

Archbishop Vincent Nichols praises Polish Catholic community

In a October 23, 2007 article in Birmingham England's Independent Catholic News, Peter Jennings writes about Archbishop Szczeban Wesoły, Chairman of the Pope John Paul II Foundation in Rome, was the principal concelebrant and preacher at a special Mass to mark the 60th anniversary of the Birmingham Polish Parish based at St Michael's Church, near the Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham, on Sunday 21st October.

Archbishop Wesoły was born in Katowice in Southern Poland on 16 October 1926, exactly 52 years to the day on which Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, Pope John Paul, was elected as Bishop of Rome in 1978.

For more than 30 years Archbishop Wesoły, who lives at St Stanislaus, the Polish Church in Rome, was responsible for looking after the Polish Catholic Communities in the first and third worlds. "For much of the time the communists were in power in the second world, including Poland," he said after Mass.

Before the final blessing, Archbishop Vincent Nichols, thanked the Polish Catholic Community for the tremendous contribution that they had made throughout the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

"We live in very interesting times when lots of Polish people are coming from Poland to live in this country. These people contribute to our well being. They work hard, they are honest and reliable. Many of them are talented and energetic.

"In particular, the young people who come over here from Poland need to be drawn into our Church community. They need to know that they are welcome in our parishes and in our Catholic schools, where their children will receive free education," emphasised the Archbishop of Birmingham.

"We live in a society that is indifferent and at times hostile to our Catholic Faith. We must be strong and stand together," he urged the Polish Catholic Community.

Archbishop Nichols added: "Today there is a General Election in Poland, a country newly involved with the EU. May Poland grow in good values, respect for life and for democracy," he said, to loud applause from the congregation.

At the start of Mass, Mgr Tadeusz Kukla, Vicar Delegate for Poles in England and Wales, thanked Archbishop Vincent Nichols for the respect for Polish culture and traditions that had been shown to the Polish Catholic Community in the Archdiocese of Birmingham since the post war years.

Mgr Kukla said: "This tragic generation of Poles, who were forced to settle in Britain after the communist regime was imposed on Poland, at the end of the Second World War, desperately wanted to uphold their culture and traditions including religious traditions and spirituality.

"Throughout all these years all your illustrious predecessors helped and encouraged the existence of Polish ministry interwoven into the rich tapestry of the diocesan pastoral care. This understanding and support of the Polish Catholic Communities helped the first generation of Poles to uphold their faith.

"Although the second and third generations of Poles who have born here are fully integrated into British society, contributing to its wellbeing in a variety of

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Autumn is approaching, the autumn of life...

All demographers agree that the number of old people in Poland is increasing because Poles live longer. For the last fifteen years the average lifespan has stretched out by four years. The problem of aging population is one of the most important problems we must unavoidably face. In several years every fifth Pole will be over 60 years old. The number of the elderly, over 80, will also increase to a considerable extent. In the next years these trends will be more evident. What does that mean for the entire society? Towards the end of the summer holiday the weather was not good for sightseeing, but the Castle of the Teutonic Knights in Malbork was packed with various tourist groups. "Annually we have over 400,000 visitors. Parents come with their children. Young people come in organized groups, students come individually. We also see many old people but the majority of them are foreigners", says Genowefa Sztajnbor, who sells tickets to the castle. She adds, "The number of Polish pensioners is considerably smaller. They might not have had money for such trips." Researches confirm this speculation. "Polish senior citizens choose organized tours incomparably more rarely than Western European senior citizens, especially from Germany or the Benelux countries. Our pensioners go with their grandchildren if they go anywhere at all. But such trips are very often sponsored by their working children" says Dr Tadeusz Buczyński from the Kraków Institute of Tourism.

