregation of Baltimore chose to affiliate itself with the bishop of "The Polish Old Catholics." Bishop Kaminski sent a priest to Baltimore who helped the break away members to move to a former Baptist Church just steps away from Holy Rosary. The new parish was named Our Lady of Perpetual Help Independent Catholic Church. Later, when affiliated with the Polish National Catholic Church, it became Holy Cross Polish National Catholic Church.<sup>45</sup>

Such were the state of affairs in Baltimore's Polonia at the time of the death of Father Skretny. Archbishop Gibbons now faced two problems. He was engaged in the ongoing court battle associated with Holy Rosary, and he had a pastoral vacancy in Holy Rosary's mother parish. The events which occurred within the next twelve months are not totally clear. For some reason Cardinal Gibbons felt it wise to remove Father Barabasz from Holy

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<sup>44</sup>Simmons, Case Study, pp.10-11. Once again, the worth of this note is diminished because Simmons fails to indicate the sources from which he has drawn this information. Is it a recollection of a descendent, or a documentary source?

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.



Rosary and appoint him as pastor of St. Stanislaus, with the understanding that this appointment would be only temporary.<sup>46</sup> Leadership of Holy Rosary parish was assumed by Rev. Joseph Dulski, former assistant pastor under Barabasz.<sup>47</sup> It would seem that this arrangement did not prove satisfactory for many of the people of St. Stanislaus parish. It may have been that Father Morys was upset that he had not succeeded Skretny to parish leadership in the same way that Skretny had succeeded Rodowicz. It does appear likely that during his time as assistant pastor of the parish, Father Morys developed a following of parish members who were loyal to him. This theory is supported by an article in Dziennik Chicagoski dated 26 November, 1904. Written at a time after Morys had resigned as pastor of the parish, the author of this news article looks back at the circumstances surrounding Morys's rise to power in the parish. The author comments:

Reverend Morys did not come to St. Stanislaus by a regular route, but intruded there by force. After the death of Father Skretny, Reverend Morys was able to win over the hearts of many of the parishioners, and they

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<sup>46</sup> This information is drawn from a conversation with Mr. Hollowak on 20 November, 1987. The information is gleaned from court transcripts and associated press coverage.

<sup>47</sup> Father Joseph Dulski was born 15 March 1866 in Prussian Poland. Having come to America, he became a student at "The Polish Seminary" in Detroit. A letter of Rev. Joseph Dombrowski, president of the seminary, to Gibbons reveals that the Cardinal has asked for a student of the seminary to be recommended for service in Baltimore's Polonia. Father Dombrowski responds to Cardinal Gibbons in a letter dated 2 April 1892, recommending Dulski to Gibbons. See Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons from Rev. Joseph Dombrowski. Detroit Mi., 2 April 1892, (ABA 89T1). Father Dulski was ordained by Gibbons in 1894. See Record of Students Ordained for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, (ABA) p. 27.

insisted that he become their parish's pastor.<sup>48</sup>

The question then arises: why did Cardinal Gibbons select this man to succeed Father Barabasz as rector of the parish? The author of the above cited article offers a solution to this question. The author observes:

Cardinal Gibbons, unwilling to do anything to provoke brawls and outrages- all the more since this was when the independent parish was being organized- gave in to their insistence and named Morys administrator at first and then pastor a couple of years later.<sup>49</sup>

This conclusion would indeed make sense. With the threat of schism looming as a dark cloud over Baltimore's Polonia, Gibbons, the great American conciliator, might indeed seek a solution which would avoid further discord. Thus it was that Tomasz Morys assumed leadership of the mother parish of Baltimore's Polonia.

Before continuing to examine the pastorate of Morys, it might be useful to consider for a moment the changes being wrought in Fells Point since the first Polish immigrants arrived. These changes affected and molded the community he attempted to lead.

The single best descriptive for this period in the life of Baltimore's Polonia would be "expansion."<sup>50</sup> Immigrants

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<sup>48</sup>"Parish in Uproar in Baltimore, Md.", Dziennik Chicagoski, 26 November, 1904, p.2. It should be observed that this article is strongly biased against Father Morys. It seeks to show that there were problems surrounding this priest from the time of his first rise to power in the parish.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Data on Baltimore expansion is drawn from Simmons, Case Study, pp. 9-12. It should be noted that despite the rapid expansion of Baltimore's Polonia during this period, when



continued to arrive in Baltimore during this era. More and more they came from Austrian and Russian sections of partitioned Poland. As the limits of the city continued to expand outward away from the inner harbor area, so to did colonies of Poles settle in sections of the city farther and farther away from the center of the city and Fells Point. By the time that Morys assumed command of St. Stanislaus parish, Poles were settling in increased numbers in sections of the city such as Locust Point, across the harbor from Fells Point; Curtis Bay and Fairfield, on the south shore of the Patapsco River; and in Canton, located just east of Fells Point. As numbers of Poles increased, so did organizations develop to meet their needs. Simmons comments:

Polish organizations, founded by the Posnanski people of the first wave [of Polish immigrants to America] built upon [a] qualified willingness among uneducated masses to follow outside leads for self-defense in a new and often hostile environment. They provided a structure and a sense of Polish identity for the mass of late-comers.<sup>51</sup>

Among such organizations which have already been considered were the ethnic parish churches, and the beneficial societies associated with them. Several other significant institutions might also be mentioned. The first of these were the ethnic savings and loan associations.

Simmons observes that among the values which the Polish peasant family brought with them were a desire for economic

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compared to the Polish settlements in other major American cities, such as Cleveland, Chicago or Detroit, the size of the Baltimore settlement remained relatively small.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.2.

stability, self reliance and stability of marriage. Generally, the stress was more strongly placed on family security than on personal advancement.<sup>52</sup> The physical embodiment of all of these cultural values was the home.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, those Poles who settled in Baltimore placed a high premium on home ownership. Much of their hard earned money went toward the purchase of a house of their own. In the city of Baltimore it expressed itself in the purchase of one of Baltimore's famous row homes. Mary Laura Swanson, in her consideration of Polish organizations in Baltimore's Polonia comments that the Poles of Baltimore were:

...a thrifty people. Not many generations from the soil, their great ambition in life is to own land. They will go hungry and take their children out of school to work in order to secure money to purchase homes...A very large percentage of Poles in Baltimore own their own homes and have purchased them through their building and loan associations.<sup>54</sup>

The acquisition of a home entailed the purchase of land and the need of a mortgage. To satisfy this need there were created ethnic building and loan associations. In Baltimore, the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>53</sup> Greene argues forcefully that land acquisition and ownership was a status symbol in Poland. Thus, he argues, that the need to own land was an important psychological influence on the arriving Polish immigrant. The acquiring of real estate became all important if the immigrant was to have prominence in the Polonia. If land was not to be bought here, then money was to be amassed to purchase additional land in Poland, to restore prestige to a family in Polish lands who lacked sufficient property. Greene, For God and Country, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Laura Swanson, "A Study of the Polish Organizations in the Polish Community of Baltimore" (Masters Thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1925), p. 83, as quoted in Greene, For God and Country, p. 41.

Sobieski Association was established in 1884. Continued urban growth necessitated the creation of others. Hence, there developed the Kosciuszko Building and Loan in 1894. Later there also appeared the St. Casimir Savings and Loan Association.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from these local institutions, developed through the efforts of middle class Polish businessmen, there also appear in Baltimore's Polonia local branches of national Polish organizations. Bukowczyk observes that during this period:

Organized Polonia was not as fragmented as it seemed. Forward-looking immigrant lay and clerical leaders had reached far beyond the narrow confines of their local neighborhoods and parishes to create national fraternal bodies such as the Polish Roman Catholic Union (1873), the Polish National Alliance (1880)...<sup>56</sup>

Thus it was that in 1886 there was established the first Baltimore lodge of the Polish National Alliance, providing life and funeral insurance. Some years later, in 1912 there appeared a local representation of the Polish Roman Catholic Union.<sup>57</sup> It was through such organizations as the PNA and later the PRCU that Baltimore remained a part of a national network of Polish immigrant society in America.

Another means of uniting Baltimore's Polish community with the outside world was its ethnic newspaper. At once this media afforded the Poles of Baltimore an opportunity of learning what was going on in their own neighborhood and in the world

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Bukowczyk, And My Children, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Simmons, Case Study, p. 12.

beyond Baltimore. At the same time newspaper correspondents had the opportunity of telling other American Polonias about events transpiring in Baltimore. Thus, there was established a means of true solidarity among Poles across the United States, and with Poles still living in Poland. It was a way in which Baltimore Poles could learn of events affecting family and friends in distant cities or nations.

In 1891, Wladyslaw Welzant, president of the Kosciuszko Building and Loan Association founded Baltimore Polonia's strongest newspaper, Polonja.<sup>58</sup> After some years of independent existence, it combined prior to World War One with another local paper, Jednosc. This paper continued to serve the needs of Baltimore's Poles until its demise in the 1940's. In order to keep their own readers aware of events concerning Baltimore's Polish community, larger Polish newspapers, such as those in Chicago and Detroit, would often pick up articles printed in these two Polish papers. It is important to observe here that Father Morys had a hand in the publication of the newspaper, Polonia. Thus, during the time of his pastorship the paper often used as a vehicle to express his views, and those of his supporters in later years.<sup>59</sup>

A final institution which might be commented on was the system of schools. Despite the fact that both St. Stanislaus and

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<sup>58</sup>Data on Baltimore's newspapers is drawn from Simmons, Case Study, p.11.

<sup>59</sup>Dziennik Chicagoski, 26 November, 1904, p.2.



Holy Rosary parishes had schools, it would appear that they were not well attended. In an America where more and more education was a necessity for advancement up the social ladder, school was not a great priority among the Polish immigrant working family. To substantiate this for Baltimore Poles, Simmons observes that in 1900 roughly 18.2% of the Polish children between the ages of ten and fifteen were working for pay. Few went to school beyond their teens.<sup>60</sup> Thus many of the youth of St. Stanislaus parish could be found working with their parents, as employees in area factories.

As was mentioned earlier, expansion is the best descriptive for the Polish community of Fells Point during this period. Daily, Poles continued to enter into the area of Fells Point, looking for a place to pray, to live and to work. Father Morys did not long remain alone to handle this great influx of immigrants. He gained an assistant in the person of the Reverend Charles Kotlarz.<sup>61</sup> This priest had arrived from Poland in 1900. Having presented his credentials to Cardinal Gibbons he was named assistant pastor of St. Stanislaus parish.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 4. It is most regrettable that Simmons fails to footnote his data on this subject.

<sup>61</sup> Rev. Charles Kotlarz was born in Upper Silesia, 27 December 1875. Most of his priestly training was obtained at the American College at the Louvain. When his priestly training had been completed he was ordained to the priesthood on 8 July, 1900 by Bishop J. F. Steppen. After a return to his native town to celebrate his First Mass, he departed for America. he arrived and disembarked in New York Harbor on 15 August, 1900. For further details on his life see: "Rev. Charles Kotlarz," Golden Jubilee Record Book of St. Casimir Roman Catholic Parish, (Baltimore, Md.: 1952), n.p..

