



Polish Profiles

Jan Henryk De Rosen

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

Sometimes instead of attending the Sunday Mass at "Our Lady Queen of Poland" parish, I drive all the way across Washington to the National Shrine, next to Catholic University. I go there to look in admiration at the beautiful stained glass windows, but mostly to look at that marvelous mosaic "Christ in Majesty".

Jan Henryk De Rosen, who did both the stained glass windows and the majestic mosaic of Jesus Christ, was mostly known before the Second World War as the artist who the Vatican chose in 1932 to restore the chapel at Castelgandolfo, the Holy Father's summer residence.

The name De Rosen sounds foreign, but the man was very Polish and has a long and interesting family background. The Rosen's father was the court painter to Tsar Alexander II and to Tsar Nicolas II. His great aunt was none other than the beautiful Angelica Kaufman, who was the great love of the German poet Goethe. Jan De Rosen's great-grandmother was Mary Weaver, an English woman who was a relative of the well known English painter Thomas Weaver.

Jan De Rosen himself was born in Warsaw, Poland in the year 1891. In his formative years he lived with his parents in France. When World War I broke out in 1914 he volunteered into the Polish Army in France organized by Colonel Teofil Sarzynski that fought under the command of General Jozef Haller. After the war he returned to Poland.

His first major works were the beautiful murals in the Armenian Cathedral in Lwow, then the renovations of the Pope's Chapel. Afterwards came the Sobieski chapel in Kahlenberg, Vienna, where the Polish King prayed before the last battle with the Turks.

In 1937 Count Jerzy Potocki, the Polish Ambassador to the United States, invited De Rosen to Washington. When the war broke out in 1939 De Rosen's return to Poland became impossible. During the war years, De Rosen, who had a Doctorate in Humane Letters, taught Liturgical Art for five years at Catholic University in Washington.

Already before World War II, art critics called De Rosen the greatest living liturgical artist of the 20th century, but he showed his great artistry here in the United States. He was also very personable, with intensely piercing blue eyes. I had the privilege to know him personally. Though he was 24 years older than Professor Jan Karski, they were close friends and I met De Rosen through Jan Karski. I also have in my home a lovely little painting given to me by De Rosen and a birthday present given to me by Jan Karski, which Karski bought in 1945 at an estate sale in Washington at the urging of Jan De Rosen. Supposedly the painting is a Bronzino, a very well known early 18th century Italian painter. A painting worth a lot of money. Maybe so. I never had it appraised or investigated. I don't want to be disappointed. I want to believe the painting is a real Bronzino.

Jan De Rosen always pictured Christ as young in his murals and mosaics. A Christ with a strong personality, never meek or self effacing. I once asked De Rosen about it. His answer surprised me, yet it made sense. "I see Christ as someone who performed miracles, who traveled with adoring followers. I see His stoical bearings in face of torture and crucifixion. Besides, there is no psychological description of Christ in the Bible," he added. "Each one of us will see Christ differently."

How right he was! Rosen brought his own vision of Christ in images he created in his mosaics, murals and stained glass windows.

In Washington alone, there are four pieces of Rosen's art. The giant mosaic of Christ at the National Shrine is the most outstanding one, truly a sight to behold. As one walks into the main church where everyone is awestruck by the great figure of the seated Christ. He looks young, strong, regal and glorious. Each time that I pray before it I feel uplifted,

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Satanic Verses

By: **Justyna Ball**

When several weeks ago I proudly applied my "Polish-Americans for Obama '08" bumper sticker, I knew people would notice. Soon after, my landlord saw it and asked me: "Do they have one that says Irish-Americans for Obama?"

It wouldn't be so intriguing if it weren't for the fact that the Cahills are not only Irish but also lifelong ... Republicans.

Wait, there is more: they are not only Republicans, but Catholics as well and the entire family is very active in our local (Sacred Heart of Jesus) church.

Jacek and Tom are running partners and even ran several marathons together. Jacek knew that his co-runner was contemplating the option of not voting for the Republican this time, but would he vote for a democrat? I doubted it.

Tom, a dentist, is known amongst his employees as "Jimmy Stewart" and is compared to Stewart's character in "It's a Wonderful Life." A model family to many, but to us, the Cahills as Catholics are as true as they can be. After sending their four children to the best Catholic schools (all his boys and our Francis went to St. John's, Tom's alma mater.) in the area, he and his lovely wife, took in a... foster child. A boy of a Latino descent. The locals thought they were crazy, having all these material goods and now all this free time, and they go out and do what?!

Our personal gratitude to them is enormous. They are probably the best "thing" that happened to us (besides being healthy and being blessed with two wonderful kids) since we moved here 22 years ago. We often refer to the Cahills as ... adoptive parents.

