

Gaude Mater Polonia!By: *Dariusz Zakrzewski*

Cloister of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (CSFN) in Komańcza. In the foreground is Sister Bogumila Zamora standing in front of the statue of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński

In times like these, the most difficult thing to do is to hold course. We all need a beacon to steer by and that for the most part is our Faith. Our Catholic Faith by God's design takes into consideration our need for role models to emulate. We call them Saints and the virtues they embody, not only give us the certainty, that as imperfect as we are, they are attainable and thus worth following, but they also reveal a great deal about our God. The Pantheon of

Saints of our Catholic Faith is extremely rich and by the grace of God, each one was given to the people and time, that made them most relevant. That is not to say, we are not to ponder the universal nature of their virtues at all times. Sainthood is timeless.

The more difficult the times, the greater God's Grace to help us. Those of us proud of their Polish heritage, can truly feel special and blessed. We were given among many others: Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe, Saint Faustina Kowalska, Servants of God Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and Karol Wojtyła. Each one represents the best Poland has to offer and each one's virtues are universal.

Of those just mentioned however, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński like no other, was exclusively given us - Poles, in a unique way. Called the "Primate of the Millennium," he truly was - one in a thousand years. Awaiting the beatification of John Paul the Great, we tend to forget, that since 1989, the beatification process of the Servant of God, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński has been in the works.

Within our own times, most of us were given the chance to experience the power of God acting through their lives and profoundly impacting ours. We were double blessed, by two "giants" of Faith that lived influencing each other, Poland and the World. While the memory of John Paul the Great is cherished across the globe, he tirelessly traversed, bringing God to the farthest corners of the Earth and thus safe, the memory of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński rests for the most part, solely with the Poles. He was our true hero, toiling an uncharted path across the "Red Sea", the yoke imposed on us by treason of our allies at Teheran and Yalta, where President Roosevelt and Churchill doomed us into Stalinist clutches. The fact that the Church in Poland was independent of the communist regime and Faith, although with some difficulty, could be practiced universally, which in essence was a Polish phenomenon within the Communist camp, is the great victory of one man, who entirely entrusted the nation into motherly care of Mary, the Queen of Poland. Cardinal Wyszyński threw the glove in their face by his famous "Non possumus!" (We cannot!), when they tried to take over control of Church nominations. He refused and was imprisoned, but did not falter and single-handedly saved Poland as a Catholic Nation.

There were many martyrs during those times. Hungarian Primate Cardinal József Mindszenty is a good example. But unlike him, Wyszyński faced the enemy not from the safe haven of the American Embassy, but head on, with a dignity and courage of no equal. His heroic Faith saved the Church and our Fatherland. He was the uncrowned King of Poland, Father of the Nation and the wise shepherd. As John Paul the Great has said in tribute to the Cardinal: "[...] This Polish Pope would not be on the See of Peter, if it were not for your Faith, not stopping short of prison and suffering, your heroic Hope, your complete trust without reservations in the Mother of the Church [...]" The same can be said of Poland. There would be no Poland, as we know it, if it were not for the "Primate of the Millennium." Throughout more than a thousand years of our history, he is one of the absolutely greatest heroes we had. He was given us specifically, thus we alone carry the responsibility to preserve his memory and his extremely rich Heritage. A nation that

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**Warsaw by Trotting**By: *Justyna Ball*

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com>

Last week in Warsaw, I was wearing a floppy knit hat and surprise, surprise - almost everyone else did too! It's the newest style. I felt like I belonged! Over the years, I had a feeling that no matter how much I tried to look good and impress my relatives and friends with my worldly insight, they were always ahead of me...

They wore the newest fashions, or at least elements of them, and they had already experienced what I was planning to, and since they did not have to visit their relatives on different continents (relatives from America always visit them), they already traveled to some exotic countries on vacation...

It did not seem like such a dreamy vacation at the beginning. A couple of my American friends were going to a safari, probably packing their long lens cameras while I was stuffing my suitcase with sweaters and several pairs of boots for different occasions of ... the same cold weather. It was going to be cold up there, the Polish meteorologist predicted.

My husband tried to cheer me up by pointing to the fact that we were flying through Amsterdam and not Zurich, which meant that we didn't have to fly over the Alps but over flat land so in case of a crash we wouldn't be stuck in the snowy mountains. I thought that was so thoughtful...

And then he added (jokingly), that dying together would be his ultimate wish.