Father Morys employed a twofold approach in dealing with the increasing numbers of souls who sought spiritual solace under his care. At St. Stanislaus parish he began a large scale building campaign to improve existing parish facilities, and to add to them when the need arose. During his administration he purchased land and erected a two story rectory at the corner of South Ann and Aliceanna Streets.<sup>62</sup> An article in the Dziennik Chicagoski, written at the time of Father Morys's resignation lists among his accomplishments as pastor:

Rev. Morys built a new school where our children study in Polish...and [he] also finally enlarged the home of the sisters, and built a new rectory at St. Stanislaus, buildings which<sup>63</sup> were finished and ready for use only two weeks ago.

In addition to this, Father Morys worked to decorate the church and it was he who installed electricity in the church building.<sup>64</sup> To carry out such an extensive building campaign within such a short span of time is quite an accomplishment. More than likely, it must have placed quite a strain on parish finances. Yet, Father Morys did not stop with these material accomplishments. He faced another problem. Increasing numbers of Poles were settling in a part of the expanding city just to the east of Fells Point, in an area known as Canton. Father Morys conceived of the idea of establishing a second daughter parish of St.

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<sup>62</sup>Golden Jubilee Record Album of St. Anthony Province, p. 52.

<sup>63</sup>"From Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 19 October, 1904.

<sup>64</sup>"From Baltimore, Md.," Dziennik Chicagoski, 19 October, 1904.

Stanislaus to serve these Polish immigrants.

The first necessity in the task of making his dream a reality was the acquisition of a parcel of land for the new Church. The Golden Jubilee Album of St. Casimir Church recounts how this took place:

It was from this...Canton Company that in 1902 Rev. Morys, pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, purchased a grant of land 330 feet long and 60 feet wide, as the future site of St. Casimir parish. A new church was an absolute necessity...it was to serve as an outlet for the surplus Polish population, that swelled the confines of Saint Stanislaus parish in or about 1900. The plot of land lay between Kenwood and Lakewood avenues, adjacent to O'Donnell, the most important street in Canton, named after Captain O'Donnell.<sup>65</sup>

With the purchase of this parcel of land, work commenced almost immediately on the construction of the new parish facility. It continued without break until the structure was completed 9 November, 1902.<sup>66</sup> The first floor of the building comprised five classrooms while the Church proper took up the second floor. The cost of this structure is listed as \$35,000.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>"Parish History," Golden Jubilee Record Book of St. Casimir Roman Catholic Church, n.p.. Old records have it that the name Canton was given to the area by Captain John O'Donnell, master and owner of the East India Company, when he arrived there from Canton, China, in 1785. He purchased the land in this area of Southeastern Baltimore. After his death, in 1805, the Canton Company was organized and legally acquired the land for industrial development. It is from this company that Morys obtained a parcel of land for a Church. Much of the area was used to build factories, especially canneries, at which unskilled Poles worked.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. This account describes the building erected as being a combination two story structure made of red brick. It faced Lakewood Avenue, overlooking the northwest branch of the Patapsco River.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.



It is truly amazing that Father Morys could have accomplished such a feat while simultaneously renovating his own parish complex. Yet, this was not the end of the building activities of this pastor. At the same time that the St. Casimir Church structure was being erected, Father Morys arranged for and commenced the building of a rectory and sisters' convent for this new parish. This additional project must have progressed equally rapidly toward completion; for, in his history of Baltimore Catholic schools, Corrigan notes, "These [Felician] Sisters also took charge, in 1902, of the school of St. Casimir, the third Polish parish in Baltimore."<sup>68</sup>

This combination church and school building was solemnly dedicated on 9 November, 1902. Cardinal Gibbons himself presided at the dedication ceremony. It is unclear exactly when the other buildings of the parish plant were ready for occupancy. St. Casimir Church remained a mission of St. Stanislaus parish until 1904.

A new daughter parish was being born to St. Stanislaus. Who would serve this newly constituted community of Catholic Poles? Father Morys recommended that his newly appointed assistant pastor, Father Kotlarz be assigned to administer the parish in its first days of existence, while remaining also the assistant pastor of St. Stanislaus under Morys. Thus, Father Morys held control over the work he had created. The first few months of Father Kotlarz's ministry were undoubtedly trying for,

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<sup>68</sup>Corrigan, The Catholic Schools, p. 154.



"Lack of accommodations forced Father Charles to commute daily to Canton to celebrate Holy Mass."<sup>69</sup> It was some time until rectory accommodations were completed.

During the time when Father Morys was pastor of St. Stanislaus, sources indicate that he also acquired a second assistant, Rev. Francis Wieszcik. Little information is known of him. One significant fact which they do reveal is that Father Wieszcik was a close relative of Father Morys.<sup>70</sup> During his days at St. Stanislaus, Father Wieszcik assisted Father Kotlarz in the work of administering St. Casimir mission.

Aside from the major construction projects discussed above, it would seem that Father Morys had one other dream. That dream was to bring together the bodies of his three deceased predecessors in a special resting place prepared at the parish cemetery. From the publicity it received, the realization of this hope must have been one of the great moments in his own stay at St. Stanislaus and also in the life of the parish. Already the bodies of Rodowicz and Skretny rested in St. Stanislaus cemetery. There only remained to gain the body of Father Koncz. An article in Baltimore's Catholic Mirror, dated 31 October, 1903, reports:

The mortuary chapel which was built by the parishioners of St. Stanislaus Church...for the deceased priests of the church, at St. Stanislaus Cemetery, has recently been completed. On next Sunday afternoon the remains

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<sup>69</sup>"History" Golden Jubilee Record-St. Casimir, n.p..

<sup>70</sup>"Cardinal Gibbons Attacked," Dziennik Chicagoski, 26 November, 1904.

of the first pastor, Reverend Peter Koncz, which are interred in Holy Redeemer Cemetery, Belair Road, will be exhumed and brought to the Church, where services will be held. They will then be taken to St. Stanislaus Cemetery and be deposited in the Mortuary Chapel. Rt. Rev. Bishop Alfred A. Curtis D.D. will officiate. Special electric cars have been engaged to carry the masses of people to and from the cemeteries. All societies of the parish will participate.<sup>71</sup>

In the presence of Bishop Curtis, Father Morys preached what was described as a moving sermon and eulogy of Father Koncz. The account of this event, as reported by Dziennik Chicagoski, makes clear that this was an event of significance not only for St. Stanislaus, but for all of Baltimore's Polonia. It reports, "The Church was so full that there was no room for anyone to stand...It was the first time the Polish cemetery was filled with such a number of people."<sup>72</sup> Again, it records that representatives of all Polish congregations of Baltimore took part:

At the end of the services, the body of the late Rev. Koncz was transported to the cemetery with the assistance of the following military societies: The Knights of St. Stanislaus and of St. Kazimierz, the cadet of St. Marcion of Holy Rosary, as well as the Knights of St. Wojciech and the Hussars of St. Kazimierz.<sup>73</sup>

The author of this article makes clear that this effort was the fruitful culmination of much effort on the part of Father Morys.

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<sup>71</sup>"St. Stanislaus Church," Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 31 October, 1903, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup>"From Baltimore, Maryland," Dziennik Chicagoski, 10 December, 1903. It should be noted that this article incorrectly dates this event as occurring on 6 December, 1903. In fact this event occurred in early November of that year.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

The author observes:

After a short service in the chapel, the remains of Rev. Koncz were placed in a grave alongside the remains of Rev. Rodowicz and Rev. Skretny. After many years of efforts, Rev. T. Morys finally succeeded in carrying out his intention of transferring the remains of the first pastor, the founder of the Polish parish in Baltimore, to where they should long since have lain, i.e. to the Polish Cemetery, amid those who in the past preached the Word of God and where<sup>74</sup> his grave will be under the kind of care it deserves.

It is ironic that the former pastor so honored on that day in 1903 should have been so detested by the same congregations while he lived just twenty years earlier. Those who sought to be rid of him, now were reclaiming him as one of their own. They claimed his body as they claimed their own oneness with the past. These Poles chose to deny or forget the painful battles of the 1880's. Perhaps, they felt that on that day they were doing Penance and making atonement for past sins, the sins of their youth, or the sins of their parents. One can only speculate about this. In any case Morys helped his congregation to make peace with their past.

One thing is certain, the actions of Morys in securing the body of Koncz for St. Stanislaus won him a place in the hearts of many of his parishioners. The above cited article affirms:

We are certain that the parishioners of St. Stanislaus and of St. Casimir's, as well as those who are currently members of other parishes and who were formerly parishioners of Rev. Koncz, are very grateful to Rev.

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.



Morys for his efforts undertaken for this purpose.<sup>75</sup>

Fr. Morys had other building projects which he hoped to accomplish. In an article in The Baltimore Mirror, dated 5 December, 1903, there is reported news of a new project of Fr. Morys.<sup>76</sup> It states that he planned to erect a new two story brick annex to the present parish complex. The new structure would be located on the corner of Ann and Aliceanna Streets. To be known as the St. Stanislaus Memorial Building, it would be constructed in 1904 as a part of the twenty-fifth jubilee celebration of the founding of the parish. The new building would be large, having fifteen rooms. No intended use is listed for this building.

It seems relatively certain that Father Morys had plans for a festive celebration of the silver jubilee of the parish. Unfortunately, such was not to be the case. 1904-5 was to prove to be a truly eventful year in the life of the parish, a year of pain and suffering, a year of sad departures and unexpected changes. In short, it was to truly be a time of transition. What were the events which would lead to such an era of turbulence and unrest?

From the brief study of the parish thus far presented, it is clear that throughout its history internal dissensions were an almost ever-present reality. They appear as often among its

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> "For St. Stanislaus Memorial," The Baltimore Catholic Mirror, 5 December, 1903, p.5.

priests as among rival factions of the laity. The period under present consideration seems to have been no exception to the rule. The causes of the current unrest are unclear. It is possible that there existed rivalry among the priests. One also wonders about the feelings of the parishioners at the incredible expenditures of Father Morys, necessitated by his elaborate building projects. Where did these poor manual laborers acquire such funds? Were they tired of continually footing the bills for his building projects? In any case, the evidence points to the fact that there did exist unrest both among the priests of the parish and among various groups of parishioners who supported these priests.<sup>77</sup>

Whatever the dispute was, it manifest itself in a feud between Father Morys and his assistant, Father Wieszck. This feud seems to have come to a head in the latter part of 1904. An article in Dziennik Chicagoski, dated 26 November, 1904, sums it up as follows:

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<sup>77</sup>Feller speaks on this issue. Unfortunately, his description of the events to be recounted here is inaccurate. Beginning with an account of the troubles surrounding the separation of the Polish Nationals from Holy Rosary Church, he continues with a description of the events surrounding the departure of Rev. Morys from St. Stanislaus, but assumes the events also occur at Holy Rosary. This initial confusion of facts leads one to question whether much of the subsequent data he sets forth applies properly to events at St. Stanislaus or Holy Rosary. It would seem that Fuller has erroneously assumed that correspondence of Gibbons recounting difficulties with the Poles in Baltimore applies to Holy Rosary, when in fact it applies to events at St. Stanislaus. See: John Quentin Feller Jr., "The Public Character of Cardinal Gibbons in His Archdiocese" (Master's thesis, Catholic University, 1965), pp. 75-8.