Our preference for Barack Obama over John McCain was no secret. So why would THEY go for Obama? At sixty-something, Tom's views did not suddenly change.

Back in September, during a funeral for our old friend, Betty "Bongie" Coulthard, the woman who introduced us to the Cahills, the Catholic priest whom she requested to speak (Betty liked to be in control even at her own funeral), talked about how Christianity has changed. How it used to be all about ... the poor (poverty related issues) and how the (privileged) rich should reach out to the poor (through charities, etc.) and how we serve ourselves best by serving others first.

How "Whatever you do to the least among you, you have done to me" and "Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless," used to, occupied our Catholic minds and shaped our views.

The priest continued on about how over the years, the "faith" has come down to only two issues: gays and abortion. Lately, it's been abortion alone (whatever happened to peace, fairness and justice?). Everything now circulates around it, and how this is fundamentally wrong. He talked about how the rich isolate themselves from the poor in gated communities and how gay and abortion issues divide people up to a point that younger Catholics leave the church, et cetera, et cetera...

Since it was election season, we have witnessed this certain confrontation, sometimes in the form of labeling Obama as "pro-abortion." And it did not stop there. It only evolved into more dramatic forms like displays of pictures of bloody fetuses at some parishes, I guess to convince the public that Obama is cooperating with the devil.

At this point, anything goes, and if you don't agree, you'll burn in hell and your candidate will burn with you!

If I tell you that such and such candidate steals, you may answer, "and who doesn't?" In politics, they are all crooks, right? We don't think highly of politicians anyway. But if I call that person "an abortionist" or a "baby killer," well, who wants to be associated with that one...hell is full of abortionists.

Another friend who claims to be a "born Republican" uses the abortion and gay issue against Democrats, or any Obama supporter, although he has never set his foot in any church and proudly displays his Hustler and Playboy magazine collection. His is purely political aversion, although the weapon remains the same.

His political view took over his spiritual side and reasoning.

On the other hand, my husband, who was brought up in Poland in a traditional Catholic household, and whose grandma turned her bedroom into a shrine to John Paul II, and has her grave and wardrobe well prepared for "the day," points out: "Notice that those who are the loudest critics of abortion never actually have to face one anyway as they are usually old men, nuns or priests..."

Yet during the elections, all Catholics are faced with this issue. What makes us split and vote for different candidates? Is being pro-life and pro-choice really what divides us?

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Calendar of Events

Jan 31, Sat, 6:00 p.m. Carnival Dance - Bal Krakusów, Harborview Ballroom, Info: 818-248-7176, 805-306-9045, 626-969-7338.

Feb 14, Sat, 6:00 p.m., Zabawa Serduszkowa, Parish Hall in LA, Info: 818-368-1434, 661-313-5449

14, Sat, Valentine Dance sponsored by Polanie. Polish Center at the John Paul Center in Yorba Linda Information (949) 888-8559

15, Sun, PNA meeting, gmina 73, donoughs, JPII center, Yorba Linda, CA

22, Sun, Friends of John Paul II, Sala Warszawska, Parish in LA

25 - 27, Loveland, Colorado, XI International Polish Alpine Ski and Snowboard competition for a trophy funded by the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles. Information at www.tatrskiiclub.com

29, Sunday 1:30 p.m., PAC General Meeting, Sala Kaszubska, Polish Parish in Los Angeles.

Apr 4, Sat, Noon, Ninth Polish Club Anniversary and Easter Celebration at Clubhouse Six, the Polish Club of Laguna Woods; Information: Irena (949) 206-9122

11, Sat, 1:00 p.m. Egg Hunt on the grounds of Szarotka

18 and 19, Sat & Sun, Spring Bazaar, Polish Parish in LA

19, Sun, Solemn Mass to honor Pope John Paul II on the 4th Anniversary of his death and to pray for his beatification, Info: 562-426-9830

23 - May 3, The Tenth Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles.

May 2, Polish Tea Party, Polish Club of Laguna Woods.

3, Sun, Constitution Day, Polish School in Yorba Linda.

30, 2009, Commemoration of 218th Anniversary of the Polish May 3rd Constitution "Poland Forever", Depictions of famous Poles in history, dinner and dancing to the Pasadena Elks Lodge, Info: Marty 626-577-9797.

Jun 7, Sun, Day of Brotherhood, Polish Parish in LA

14, 2009, Sun, 10:30 am - 5:00 pm, Proud to be Polish Festival, Yorba Linda

28, Sun, 1:00 pm PAC Annual Election Meeting, Pope John Paul II Polish Center, Yorba Linda.

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