The guy sitting next to me on the Amsterdam-Warsaw flight was non-responsive, as fellow travelers usually are, totally lost in his book. He did not exchange a word with anybody and just ignored the world around him - or was it just me? When he finally left his seat for the short restroom break, I was able to see the title of his (Polish) book... "Men Who Hate Women"...

What a warm welcome...

I had a list of things to do, people to see, and places to go over the next two weeks. It was New Years Eve, and we were in one of Europe's capitols and La Toya Jackson had just arrived for Michael Jackson's tribute and moon-walking contest. Warsaw's air was fresh and crispy, and the snow was still pure white before it had a chance to turn into muddy mush... and the radio stations played Jay-Z feat. Alicia Keys' "Empire State of Mind."

TV stations reminded people that January is carnival season, and that it's time to pick up your evening attire.

Our son came home to New England for Christmas and later stayed in Boston with his friends so we were using his place in the Lower Mokotow district, which actually used to be... our place, the same one where we brought newborn Karolina, his sister, from the hospital, some 26 years ago. There are advantages to this: it was better than a hotel, because it's fully equipped and you are free to do whatever without being kicked out for not paying the bill. It was better than being at the relatives' places. Their young children won't bug you with their gifts from Santa and their dogs won't lick your face in the middle of the night. Here you are the king of your bathroom, etc. But there is a bad side too. First, you have to clean it (our son left us clean sheets and towels, thank God for that!), remove all the expired food from the fridge and replace it with fresh produce and champagne.

On the last day of 2009, Warsaw officials provided free live entertainment at Constitution Square so everyone seeking some action marched there. The late 80s girlband Bananarama tried to warm up the audience with "Cruel Summer," and strangely enough, it worked. We had a great time singing along and dancing in the street until Jacek needed to use the restroom and we looked around for one for half an hour. When we finally found them, ALL OF THEM lined up in one long row from Hoza St. to Centrum, we were so tired of walking that instead of going back to the stage we walked to the nearest metro station, passing young Varsovians eager to party who had a little too much to drink already.

I guess it was the time when families leave and the out-of-towners enter and start getting a little too cozy. Security was tight, but I did not necessarily trust in their preventive powers and did not want to lose my eye, at least not on the first day after my arrival, in case any corks hit me in the face - also, fireworks are legal in Poland.

So we welcomed 2010 with a bottle of champagne watching the rest of the show on the flat screen from the safety of our son's apartment.

It was the best, with Francis' ... hockey bag in the middle of the living room, his bike partly used as a drying rack, looking forward to the New Year and meeting our electrician and plumber soon to discuss the wiring for our "retirement home."

The house that has taken forever to build, because we hit several bumps along the way.

On New Year's Day, we observed a

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Calendar of Events

Jan. 30, Sat, 6:00 pm Carnival Ball organized by "Krakusy", Pacific Ballroom - Reef on the Water - 880 S. Harbor Drive in Long Beach. **Zbigniew Gałazka Orchestra.** \$95.00 per person. Students (Under 24) \$70.00. Information: E. Romuzga 626-827-7338, A. Ilnicki 818-841-8198, Z. Fitkowski 626-282-5298 and U.Grzelecki 714-964-9165.

31, 13:00 - 15:00 Sunday, 40 Anniversary of POLAM. Polish Parish Hall, 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90018. No charge.

Feb 13, Sat., 6:00 p.m. Valentine's Weekend Dance Party with Zbigniew Gałazka Duo at Our Lady of the Bright Mount Parish Hall at 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA. Reservations at: Diana Kozłowski 310-804-4942, Mariola Mierzwa 818-653-3360 and Anna Glapa-Grossklag 661-313-5449.

26 - 28, Polish Ski Trip, Mammoth Mountain, Departure from 3400 W. Adams Blvd. on Feb. 26 (Friday) 0, 4:45 p.m., return Feb. 28. Information at: 310-331-6492 (day), 310-670-3152 (evening). (See page)

27, 2010, Sat, 7:00 p.m. Concert celebrating 200th anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin birthday organized by Music Society of I. Paderewski and Culture Club of Helena Modrzejewska at Zipper Hall, Colburn School Conservatory of Music. Tickets and information at 818-456-7742.

28, POLONIADA, Competition for an essay or album about selected Pole and his contribution to the culture of the country you live in. Info: fmp7@poczta.onet.pl

Mar 27, Sat, 11:30 a.m. Easter Celebration & 10th Club Anniversary Clubhouse Five, The Polish Club of Laguna Woods, Information: Irena 949-206-9122.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbykooopet@aol.com ★

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