The Polish parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Baltimore, Md. has been the site of scandalous scenes for several weeks now. Outrages rule there, and it often comes to blows between members of the two factions into which the parish is divided. Rev. Morys, the pastor of the parish, had his assistant, who is also a close relative of his, arrested, and initiated a lawsuit against him. It all supposedly has to do with a scandalous matter on which it is best to draw the curtain. Whatever the case, we can only report that Rev. Morys arrested and sued his assistant without the knowledge and permission of his spiritual superior, Cardinal Gibbons.<sup>78</sup>

What was the outrage committed against Father Morys which led him to pursue such a drastic course? "The curtain" is pulled back just a bit in another article from Dziennik Chicagoski. In it the reporter asserts, "The pastor, Rev. Morys, swore out a warrant against his assistant for having sent an indecent letter to his [Morys's] landlady."<sup>79</sup>

By moving from the level of the press to that of the personal correspondence of those involved in this affair, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of the situation. Morys clearly states his position in a letter to Cardinal Gibbons, dated 5 October, 1904. In it he states:

During the last retreat I have been notified of Your Eminence's desire to see me. On Thursday of the same week I went to Your Eminence's room at 4 p.m. and I was informed that Rev. A. Marzecki would be my assistant priest; on this occasion I mentioned to Your Eminence some of the troubles and asked for the permission to prosecute the offender, Rev. F. Wieszck, my former assistant. In one way Your Eminence prohibited to act then I mentioned that I have been often the object of

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<sup>78</sup>"Parish in Uproar in Baltimore, Maryland," Dziennik Chicagoski, 26 November, 1904, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup>Dziennik Chicagoski, 18 November, 1904. Information telegraphed to this newspaper from the Detroit Polish Daily.



ill treatment in letters sent by Father Wieszck. I asked Your Eminence if I could take any action with the U.S. postoffice against the sender of such letters and these are the words Your Eminence told me: This you can do, I have no objection. [emphasis his] On this ground I acted in the affair the outcome of which I did not expect as it happened. Thinking of your permission above mentioned I think that I did not do anything<sup>80</sup> out of the way except the scandal unexpected as it is.

In this way Father Morys states his side of the case. From the letter it appears that the feud between him and Father Wieszck is of longstanding duration. It also involves more than the single letter, for which he apparently took his former assistant to court. Could Father Morys have misunderstood the cardinal's instructions to him? Or, could Cardinal Gibbons have failed to grasp the true nature of the request which Morys laid before him perhaps in somewhat broken English? It is difficult to ascertain the exact time of this retreat and this critical conversation. One clue to its date is the mention of the appointment of Father Marzecki as a new assistant pastor of the parish. A note in Dziennik Chicagoski, dated 8 August, 1904 states, "The Rev. Andrzej Marzynski has been named vicar at St. Stanislaus parish."<sup>81</sup> The retreat most probably took place a short time before this issue; for, the newspaper was usually prompt in reporting news events in Baltimore.

The Chancellor of the archdiocese wasted no time in responding to the above cited letter of Morys to Cardinal

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<sup>80</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Rev. Tomasz Morys. Baltimore, Md., 5 October, 1904, (ABA 101P2).

<sup>81</sup>"From Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 8 August, 1904.

Gibbons. In his response the chancellor informs Morys that:

His Eminence directs me to say that any inference you may draw from his words—to the effect that he gave you any encouragement to have a brother priest arrested and summoned before a criminal tribunal is absolutely false and unwarrantable. When you informed His Eminence that you proposed to do so, he forbade you emphatically under pain of suspension. Moreover, he directs me to say that you have inflicted upon the clergy and laity of Baltimore an injury almost irreparable, a humiliation which bows their heads in shame. But the end is not yet. You shall hear from His Eminence again, for this matter shall receive his early and serious attention, and<sup>82</sup> you must prepare yourself to bear the consequences.

The tone of the above letter gives a clear indication of the seriousness with which they viewed the actions of Father Morys. The scandal must have been considerable. The response of Cardinal Gibbons to the situation also shows the seriousness. A newspaper article, attempting to explain the situation clearly for its readers, well sums up the situation:

Canon law states that misunderstandings and quarrels between priests are to be settled by spiritual authorities and can be brought into secular courts only with the expressed permission of those authorities. A priest who does not comply with the law of the Church is subject to severe ecclesiastical punishment. Such a punishment was inflicted on Rev. Morys, who by dragging his fellow priest into the secular courts, not only disregarded canon law but also exposed the priesthood to scorn and derision. Cardinal Gibbons suspended Rev. Morys and revoked his authority for having repudiated Church law, and [he] entrusted the administration<sup>83</sup> of St. Stanislaus parish temporarily to another priest.

Father Morys left the parish on 13 October, 1904. Reports

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<sup>82</sup>Letter of P. C. Gavin, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, to Rev. Tomasz Morys, Baltimore, Md., 5 October 1904, (ABA unnumbered).

<sup>83</sup>"Parish Uproar," Dziennik Chicagoski, p.2.

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extent of three hundred dollars and more.<sup>86</sup>

The need for an independent audit of the books seems then to support this proposition.

The initial reaction of Father Morys's friends to his departure seems to have been one of shock. This is seen in an article prepared shortly after his departure. The author observes:

Today is the first day of a deep mourning which hangs over the parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Baltimore. For it was just yesterday [October 13] that our parish was orphaned when our universally idolized pastor, Rev. Tomasz Morys, left the parish for a temporary rest after his hard work and many worries of recent days, and went to see friends in Connecticut. The last few days of his stay in Baltimore were definitely one of the greatest trials to which a man in his position can be subjected... And so after eight long years, he was forced by circumstances not wholly under his control to leave his church, his parish, and his dear parishioners, and to begin work anew elsewhere. Even his worst enemies would have to admit that no Polish parish has ever had a better manager than Rev. Morys proved to be...

Another report from Baltimore seeks to minimize the harm done by Rev. Morys's disobedience by contrasting it with his accomplishments:

Anyone can violate the laws of Church or State, but there are few who can administer a parish composed of several thousand so that it will grow the way ours has developed over the last seven years. Even the Rev. Morys's worst enemies must admit that. And everyone

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<sup>86</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from James F. Donahue of St. Patrick's Church, Baltimore, Md., 10 January, 1905, (ABA 102A5).

<sup>87</sup>"From Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 19 October, 1904. It is clear from the tone of the article that it is written by one supporting Rev. Morys, and somewhat confident that he will return.

admits now that Rev. Morys was good for the parish and to the parishioners, and<sup>88</sup> that he cared for their welfare, and never his own.

This same author then proceeds to seek to praise the former pastor by noting his own unselfishness and lack of greed:

Now if, for example, during all this time, instead of building and increasing the parish and saving the parish money, he had been lining his own pockets and possessed a sum of money, like a certain deceased priest in Pennsylvania, who upon dying left \$140,000 in his estate- well then, Rev. Morys's current enemies would have respected and flattered him; but the fact that the Rev. Morys ignored his own pockets and cared only for the good financial condition of his parish is the reason that some are attacking him now.<sup>89</sup>

One cannot help but notice the attack on the anti-Morys faction embodied in this article. Every effort is employed to paint Father Morys in a favorable light. The article ends with a wish:

We have hopes, however, that His Eminence the Cardinal will finally hear the prayers and entreaties of our parishioners and will give us back Rev. Morys as the pastor of our parish.<sup>90</sup> We trust God, and our prayers will be answered.

A final article to be considered as representative of the literary out put of the supporters of Morys. This article is especially touching as it recounts the feelings of parishioners visiting their dead at the parish cemetery, just a short time

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<sup>88</sup>"From Baltimore Md.," Dziennik Chicagoski, 2 November, 1904.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid. The author of this article might be surprised to learn that Father Morys was not as poor as he might have thought. On 2, December 1904, Father Morys wrote to Cardinal Gibbons offering to sell to the archdiocese the house in which the priest at St. Casimir is living for the modest sum of \$1,475. See: Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Rev. Tomasz Morys. Providence R.I., 2 December, 1904, (ABA 101T2)

<sup>90</sup>ibid.

after Morys's departure. This might well have been an exceptionally powerful moment for the people in light of the events which occurred there the previous year, that is the fruition of Morys's efforts to have the first pastor buried there. The article states:

At the cemetery...the people realized for the first time that they had been deprived of their priests who had cared for them so long. Father Barabasz delivered the sermon. Each of our parishioners grieved over the loss of him who took care of this cemetery for so long, who built that chapel and had brought his late predecessors there for their eternal rest, and who was preparing a place there for himself... Now when he had proved for all to see his management and thriftiness, when he could have occupied himself with the inner spiritual work among his flock, he was forced through misunderstandings with some and the instigation of others, to leave behind his eight years of work and exertions, leaving it to others to harvest the fruits of his labors.

These articles are more than just the normal expression of a parish grieving the loss of its pastor. They also served as a powerful tool of Father Morys's friends, to keep his memory alive, and to incite the parishioners to demand his restoration. That his friends acted in such a way is declared in another article written by one not so favorably inclined toward Father Morys. The author of the following article tells what occurred in the months following Morys's departure:

His departure provoked a storm. Some parishioners accepted the suspension and removal of Rev. Morys quite calmly, others, incited by the suspended priest's friends began to rebel. These dissatisfied parishioners sent several delegations to the cardinal to ask him to return Rev. Morys to his post as pastor of the

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<sup>91</sup>"From Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 16 November, 1904.



parish, but always received a negative response. The refusal of Cardinal Gibbons resulted in Rev. Morys's advocates' decision not to abandon him and to demand the suspended priest's return to the parish, cost what it may.... The weekly Polonia published by Rev. Morys has contributed not a little to the conflicts; instead of soothing minds it adds fuel to the fire and tries to present Rev. Morys as a victim of injustice.<sup>92</sup>

The parishioners, longing for the return of Father Morys, had a perfect opportunity to plead their cause before the cardinal. On 13 November of that year the people of St. Stanislaus celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of their parish, as well as the annual indulgence on the feast day of the patron of their parish. On that snowy Sunday a number of priests from other parishes came to the festivities, and in the afternoon Cardinal Gibbons also arrived to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation with the faithful.

An account in Dziennik Chicagoski described the events as follows:

As soon as Cardinal Gibbons entered the rectory, however the building was surrounded by an enormous crowd of men, women, and children, and all around the building were heard cries and shouts that promised no good. Soon there stood before the cardinal a committee composed of several men, who began at first politely, but then more violently, to ask for Father Morys's return to the parish. As he had earlier, the cardinal politely but firmly said that Father Morys could not under any circumstances return to the parish until he performed the specified penance, and go on a retreat. The committee began to press the cardinal brutally, and soon an excited crowd began to fill the rectory. Cardinal Gibbons, seeing how matters stood, went upstairs and ordered the door closed. Soon the police, informed of the disturbance, arrived in considerable numbers, rescued the cardinal from the unpleasant

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

situation, and escorted him to his carriage.<sup>93</sup>

A second article, published a week earlier in Dziennik Chicagoski, offers additional information on the incident. Drawn from the Detroit Polish Daily's account of the event, it offers a more dramatic retelling of the event, and one much more critical of Morys's supporters. For example, this article recounts that:

Cardinal Gibbons [was] attacked by exasperated crowds in front of the Church of St. Stanislaus. The cardinal, seeing himself endangered was forced to seek refuge in the rectory, but saw that it could not protect him, and [he] went up to the second floor. In the meantime the police had been telephoned, and when they arrived they dispersed the crowds, which were even breaking into the rectory. The Poles are maintaining that they will not let the cardinal into the church until Rev. Morys returns to the parish.<sup>94</sup>

The pro-Morys newspaper, Polonia, offers quite a different account of these same events.

His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons arrived at St. Stanislaus for the jubilee at 6:30 pm. A number of members of the St. Wojciech Society came out to meet him and, walking beside him, escorted his Eminence to the new rectory. There, despite storms and snow, a great number of the faithful had assembled to greet the church dignitary. A considerable number of our parishioners were congregating at that time in the school hall, and having learned of His Eminence's arrival hurried through the courtyard to the rectory to have a chance to greet His Eminence and simultaneously

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<sup>93</sup> Dziennik Chicagoski, 26 November, 1904, p.2. The following comment precedes the article from which this account is drawn, "On the basis of telegraphic reports, and then on the basis of various comments, reports and articles of the newspaper, Polonia, published in Baltimore md., we have been giving information about the disagreeable conflicts at St. Stanislaus parish in baltimore. today we give as well the following explanation which recently appeared in Polak we Ameryce, in order to present this affair to our readers from all possible points of view."

<sup>94</sup> Dziennik Chicagoski, 18 November, 1904.

to ask him to recall Rev. Morys as pastor of the parish. The whole rectory was soon filled with the oldest parishioners, demanding the return of Rev. Morys. When it was reported to His Eminence that the parishioners wanted to present a petition to him, His Eminence went down to the assembled, accompanied by the clergy, and after hearing the petition presented in the name of the parishioners by Mr. Felix Brzoskowski, peremptorily announced that he refused to consider it. Naturally the cardinal's sudden response to those who had erected that church and numerous parochial buildings with their own hard earned pennies had a very crushing effect. It crushed them more however, when a certain priest shouted at them at the top of his lungs, "Come, do as you're told, go home, get some sleep. Drop by tomorrow and I'll chat with you." This outraged the assembled crowd beyond measure. But they showed they had enough strength of will and moderation and didn't permit themselves any excesses. The cardinal had a chance to see...that the parish continues to long for the return of Rev. Morys... The police escorted the cardinal from the rectory to his carriage and [he] rode off peacefully. Fears for His Eminence's person were entirely unnecessary, for our people are pious and respect the dignitaries of their Church. In this instance, His Eminence had a good chance to see<sup>95</sup> how our people respect and love their good pastors.

The article does far more than present a picture of the events of the day. It shows the opponents of Morys as the real troublemakers, whether they be priests or prelate. Each mention of Morys is an opportunity to list one of his accomplishments and to generate favorable sentiment for the man.

Gibbons offers his own perspective on the events of that day in a letter to his brother. In it he writes:

Last Sunday night I had an adventure with the Poles who are a most excitable people and some of them are not far removed from barbarism. A faction among them consisting of some men, and hysterical women wanted me to restore a priest whom I had removed for good causes.

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<sup>95</sup>"Report from Polonia on Baltimore Incident," Dziennik Chicagoski, 23 November, 1904.



They invaded the priests' house, and I could not get out till I sent a messenger to the police. They are full of faith, but they are very violent and quarrelsome. I am quite well thank God.<sup>96</sup>

It seems certain that Cardinal Gibbons had much to think about as he returned home in his carriage that day. Now that things had somewhat settled in Holy Rosary parish, St. Stanislaus had become a caldron of discord. The parish could not continue forever without a rector. If a new pastor was offered to the people, what would be the reaction of the friends of Morys? Perhaps, he feared that they might join their former fellow parishioners in the Polish National Catholic Church, just a stone's throw away from their parish Church. It was this very fear which had led him reluctantly to name Morys as pastor eight years earlier. He could not afford to place into such a delicate situation a man whose talents and reputation were unknown to him. In fact, at this point he turned to the Order of Friars Minor Conventual for assistance.

Who were these Conventual Franciscans? An extensive examination of their history would go beyond the scope of this brief treatment. Nevertheless, to offer a brief summary of their activity in the United States seems useful at this point. The Conventual Franciscans have been present in the United States as an organized body since 1852, when four friar priests and one friar brother of the German Province of Conventual Franciscans

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<sup>96</sup>Letter to John Gibbons, from James Cardinal Gibbons, Baltimore, 15 November, 1904, as quoted in Feller, "Public Character," p. 76.

travelled from Havre, France for America, in response to the request of Most Rev. J. M. Odin C.M., D.D., first bishop of Galveston, Texas.<sup>97</sup> They were called to America to work as missionaries to the Catholic immigrants from Germany. Within two years of their arrival the friars were working to establish and build up six parishes in Texas. Soon the friars were also ministering to a parish in Philadelphia, and were chaplains to the Franciscan Sisters at Glen Riddle. In 1858, with ten friars caring for a score of parishes and parish missions, the second superior of the American Mission travelled to Rome to request more friars and the establishment of an American Province. In fact, in 1858 a Commissariate General was established in America and Rev. Leopold Moczygemba was appointed its first Commissary General. The Commissariate was placed under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception. Upon his return to America, Moczygemba was invited to tend to the needs of German immigrants in the diocese of Albany, in Utica and Syracuse, by the bishop of Albany, Most Rev. John McCloskey, D.D.. This invitation was accepted, and Syracuse, N.Y. became the motherhouse of the Commissariate. Soon the Texas missions were relinquished by the friars, and their work centered now in the Eastern states. During the next twenty years the friars increased in number, as did the places in which they cared for immigrants from Germany. In 1866, Moczygemba was succeeded in

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<sup>97</sup> Background history of the Friars Minor Conventual is drawn from "The Franciscan Apostolate," The Minorite, 10 (December 1935): 5-21.

office by Rev. Fidelis Dehm, former Provincial of the German Province. The friars also accepted parishes in Kentucky and New Jersey. In 1871 a General Visitation of the friars in America was conducted. At the end of this examination of the American Commissariate, it was recommended that the Commissariate be raised to the level of a Province. Accordingly, on 15 January, 1872, Immaculate Conception Province was created, and Fr. Bonaventure Keller became the first Minister Provincial. During the next five years the Provincial commitments expanded both in the East and Midwest. Rev. Joseph M. Lesen served as Provincial Minister from 1880 until 1889, and Rev. Francis M. Neubauer from 1889 until 1895.

In 1895 an important event occurred in the life of this Province. It would change the course of the Province and indirectly bring the Province and Archbishop Gibbons together in the subsequent decade. In that year, the Very Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski was elected as the fifth Provincial Minister of Immaculate Conception Province.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski was born in Czarnekow, Poland on 9 January, 1855. Following his primary and secondary education, he emigrated to America. On 28 March, 1874, he was solemnly professed before Rev. Fidelis Dehm in Syracuse, N.Y. According to the wishes of his superiors, his studies for the priesthood occurred at The Louvain, where he proved himself to be a man of great intelligence. He was ordained at the Louvain on 26 May, 1877. The following year he received his Bachelor of Sacred Theology. In 1879, he was sent to Rome to take the prescribed examination for Apostolic Confessors. He then received an obedience to act as Confessor for Polish and German pilgrims at the Basilica of Loretto, Italy. He fulfilled his duties here until 21 April, 1885, when he was commanded to fulfill like responsibilities at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In spite of the hours of work entailed by this assignment, Father Fudzinski



How did this conventual friar bring about such changes? It was during his term as Minister Provincial that he began to accept parishes whose congregations were predominantly, if not entirely Polish in make up. This pattern was to be continued by his successor in office, Very Rev. Louis Miller, during the first portion of his term. In 1896, Fr. Hyacinth accepted care of St. Adelbert's Church in Long Island, New York. In 1898, Fr. Hyacinth founded and assumed care for Corpus Christi parish, located in the Polish section of the city of Buffalo. Another parish which he accepted was St. Joseph's Church, in Webster, Massachusetts.<sup>99</sup>

The acquisition of these Polish parishes soon began to create problems within the Immaculate Conception Province. Many of the friars, including the provincial administration, could not speak Polish. They felt unable to fully understand and minister to the needs of members of the Polish parishes. Thus it was on 12 April, 1899, during the final session of the Provincial Chapter in Trenton, New Jersey, that the newly elected Minister Provincial, Very Rev. Louis Miller, proposed the creation of a

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was still able to pursue studies in Theology, Civil and Canon Law. He received a Doctorate in all of these branches of study on 27 January, 1886. His talents did not go unrecognized. He was named Superior of Confessors, or rector of the Sacred Penitentiary at the Vatican on 4 October 1891. After four years of service in this capacity, he left this work to return to what he felt to be his true calling: work among Polish immigrants in America. See Necrology of St. Anthony of Padua Province Order of Friars Minor Conventual, (Baltimore, Md.: Provincialate, 1961), pp. 24-26. See also "A Brief Biography of Very Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski," Golden Jubilee Album of St. Anthony Province, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup>"Franciscan Apostolate," Minorite, pp. 16-7.

new General Commissariate. It would include the parishes and associated friaries which served the Polish Apostolate, and which were staffed by friars of Polish descent.<sup>100</sup> No definitorial objections were offered to the proposal, yet the effort bore no fruit at this point.<sup>101</sup>

Why was the resolution not carried out? Haas offers the following solution, "[The resolution] was tabled for the time being to allow further expansion in terms of friaries and personnel before the Order could be approached and asked to create what would in effect be the start of a second American Province of Conventual Franciscan Friars."<sup>102</sup> It does seem probable that one of the leading promoters of the idea of a separate juridical entity to serve the Polish Apostolate was Father Fudzinski himself. This is supported by the fact that in the following years Fudzinski worked diligently toward its formation.

Father Fudzinski, assisted by another Conventual, Felix Baron, received the permission of the Provincial Minister, Louis Miller, to make a circuit of visitations to the various colonies of Poles situated in the Eastern portion of the United States.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> See Acta of Provincial Chapter of 1899 of Immaculate Conception Province of the Order of Minors Conventual, (Archives of Immaculate Conception Province (ICPA), Rensselaer, N.Y.) un-numbered document.

<sup>101</sup> Golden Jubilee Album, St. Anthony Province, p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Haas, History, pp. 5-6.

<sup>103</sup> Haas, History, p. 6.

These visits might serve two ends. First of all, they offered the friars an opportunity to minister to the needs of the various groups of Polish immigrants, some perhaps in great need of Polish priests to combat the rise of independentism. Secondly, it afforded Fudzinski a chance to survey opportunities for the friars to acquire additional locations for parochial activity, and to speak with local clergy about the feasibility of such an arrangement.

Fudzinski and Baron were successful in their efforts. In addition to the Polish parishes already acquired by Immaculate Conception Province, they were able to secure several additional places. It might be added that many of these new parishes had histories of parochial factions, and wars between clergy and laity. In 1900 friars began to care for Poles in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, at St. Stanislaus Kostka parish, and at its mission parish of St. Stephen. In 1903 Conventual ministry began at Mater Dolorosa Church, in Holyoke, Massachusetts. In 1904 three additional parishes were acquired: St. Stanislaus, in Chelsea, Massachusetts; St. Hedwig, in Detroit; and finally, the parish being considered in this presentation, St. Stanislaus Kostka in Baltimore, Maryland.

It was not enough to acquire additional parochial ministries. There was also the need for additional friars to serve the Poles in these parishes. And, if a separate juridical entity of friars was to be established, Fudzinski needed greater numbers of Polish speaking friars to insure its stability and



permanence. Accordingly, Father Fudzinski wrote letters to superiors of the Order in Cracow, Poland, pleading for additional men to serve Poles in America. His letters outlined the dangers which Polish immigrants faced without proper spiritual guidance. Responding to his urgent requests, authorities of the Order permitted nine Polish Conventual priests to come to America to assist Fudzinski in his endeavors. Among them was Father Francis Pyznar OMC.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, it was a most felicitous coincidence which brought St. Stanislaus parish under the care of the Conventuals. It was the result of two groups with a need- an Order in need of Polish ministerial opportunities in order to form a new Province, an archdiocese in need of regular clergy to care for Poles and bring peace to their community.

It is not clear how the initial overtures occurred, which led to the acceptance of St. Stanislaus Kostka by the friars. It does not at all seem improbable that Gibbons was aware of the presence of the friars in the United States and of their recent acquisition of Polish parishes. It also does not seem improbable that he had heard of Father Fudzinski, in light of the important positions which the former minister provincial had held during his days in Europe. In any case, Cardinal Gibbons did request the Conventual Franciscans to assume pastoral responsibility for the beleaguered St. Stanislaus.

In a letter of Father Francis Pyznar to Cardinal Gibbons,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

dated 23 January, 1905, one learns of the arrangements made for the transfer. Father Pyznar states:

At present time, we Polish-Franciscans are under the Provincial of the German Province, Rev. Louis Miller, from Syracuse, N.Y.. I referred now to him all what [sic] was done in Baltimore regarding the Polish parish, what is offered us by His Eminence. He then expressed the desire to get "documents of possession" signed by His Eminence and himself with the limits of the parish. Therefore he will prepare such document [sic] and he will come personally to Baltimore to His Eminence Wednesday next (25th of Jan.) in the afternoon.<sup>105</sup>

In a letter, dated 4 February 1905, Miller writes to Gibbons, "I avail myself of this opportunity to again thank Your Eminence most heartily for the extremely kind treatment accorded me during my stay in Baltimore."<sup>106</sup>

The decree for the transference of the parish was drawn up and agreed upon by Gibbons and Miller. The document is dated, 26 January, 1905. In this document Gibbons lists the reason for the transfer:

Already from the beginning, when we accepted care of this flock, we desired to work strenuously so that the faithful who were entrusted to us would be directed in the way of salvation by zealous priests. Thank God, our diocese has had a number of such priests, not a few of our priests work in the diocese also. When however, in recent years not a small number of Poles entered into our diocese, not using the language of this area, wishing to care for their spiritual needs following the practice of our predecessors, using all types of industrious means-even including the sacrificing of money, we spent to get a supply of Polish priests. But

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<sup>105</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Rev. Francis Pyznar, pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, Shamokin, Pa. Shamokin, Pa., 23 January, 1905. (ABA 102B3)

<sup>106</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons from Fr. Louis M. Miller OMC. Syracuse, N.Y., 4 February, 1905, (ABA 102C2).

in our attempts we were not successful. So in such a case we come to you, Father Miller for help. For your cooperation for the present needs of the Poles, as far as the spiritual safety of the Poles [is concerned] we are publishing the following decree: Having had the advice of diocesan consultors and their unanimous consent to your Order, to the Immaculate Conception Province ... we concede the care of the souls of St. Stanislaus in Baltimore with all privileges, rights and duties, in particular the rights of a convent so that you will be able to carry out your way of life according to your Rule and Constitutions...<sup>107</sup>

Also on that date, Gibbons and Miller forwarded to Rome their petition for the transfer of the parish to the Conventual Franciscans. The petition contained four points. The first was the affirmation that the title of the property, of all goods moveable and immovable of St. Stanislaus Baltimore, would remain in the name of the archbishop of Baltimore, and of his successors. The second point states that all returns given in behalf of the Church by the faithful belong to the parish and not to the friars' convent. The third point affirms that the Order is free to name a rector of the Church, if he is a solemnly professed priest of the Order.... The rector candidate can then seek the approval of the archbishop as soon as possible. This third part contains an important point which will be discussed later. It requests that the other priests of the Order, not living de familia who are passing through or are assigned for a short time by the Provincial Minister, are granted confessional faculties. A final portion of the petition expresses a desire

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<sup>107</sup> Decree of James Cardinal Gibbons, addressed to Very Rev. Louis Miller OMC, Minister Provincial of Immaculate Conception Province, Baltimore, Md., 26 January, 1905, (ABA 102B9).



that the Conventual Franciscans would work with other groups of Poles in the diocese and outside of the parish, after further arrangements have been made with the major superiors of the Province.<sup>108</sup>

The petition of Cardinal Gibbons and Father Miller was received in Rome and considered. On 23 February, 1905, Pius X approved an amended version of the decree which had been submitted.<sup>109</sup> Gibbons was notified by the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, in a decree dated 4 March, 1905, of the granting of his petition.<sup>110</sup> In his letter to Gibbons the Cardinal Prefect observed that Rome had thought it best not to approve a portion of the third part of his petition, as noted in the discussion of that document above. In short, Rome stated that it wished to have all visiting friar priests at St. Stanislaus, or those staying only a short time at the parish to receive specific faculties from the Ordinary of the archdiocese. Thus, he and his successors would always be free to grant or deny faculties to visiting priests.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Contract between James Cardinal Gibbons and Louis Miller OMC, Baltimore, MD. 26 January, 1905, (ABA 102B8.1).

<sup>109</sup>Decree of Pius X, Rome, Italy, 23 February, 1905, (ABA 102D).

<sup>110</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Cardinal Gotti of S. Congregation Propaganda Fide, Rome, Italy, 5 March, 1905, (ABA 102B5).

<sup>111</sup>One can only speculate as to why the cardinal initially made this request. One might wonder if after the many unfortunate experiences he had with the Poles of East Baltimore and their priests, Gibbons was attempting to avoid as much as possible, interference in their daily affairs. This postulate

Gibbons was now able breathe a sigh of relief. One of the most problematic aspects of his ministry to the people of Baltimore had finally been resolved, after nearly a quarter of a century. The interminable squabbles of the Poles of East Baltimore had taken a definite toll on the cardinal. Feller cites a letter of Gibbons to his brother John, in which he confides that as a result of his problems with the Poles of Baltimore he was very near to collapsing. The crisis had seriously affected his nervous system. In this same letter, written just days after the contract with the Conventual Franciscans had been sealed, he rejoices, "...now blessed peace reigns in our Balto. Poland...[and] I am myself again."<sup>112</sup>

Even before this contract was being formed, tentative decisions seem to have been made as to the choice of a new pastor for the troubled parish. The task fell to Fr. Francis Pyznar, one of the priest friars who had recently arrived from Poland in response to Fudzinski's request for help, and whose letter to Gibbons was cited above.

Father Francis Pyznar was born in Kobylanka, Poland on 11 November, 1865. He entered the Order in Lwow and was professed there in 1885. His talents and intelligence are proven by the fact that following his ordination to the priesthood at Cracow in 1888 he served his Province as Master, and as guardian of a

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was set forth by Hollowak.

<sup>112</sup>Letter to John Gibbons by James Cardinal Gibbons, Baltimore, 5 February, 1905, cited by Feller, "Public Character," p. 77.

friary. He also served as a missionary in Rumania. As was mentioned above, he came to America in 1889 in response to Father Fudzinski's request for Polish priests to work in American Polish communities.<sup>113</sup> When he arrived in America, Father Pyznar first went to Buffalo, New York, where Father Fudzinski was assigned. After spending some time there, he accompanied Father Fudzinski to Shamokin, Pennsylvania. The Conventuals had accepted care of St. Stanislaus Church in Shamokin, in 1900. It appears that this parish also was troubled with problems of an unknown nature during this period. Fudzinski travelled there with Pyznar to correct the problems if possible. The author of a history of this parish observes:

During these years dissension and misunderstanding [had] plagued the parish. It was at this time [c. 1900] that the bishop decided to entrust the care of the parish to the Franciscan Friars.... Father Hyacinth Fudzinski... personally assumed the task of bringing peace and harmony among the people. He then assigned Father Francis Pyznar as the first Franciscan pastor, with Fathers Stanislaus Tarnowski and Eusebius Pelc as his assistants.<sup>114</sup>

It would appear that Fudzinski had confidence in Pyznar's abilities, in that he entrusted this parish to him. This confidence seems to be proven again, when in late 1904 or early 1905 he assigned Pyznar to serve as the first Conventual pastor

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<sup>113</sup>Necrology of St. Anthony of Padua Province, p. 11.

<sup>114</sup>"Our One Hundred Years: 1874-1974," Centennial Souvenir Book of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, Shamokin Pa., (Shamokin, Pa., 1974), pp. 15-16.



of St. Stanislaus Church in Baltimore.<sup>115</sup>

In his letter to Gibbons, dated 23 January, 1905, Pyznar informs Gibbons that he will come to Baltimore on 26 of January. He will be accompanied by another priest and a brother.<sup>116</sup> It is unclear whether this trip was for the purpose of assisting in the formation of the contract, or for assuming the rectorship of the parish, once the contract had been drawn up.

It is surprising that the man behind this expansion of the Province was not present for the meeting. Where was Father Fudzinski? To answer this question it is necessary to briefly digress from the above series of events.<sup>117</sup>

By 1904, much of the preparatory work for the creation of a General Commissariate for Polish friars in America had been completed. In the year 1904 a most fortuitous event occurred. Father Dominic Reuter, a member of Immaculate Conception Province and an associate of Father Fudzinski, was elected to the position of Minister General of the Conventual Franciscan Order. Father Reuter was not at all ignorant of the developments in Fudzinski's quest for a Polish Commissariate. Accordingly, prior to his

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<sup>115</sup>As an aside, it might be observed that Cardinal Gibbons also saw fit to entrust St. Casimir Parish to the Conventual Franciscans. From 1906, Fathers Eusebius Pelc and Anthony Romanski, Franciscans assisting at St. Stanislaus with Father Pyznar, took temporary care of the parish. In 1907, Father Fudzinski appointed Father Joseph Bok as the first permanent Conventual pastor of the parish. Father Dulski, who had cared for the parish experienced a loss of health and died 9 May, 1906.

<sup>116</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Rev. Francis Pyznar, Shamokin, Pa., 23 January, 1905. (ABA 102B3).

<sup>117</sup>Haas, History, p. 6.

departure for Rome, Reuter called for a meeting of the Plenary Definitory of Immaculate Conception Province in Syracuse, N.Y.. The subject of a general commissariate was set before the friars attending the meeting. Approval was then given to request Rome for permission to establish a special entity to minister to the needs of Polish immigrants in America. Father Fudzinski went to Rome with Father Reuter. As a result of these efforts, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith granted the petition on 17 February, 1905. The Minister General then authorized the canonical erection of the general commissariate and appointed Father Fudzinski as Commissary General.<sup>118</sup> This commissariate was not to last long. A year later, in 1906 the commissariate was raised to the canonical status of a province of the Order. It was thus that in 1906 the Province of St. Anthony of Padua was created. At the first Provincial Chapter, held that same year, Father Fudzinski was elected to the position of first Minister Provincial of the Province, a position he would hold until 1919. From all of this it can be seen that the years 1904-1906 were a time of transition not only for the parish of St. Stanislaus, but also for the friars who had assumed the care of the parish.

At some point in the spring of 1905 Father Pyznar arrived at St. Stanislaus parish in Baltimore to assume his duties as rector. At this same time Father Marzecki departed from the parish and was stationed at a Polish parish in Curtis Bay section

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<sup>118</sup>"Franciscan Apostolate," Minorite, December 1935, p. 17.

of Baltimore. Father Pyznar was soon involved in preparations for the arrival of an important visitor.

Across America unrest appeared among communities of Poles. Laity and clergy demanded greater representation for Poles among the American hierarchy. Ultimately, they wanted a Polish bishop. The Vatican was not unaware of the turbulence shaking Polish communities in America. It had received complaints, requests and petitions from Polish leaders seeking equality in the American Church. As a result, the Vatican sent Archbishop Albin Symon, himself a Pole, to determine the condition of Polish Catholicism in America.

Having arrived in New York City, Archbishop Symon first travelled to Washington to confer with the permanent Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Falconi. Following this meeting, Archbishop Symon made the short trip to Baltimore to pay a call on Cardinal Gibbons. While in Baltimore, Symon planned to visit with the Polish community in the city. Dziennik Chicagoski reported on 30 May, 1905:

...Next our delegate went to pay his respects to His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons in Baltimore which occurred on Saturday. On Sunday he officiated at a High Mass at Holy Rosary Church, and spoke several beautiful words to a very large assembly of our people. On Monday, His Excellency celebrated mass at St. Stanislaus, and spoke to those assembled. On Tuesday he was at St. Casimir's. So he dedicated a day to every one of our local parishes, and spoke to the members of each parish. Early Tuesday, after Mass, he went to Washington...<sup>119</sup>

The author of this article then goes on to editorialize,

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<sup>119</sup>"His Excellency Archbishop Symon in Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 30 May, 1905, pp. 4-5.



advancing opinions as to the reasons, overt and covert, for the papal representative's visit. The author then defends the people of Baltimore's Polonia as unique, in that they do not cause problems:

Our people is [sic] pious, even generous, Polish priests are hard working, always striving for the good of their parishes, educating people in the faith of our fathers and preserving our young generation from being Americanized. is that really so evil and the cause of eternal complaints against us.... There was nothing definite to be learned from his Excellency's first visit to baltimore, because as anyone who knows the state of affairs there realizes, <sup>120</sup> the conditions there are very much out of the ordinary.

Regardless of the nature of the behaviors of the people of the Polish community in Baltimore, undoubtedly the presence of Symon in their midst must have generated stirrings of ethnic pride and a sense of security. A Polish prelate was in their midst to listen and to guide them.

The sense of pride and accomplishment continued for the community of St. Stanislaus into the latter part of that year. Again, Dziennik Chicagoski includes an article from Baltimore's own Polish newspaper, Polonia which reports:

On Sunday 13 October at 3 p.m. the new section of St. Stanislaus Kostka cemetery will be dedicated. The new plots have already been marked out and look very beautiful. Four new and durable bridges have been built along the path to the cemetery. At the entrance one sees a magnificent description: St. Stanislaus Cemetery," and two new gates as well. The main path to the cemetery, and other smaller paths, are paved with slag.... The whole cemetery is cleaned and renovated, and new rules have been established to maintain general

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

order.<sup>121</sup>

The last line might well speak for the whole parish. It would seem that Father Pyznar devoted the first months of his tenure to cleaning up the mess he had inherited. Slowly he was working to renew the parish, to renovate it. In addition, he was laying down new rules to maintain general order in all of St. Stanislaus. He was offering the people something they could be proud of.

Father Pyznar prided himself on his ability to organize and to build. The single thing that the parishioners recall of him is this pride. "Not everyone can build, I can." It was soon after his installation as pastor that Pyznar began to manifest this desire to build.

Father Pyznar acquired two pieces of property as pastor of the parish. Extensive improvements were made to both properties. The first piece of property was located some blocks from the parish at the corner of Paterson Park Avenue and Eastern Avenue. Upon this property he established an orphanage.<sup>122</sup> A second piece of property was acquired, located on the Southeast corner of Aliceanna and Ann streets, across from the Church. This property was converted into a large printing establishment

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<sup>121</sup>"From the lives of Poles in America," Dziennik Chicagoski, 17 October, 1905.

<sup>122</sup>"Priest Missing a Year," Baltimore News, 19 March, 1915. Very little information seems to be available on the nature of this orphanage or on its history and demise.

for Polish periodicals.<sup>123</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that this latter property became the new home for the Baltimore Polish newspaper, Polonia and for Polonia/Jednosc when the two papers merged.<sup>124</sup> Pyznar himself edited the newspaper, and employed the press to put out various Polish religious pamphlets and devotional booklets for the faithful of Baltimore.

Jednosc stood solidly behind Pyznar. A battle of Polish newspapers took place in 1912 between the Dziennik Narodowy of Chicago and Jednosc over the character of Pyznar. It would seem that a certain individual spent some time in Baltimore and was in some fashion associated with Jednosc. He then wrote scandalously of Pyznar in the Chicago paper. Jednosc published a letter from an L. Budny, which attacks the unknown slanderer of Pyznar. In part Budny writes:

...We [Poles of Baltimore] didn't know this newspaper [Dziennik Narodowy], but now we see what it is worth when it writes such impudent lies and revolting slander against our kindly and industrious Rev. Pyznar because he took up for poor Poles to get them work.... And here some scoundrel and blackguard dares to abuse our pastor and us parishioners?... Where'd he crawl out of with his asinine knowledge and morals, like some lunatic?... And my the Lord preserve us from charlatans who dirty the names of good priests...<sup>125</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is much more to the whole affair. Unfortunately sources are not available to unravel the mysterious

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> "Father Pyznar to Retire is a Rumor," Baltimore News, 9 March, 1914. The article states that Pyznar was a backer of the Polish organ Jednosc.

<sup>125</sup> "Parishioner's Letter," Jednosc, Baltimore, Md., 16 July, 1912.



aspects of this interchange. The Baltimore newspaper itself affirms that it will not dignify the controversy with further explanation and comment.<sup>126</sup> One fact that is known is that during 1912 Father Pynzar relinquished his role as editor of the paper, while continuing to submit articles to it for publication.

In addition to his involvement in establishing an orphanage and in providing for the newspaper, Pynzar was also quite involved in assisting immigrants who continued to arrive in large numbers at Baltimore harbor throughout his days as pastor of the parish. He worked actively to establish an agency to care for arriving immigrants. In fact he was named vice president of the Immigrants and Sailors Protective Association of ISPA, when it was created. Cardinal Gibbons himself was the honorary president of this organization, and Bishop Corrigan the acting president.<sup>127</sup> His involvement with this agency brought Father Pynzar a wide reputation in the city. The bureau was located at 1636 Cuba Street, near Locust Point, in Baltimore. Pynzar and his agents would meet incoming steamers carrying immigrants. When they had disembarked, Pynzar and his men would offer them material assistance, as well as caring for their spiritual needs.

A news report in Dziennik Chicagoski offers a glimpse of a day in Father Pynzar's life, and in the lives of those he cared for:

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> "Father Pynzar to Retire is a Rumor," Baltimore News, 9 march, 1914.

Mrs. Galli, a widow with two children came to our port (Baltimore) on the ship Rhein. The immigration inspectors detained her, and she was to be deported for lack of a marriage certificate. Jan F. Morgan, the representative of the ISPA, appealed to Washington. In the meantime Wojciech Goslowski appeared from Davenport, Iowa; Mrs. Galli was expecting him to marry her and had sent him a telegram. For several days she had anxiously awaited word from Goslowski, with no results. On the last day, an hour before the ship was to sail, probably carrying Mrs. Galli and her children on it, Goslowski arrived in Baltimore, and was joyfully received. He agreed to marry the attractive widow immediately, being himself a widower for six months. He went with Morgan to the court and took out a marriage license, and thus armed returned to his betrothed. Mr. Hoffman, representing the Immigration Commission... released Mrs. Galli... Mr. Morgan took her to the ISPA. Mr. Morgan conducted the newlyweds to the rectory of St. Stanislaus Kostka, where the pastor, Rev. Pyznar married them. After the wedding the pastor spoke to them, and in a few words comforted and encouraged the newlyweds, warning them not to forget the important obligations which marriage entails.... The happy couple set out for Davenport and there will begin their family life....<sup>128</sup>

It is rare that one is able to recapture a moment which appears mundane to the world, yet significant in the microcosm of Polonia.<sup>129</sup>

While Father Pyznar served as pastor, St. Stanislaus saw a period of rapid expansion. What was the reason for such large scale development? The influx of Poles from Russian and Austrian partitioned Poland seemed to peak during his administration of the parish. One source estimates that the parish population grew from six to seven thousand souls in less than ten years. Concretely what did this mean? For instance, at the time of his departure from the parish there were approximately nine hundred students who were enrolled in the parish

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<sup>128</sup> This human interest story can be found in Dziennik Chicagoski, 25 September, 1913. It is one of a series of human interest stories from various Polonia's. The accounts at times are dramatic, yet essentially accurate from an historical perspective.

<sup>129</sup>

An examination of the marriage register of St. Stanislaus parish reveals no entry of this marriage. This is unusual, as there seems little reason to doubt that the marriage did occur as described.

elementary school.<sup>130</sup>

There was perhaps one other reason for the building of the parish hall.. In 1907, the Polish Home was established in Fells Point. This organization purchased a hall above a bar on Bond Street. It offered Poles a chance to gather for entertainment, without the need to go to a saloon. It is possible that Father Pynzar wanted to create such a place himself- a place where his people might gather for wholesome entertainment within the bounds and guidance of the parish. It is clear that he had a great devotion to and concern for the youth of his parish. One writer notes:

Father Pynzar took considerable interest in the young people. He organized them into literary, musical, dramatic and athletic associations, provided a number of amusements for them and held concerts and moving picture shows in the parish hall.<sup>131</sup>

How would any of the above described activities be possible if there were no facilities within which to conduct them?

Father Pynzar was a tireless worker. Accounts of his activity at the parish frequently comment on the fact that he never took a vacation while serving the parish.<sup>132</sup> As the years passed he grew to be popular not only within the bounds of his parish, but also within the city itself:

His work in Baltimore had attracted even the officials of the Vatican, and in 1911 a special blessing was received by him from... Pope Pius X, together with the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



Pontiff's picture. He was held in high esteem by Cardinal Gibbons and Bishop Corrigan, and on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination he was publicly praised in glowing terms by Mayor Preston and others at a big demonstration at St. Stanislaus Hall.<sup>133</sup>

As was already mentioned, Father Pyznar had the ability to instill pride in his parishioners, pride in belonging to their parish and pride in their Polish heritage. Another instance which afforded him such an opportunity occurred late in 1912. The event which offered him this chance was the three hundredth anniversary of a great Polish priest/hero: Rev. Piotr Skarga S.J. Dziennik Chicagoski offers this account of the event:

On 28 November of this year we celebrated the 300th anniversary...of Rev. Piotr Skarga. This celebration was organized by the efforts of the Franciscan Fathers, and especially of Rev. Francis Pyznar, who spared no labor or effort to make the Festival turn out splendidly. And the Festival was in fact splendid in every sense of the word.<sup>134</sup>

Societies from all of Baltimore's Polish Roman Catholic parishes took part in the celebration. The Jesuits of St. Ignatius Church, Baltimore were invited to attend. One of their number, Rev. Michael J. Sheehy S.J. was the celebrant of the Mass. Father Pyznar was the homilist for the celebration.<sup>135</sup> The day must have been a moving one for the parishioners. With the arrival of societies, priests and parishioners from neighboring parishes, all converging on St. Stanislaus, the people of this

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> "From Baltimore," Dziennik Chicagoski, 7 December, 1912.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

parish could remind themselves with pride that they indeed were a part of the mother parish of Baltimore's Polonia.

As was mentioned above, Father Pynzar was of the opinion that while anyone could pay off a debt not everyone could build well. He was firmly convinced of his abilities as a builder. Unfortunately, his financial abilities did not match his building acumen. The vast projects which he undertook were expensive. Their accomplishment led the parish into debt. This led to tension between Father Pynzar and his Minister Provincial, Father Fudzinski, a man of impeccable financial abilities. This strain can be seen developing as early as 1907. In a letter to Cardinal Gibbons, dated 29 November, 1907, Fudzinski writes:

Returning home I found a letter from our Fr. Francis, in which he asks with all possible insistency, to grant him permission to erect the walls and roof of his projected hall, and to finish the building next spring. In order to enforce his petition, Father Francis states, that Your Eminence is not against his plan. Is this true? I am convinced that St. Stanislaus Church could not stand a debt of \$150,000 to \$160,000. It has now, as things stand, a debt of \$128,600.00, rather more than less. If the plans of Father Pynzar should be realized the first amount certainly would be reached. It would be against reason and consience [sic] to incur [sic] such a heavy debt. In the hope that Your Eminence will and shall decide for the best of the allocut [sic] have bankrupt St. Stan. parish in Baltimore, I ask your<sup>136</sup> blessing and remain Your Eminence servant in Christ.

No response to this letter could be located. In fact, Father Pynzar was able to complete the parish hall as he wished. How this occurred is unknown. One thing that is clear from this

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<sup>136</sup>Letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, from Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski, Minister Provincial of St. Anthony of Padua Province, Buffalo, N.Y., 29 November, 1907, (ABA 105 P11 5041).

exchange is the strong willed nature of Pyznar.

It was in March of 1914, after roughly nine years of service in the parish that the parishioners of St. Stanislaus received a surprising bit of news. An article in the Baltimore News, dated 9 March, 1914, reports this news as follows:

The retirement of Rev. Francis Pyznar from the pulpit of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church was announced today. A nervous breakdown is the cause of Rev. Pyznar's leaving. For nine years the priest has been one of the prominent figures in the Polish colony and dabbled in politics, journalism and social work. Father Pyznar will leave the city at one o'clock this afternoon for the West it is understood. He will be succeeded by his priest assistants Rev. Joseph Kordaz and Stanislaus Jasiniski. Though it is declared that he is simply taking a rest, it is believed that he will not be returning.... It has been rumored that Rev. Pyznar had intended to leave his church for over a year, and that permission had just been granted by the Provincial.<sup>137</sup>

Additional information regarding this sudden turn of events can be gleaned from another newspaper account. It is reported that:

The Rev. Francis Pyznar...has resigned, and the parish is now temporarily in charge of the Franciscan Provincial, Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski. Father Fudzinski came here from his headquarters in Buffalo to make the change. Father Pyznar left Baltimore about March 20 and it was understood that he was going on an extended vacation, but last night the Provincial stated that Father Pyznar had resigned...and was thought to be on his way to his native home in Poland.... Father Fudzinski is to have an audience with Cardinal Gibbons today, and it is thought that the status of the parish will be discussed. It seems that the Cardinal's office had taken up the question of the supervision of St. Stanislaus following Fr. Pyznar's departure.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>"Father Pyznar to Retire is a Rumor," Baltimore News, 9 March, 1914.

<sup>138</sup>"Father Pyznar Leaves," Baltimore News, article from a private collection. The date is unknown, but would seem to have been within two weeks of the departure of Father Pyznar.



From conflicting details, it is clear that the departure of Father Pyznar was hardly a carefully and well planned out transition. It appears that Father Pyznar had experienced some problems during his tenure as pastor. These emerged into the public arena as journalists attempted to speculate as to the causes of the departure of the clergyman. As Father Fudzinski tried to respond to the inquiries of the press, the tension which existed between them, and which was noted above, becomes much clearer to see. One of the main areas of suspicion revolved around the controversial parish hall. A news article reports:

The Provincial was asked if the operation of St. Stanislaus Hall... had anything to do with Father Pyznar's resignation. He said [that] it had not. He said that he felt the Church was open to criticism for the operation of the hall and that he did not approve of it as a Church asset, but it prevented a greater evil in having another hall in the vicinity of the church.... A number of complaints reached the Provincial, particularly with regard to St. Stanislaus Hall... shortly after the hall was opened. The hall was designed originally to supply recreation for the parishioners. It was to be under control of the parish priests and was expected to offset attractions at other dance halls in the city, where there was no supervision over the dances and entertainments. This element of the hall's purpose was gradually lost and eventually St. Stanislaus hall was being rented to organizations of many kinds.<sup>139</sup>

It seems clear that the use of the hall was a sore spot for many of the parishioners. Angered by the use of their hall by groups which they might have judged as outsiders, these people may have protested. The departure of Pyznar may have afforded them an opportunity to speak their mind. Thus, rumors may have been

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

generated among confused people looking for answers. In fact answers would not come to the surface for some months.

On 19 March, 1915, nearly a year after the departure of Father Pyznar, the Baltimore News featured the headline, "Suit against Priest Reveals Mystery."<sup>140</sup> The article reveals the following facts:

The filing of a bill of complaint in Circuit Court #2 of Pennsylvania, yesterday against the Rev. Francis Pyznar, former rector of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church for the foreclosure of a mortgage of \$16,200 has revealed the fact that none of those most intimate with the priest while he was here have any idea of his present whereabouts, nor any knowledge of what became of him after he left this city under rather mysterious circumstances in March of last year. It is not even known whether he is still in the priesthood....The bill of complaint was filed yesterday by Whitelock, Deming and Kemp for Mr. Roman Ocepa of Northumberland County, Pa....The bill filed against him yesterday asks for the foreclosure of a mortgage of \$16,200 on properties on Aliceanna and Ann Streets, near the Church, and on Eastern and Paterson Park Aves., securing loans from Mr. Ocepa to Father Pyznar. The bill also asks that an assignment to the plaintiff of one of the lots subsequent to the mortgage may be declared to have been made by way of mortgage to secure later loans to the defendant of \$2,750, and that both of the lots may be sold in the proceedings, the net funds realized to be credited against the aggregate indebtedness of the defendant to the plaintiff.<sup>141</sup>

With the publication of the law suit there began an almost frantic search to locate the missing priest. Where was Father Pyznar? Did anyone know of these loans to Father Pyznar? Reporters revealed:

When [Pyznar] left here it was reported that he had

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<sup>140</sup>"Suit Against Priest Reveals Mystery," Baltimore News, 19 March, 1915.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

sailed for his former home in Galicia, Poland. But, at the rectory of St. Stanislaus...it was said this morning that none of the three priests now stationed there know whether he really did sail...[Pyznar] refused to divulge his destination. St. Stanislaus has no rector now, since Fr. Pyznar resigned. The Rev. Stanislaus Jasinski acted as spokesman for the priests there this morning. He spoke regretfully of the manner of Fr. Pyznar's leaving and of the filing of the bill of complaint against him. "It is a very unfortunate case," he said. "We here know nothing whatever of Father Pyznar. We do not know if he is in the country of abroad, not even if he is still in the Franciscan Order. We have heard not a word from him since he left.... The suit? Of that we know nothing either. It has no connection with the parish affairs, and whatever interest Fr. Pyznar had in the properties in question must have been entirely personal."<sup>142</sup>

The friars either did not know where Pyznar was, or they had been advised by Father Fudzinski to remain quiet on the subject. A similar response to these events came forth from the office of Cardinal Gibbons. The article continues:

Practically the same comment on the bill of complaint was made at the Cardinal's residence this morning by the Rev. Louis Stickney, chancellor of the archdiocese, "The first that I knew of the matter...was what I read in the Sun today. As far as I know, it is a personal matter of Father Pyznar's."<sup>143</sup>

Here an interesting phenomena occurs: all related parties disassociate themselves from Father Pyznar. Father Jasinski affirmed that the matter was a personal one, not involving the parish. The chancellor affirms that the matter is personal, not binding the archdiocese. Jasinski adds one more important disassociation. He notes that Father Pyznar never fully abandoned his ties with the Polish Province from which he came.

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.



Thus, he was never fully affiliated with St. Anthony of Padua Province, and the Province could not be held liable for his personal actions.

There which remained unanswered at the time of the filing of the bill of complaint. Who was Roman Ocepa? Was money actually loaned to Pyznar? For what reason? Some of these questions are able to be answered if an examination is made of correspondence which dates five years later. On 19 April, 1920 Mr. Ocepa wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, appealing his case to him. The text of the letter sheds some light on the above questions. Ocepa writes:

I am a Catholic and as such always took great interest in the welfare of the Church. When told by the priests that by placing my money as a deposit in a Church, I thereby would be helping a very good cause, as the churches had to pay 6% interest in banks or on mortgages. I at once was willing to loan my money at 4% to the churches. I was also told that this transaction was authorized by the Hierarchy. The Rev. Francis Pyznar, rector of St. Stanislaus Church, Baltimore, Md., and today rector of St. Mary's Church, #108 Montgomery Street, Montreal Canada, asked me to loan St. Stanislaus Church in Baltimore the following sums of money:

July 26, 1907	\$5000.	at 4%
Oct. 08, 1907	\$1000	at 4%
May 27, 1908	\$3000	at 4%
June 23, 1910	\$3700	at 4%
Sept. 29, 1911	\$2000	at 4%
May 20, 1912	\$1000	at 4%
June 29, 1912	\$ 500	at 4%
May 12, 1913	<u>\$2700</u>	at 4%
	\$18,950	

I am in possession of two Deposit Books [emphasis Ocepa's] issued by Rev. Francis Pyznar OMC as rector of St. Stanislaus Church with the parish seal, accounts as stated above. I paid a visit to His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons three years ago, and he told me that he will refer the matter to the Franciscan Provincial, Very Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski. I also saw Father Provincial, and he told me that he knows that Rev. Francis Pyznar

loaned the money from me, but that although he gave me the deposit books of the parish he did not enter the amounts in the Church record. [emphasis Ocepa's] As a Catholic I do not like to bring a court proceeding against the Church [emphasis Ocepa's] especially against Church authorities and priests- hence I humbly ask your excellency to use his influence with the respective authorities that they settle this affair in a peaceful and Christian way. This money represents my hard work for twenty years. Knowing that people were depositing money in Churches and never doubted a moment that the money was safe I did the same thing, and now I should be deprived of my life savings or be impelled to go to court against the Church or a priest. If your excellency would condescend, I would come to Washington and place before him all the documents that are in my possession and also the deposit books.<sup>144</sup>

From this letter we learn much of Ocepa. In fact, he was a business, owner of a small butcher shop in Mt. Carmel, Pa. He lived in a small town situated a few miles from Shamokin, the location of Pyznar's first parochial assignment, prior to Baltimore. It seems quite likely that Pyznar met and became friends with Ocepa during the time he acted as rector of St. Stanislaus in Shamokin. And, when Pyznar found himself in financial straits because of overexpenditures at the Baltimore parish, it seems quite reasonable to assume that he did in fact turn to an old friend to assist him. More than likely Pyznar believed that he could repay Ocepa for the loans. Apparently, however, the debts began to mount and it became increasingly evident to Father Pyznar that he could not hope to make good on the loans. In fact, Father Pyznar's successor at St. Stanislaus, Father Stanislaus Tarnowski OMC was saddled with a huge debt

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<sup>144</sup>Letter to Most Rev. John Bonzano D.D. Apostolic Delegate, from Mr. Roman Ocepa of the Corner of Second and Maple Streets, Mt. Carmel Pa., 19 April, 1920. (SAPPA unnumbered).

which he worked strenuously to successfully reduce. It remains unclear whether it was Fudzinski's or Pyznar's idea to flee the country and take refuge in Canada. What is clear is that Fudzinski refused to deal with Ocepa's claims, claiming that Pyznar's debts were personal, and knowing that Ocepa would be hard pressed to pursue Pyznar to Canada with claims against him. Thus far we have heard Ocepa's side of the story. What did Fudzinski have to say on the matter?

On 5 May, 1920, several weeks after receiving Ocepa's letter, the Apostolic Delegate directed a letter to Father Fudzinski. In it he wrote briefly:

I am sending you herewith enclosed a letter which I have received. The Father involved in this affair seems to belong to your order, and if so, I beg of you to investigate the matter and send me as soon as possible all necessary information, so that I may be in a position to give the writer a suitable reply.<sup>145</sup>

The request of the Apostolic Delegate afforded Father Fudzinski an opportunity to set forth his views and feelings on the matter. While a copy of the actual response of Father Fudzinski is not available, a rough draft of it has been located. It is clear on several points. In it Father Fudzinski explains:

I answer as follows: It is true that Rev. Francis Pyznar belongs to our community, he was always of the class "novis rebus studens" therefore his superiors always had difficulties to keep him within the limits of good administrations. He was appointed as rector of St. Stanislaus parish in Baltimore, during my absence in Rome. After my return I attempted to change him, but I was asked not to do it. So it happened that Rev.

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<sup>145</sup>Letter to Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski, Minister Provincial, from Most Rev. John Bonzano, Apostolic Delegate, Washington, D.C. 5 May, 1920, (SAPPA unnumbered).



Francis Pyznar bought a publication which according to his intention was supposed to be a good Polish Catholic newspaper. He did this without the permission of his Eminence Cardinal Gibbons and of his religious superiors; he bought real estate and erected a large club house or hall, without the permission of his religious superior, so much so that at the laying and the blessing of the cornerstone by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, I was not present at the ceremony, although being at that time in Baltimore. He bought and orphan asylum pariter without the permission of his religious superior, His Eminence. He bought a resort outside the city limits of Baltimore which was supposed to be a home for the aged and infirm priests, without the knowledge and consent etc. He also started a Polish Savings Bank without the knowledge and consent of his religious superior, which I closed at the occasion of my canonical visitation in 1913.... I deposed Fr. Pyznar from the rectorship and held the administration in my own hand for two years, closing the bank and trying to smooth out the financial difficulties. His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons and the Order took upon ourselves extraordinary pecuniary sacrifices to bridge over the financial difficulties in order to avoid the public scandal; we also had to close the orphan asylum, ignoring the Polish newspaper and the home for the aged priests. This is my personal conscientious inside information in regard to Father Pyznar.

Regarding the letter itself of Mr. Roman Ocepa, I must state that the letter was written "in mala fide." Apparently Mr. Ocepa preferred to be the creditor of all his payments made to Fr. Pyznar, which is positively false because he sold and appropriated all the moneys of the sale of the house and the machinery of the Polish paper. 2.) He sold the property and all of the contents of the orphan asylum. 3.) I have no positive proof, but the same was done, I have been informed with the house of the aged and infirmed priests. Therefore, the pretenses of Mr. Ocepa are evidently false. Why does he not state the amounts realized from each of the above sales? For the last five years, Fr. Pyznar does not belong to our Province, hence he is no longer a member of St. Anthony Province of which I am the Provincial. The only thing Mr. Ocepa could and should do is to prosecute Rev. Fr. Pyznar as receiving money from him under false pretenses. <sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Draft of Letter to His Excellency Most Rev. John Bonzano D.D., Apostolic Delegate, from Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski, Minister Provincial St. Anthony Province, Buffalo N.Y., date unknown,

The contents of this letter do much to change the image of Father Pyznar. It would seem, that while the public newspapers praised the accomplishments of the clergyman, his religious superior could only condemn him as repeatedly acting outside of, and at times against religious obedience. It is interesting that even at the outset of his term as pastor of St. Stanislaus, Father Fudzinski was inclined to remove him. One can only wonder at his reasons for this. Was it perhaps that he had proven unsuccessful in his first parochial assignment in Shamokin? Who was it who dissuaded him from removing Pyznar? Could it have been Gibbons himself? The fact that Gibbons would want some stability in the parish argues in favor of this possibility. None of the documents discuss the existence of a parish bank, although it is certainly in keeping with the character of Polish parishes during this era to have one. It is possible that Ocepa lost his money when the bank collapsed. The rapid closing and selling of the properties accounts for the lack of information available about them after the tenure of Father Pyznar. In the light of this letter, the earlier letter of Fudzinski to Gibbons regarding the prudence of building a parish hall makes great sense. Fudzinski was concerned about the great expenditures of Pyznar.

Another interesting point centers on the official visitation Fudzinski in 1913. It is surprising to hear that Pyznar has been secretly deposed. Pyznar remains in the parish for some months after he has been removed from the pastorate,

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(SAPPA,,unnumbered).

apparently acting as pastor. This would explain one report that Pyznar had commented that he desired to leave the parish some months prior to the date of his actual departure.

A further fact revealed in this letter is the dubious character of Mr. Ocepa. It would seem that he was not completely honest with the Apostolic Delegate, if Fudzinski's data is accurate. He is not quite the naive and innocent victim. One wonders what his motives were: revenge, greed? Or was there more to it all than even this round of correspondence reveals?

It seems only appropriate to allow a final word to Father Pyznar. On 26 June, 1926, Father Pyznar wrote to the Minister Provincial of St. Anthony Province in the United States, Very Rev. Justin Figas. He wrote from Padua Italy, where he was serving at the Basilica of St. Anthony. It appears that even at this late date the matter of Ocepa's claim was still unresolved. This is what Pyznar has to say:

Yesterday I received news from the United States of America, from Roman Ocepa, Mt. Carmel, Pa.. In the known matter of the debt in Baltimore-he went the way of the courts because he could not receive satisfaction from the Franciscan Fathers. I wish to bring to your attention that there resulted very much unpleasantness not only for you, but mainly for the whole Province. I am an American Citizen, hence surely the courts will recall me to Baltimore as the main witness in the matter of charging the debt to the houses. Surely I must go before the courts and reveal the whole affair-this revealing of the nature of things and religious life between me and the Province and in a large measure [will] bring scandal and direct the case against the Franciscan Fathers. From this storm the archbishop of Baltimore may gain and it do us harm. The American courts will not take into consideration our Church Canons and may give an unfavorable judgment against us, and the good, moral opinion and good name of the Franciscans can suffer. That is why I beg the



Provincial to take note of this before hand and do not let this matter come to the American courts, but make an agreement and settle this affair with Ocepa. I wanted to free the Province from this troublesome action by obtaining a certain parish to slowly pay off the debt. <sup>147</sup>But I could not find anyone who would listen-...

Ten years after the initial claim was filed, litigation on the case continued. Interestingly, Father Pyznar sounds quite humbled in this letter. He is eager to make restitution for the damages he has done. Yet, he is unable to do so, confined by circumstances beyond his control. It is unclear how the matter was finally resolved. The litigation continued long after the period germane to this presentation. As an aside it might be added that Fudzinski died in Poland in 1925, while visiting after the conclusion of the General Chapter of the Order in Rome. Father Pyznar, after his departure from Baltimore, remained for six years at St. Mary's Church in Montreal. Afterwards, he returned to Poland where he served for three years as Secretary of his Province there. He then served as Confessor at the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua, Italy for eight years, until 1931. He then returned to Poland, where he died at Cracow in 1951, at the age of 85. <sup>148</sup>

In conclusion, one might observe that the beginnings of St. Stanislaus were shrouded in storm clouds, the clouds which

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<sup>147</sup>Letter to Very Rev. Justin Figas, Minister Provincial of St. Anthony Province, from Rev. Francis Pyznar, Padua Italy, 26 June, 1926, (SAPPA unnumbered).

<sup>148</sup>See Necrology of St. Anthony of Padua Province, pp. 11, 24-6.

rained so fiercely upon those laying its cornerstone. Those clouds seem to have remained throughout the days of its growth. But truly, this is only one side of the picture. It is unfair to focus only upon the negative features which seem to dominate its history. There is also the bright side. It is the story of immigrants who successfully worked to establish themselves in a foreign country among men and women at once familiar and yet alien. Truly it was a parish that knew division. But it was also a community that knew unity and joy- the joy of brides and grooms such as Mr. and Mrs. Goslowski. The excitement of watching children growing in age and in knowledge at the hands of the Felician sisters was also a part of parochial life. The unity experienced in the communal support at the time of the death of a member of the parish, the benefits they enjoyed from a fraternal beneficial society of the parish or neighborhood. Even as the parish grew and changed, so often the parishioners were strengthened in their rootedness in the past by events surrounding the cemetery. Indeed, parishioners often fought with their priests over control of the parish. Yet, at the same time it was the parishioners of the parish who demanded that Gibbons restore the pastor he had suspended. It seems that while parishioners could fight with their priests, they valued them also and could be intensely loyal to them.

Amidst all of these struggles a minor miracle occurred. The people of St. Stanislaus, as well as the friars who served them in, the latter years of this study, gained an identity. In

the midst of countless transitions and changes the people and priests discovered and rediscovered themselves and grew to feel at home in St. Stanislaus parish, in Polonia, in Fells Point, in a small section of Baltimore, Maryland. And growth continues to today in continual times of transition.



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