One hundred doctors for millions of patients

The old people in Poland haven't any means for trips to Polish or foreign resorts during their summer holiday. All kinds of trips are luxurious for them and they must save money for a long time to afford them. Therefore, "town" people spend their holiday in their own garden plots and every few years they go to sanatoriums. People living in villages do not think of leaving somewhere on holiday, they stay in their places. This is mainly a question of being used to such forms of resting and also the question of low pensions. For example Zygmunt O., a 74-year old former farmer living near Sandomierz, receives about 600 zloty a month. He has had two strokes and two heart attacks. He spends one third of his pension on drugs. Cutting down unnecessary costs, which are undoubtedly trips, is a must in the pensioners' budgets. The Central Service for Statistics shows that almost 10% of senior citizens and every fourth pensioner live on the poverty line. Only families with many children have worse material situations. Sociologists notice that many pensioners who can live on their own sell their apartments in towns and move to the country. The main reasons are: lower costs of living and fresh air. This is kind of a return to the roots since for the last forty years nine million people have moved to cities. Our pensioners cannot count on help of social workers as their peers in the West can. We have proportionally three times fewer social workers than for example in Germany. There is a lack of places in health care centres. When we were preparing this article we contacted several old people's homes in Poland. There was only one place available in one health care geriatric house. One had to pay 1,400 zloty for a place in a room with several beds. But that price did not include medicines and pampers. In 2004 the services in old people's houses were commercialized. These houses demand market prices, i.e. between 2,000 and 2,500 zloty. The average available sum is less than 800 zloty. "That shows the difficult situation of old people and their families," says Prof. Jozefina Hryniewicz, sociologist at the University of Warsaw. The national gerontology, knowledge dealing with the process of aging, treatment of old people's diseases, and the social side of ageing, is still at a nascent stage. The number of specialists dealing with diseases in old age and their prevention is also small, as few as 100 specialists in the whole country. And the number of potential patients amounts to

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"Tell them we weren't the only ones."

By: *Dr. John Z. Guźłowski*
Professor Emeritus
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My mother said that to me once just before I did a lecture about her experiences and my dad's experiences as slave laborers in Nazi Germany. She wanted me to be sure I told the audience that my parents weren't the only people that terrible things happened to in those concentration camps. I promised my mother I would, and in fact, when I got to the lecture hall that night and stood up in front of that audience the first thing I did was tell them what my mother told me to.

"My parents weren't the only ones."

For a long time, I thought I knew what she meant by that sentence. My mom hadn't told me much about her experiences. My dad, however, had told me a lot about his terrible experiences during his five years in the German concentration camp system, and he also told me something about what had happened to my mother and her family, her mother, her sister, and her sister's baby. They had been brutally murdered by the Nazis who came to their farm in eastern Poland. As I said, my mother didn't talk about this experience or many of her other experiences for much of my life with her. I talk about this in one of my poems, "Here's What My Mother Won't Talk About." In it, my mother's response to my questions about her time under the Nazis is to tell me that I'm a fool and "If they give you bread, eat it. If they beat you, run." That was pretty much it.

This last September, Tracy Meyers, the Director of the Women and Gender Studies Program at Valdosta State University, invited me to do a lecture and poetry reading about my mother's experiences during and after the war.

To prepare for it, I started thinking about my mother's experiences and her silence about so much that had happened to her. I re-read an article I read years before by Jessica Alpert called "Muted Testimony: Rape and Gendered Violence of the Holocaust." Alpert's argument was that women tended not to talk about their experiences in the concentration camps and the death camps because of the sexual brutality they experienced. This led me to do some more research, and what I found out was that a lot of the histories and memoirs and literary writings about war talk about what men are doing in a war, but these histories don't always look at what's happening to women and how they are experiencing war.

It's not surprising. Women's experiences of war tend to be different than men's experiences of war. Women's experience tend to be brutal and without much glory or sense of victory or accomplishment. Doing a Google search of "women" and "war" brings up things like the Japanese rape of the city of Nanking. The actual number of rapes that occurred there is hard to pin down but they range from 20,000 to 80,000. One source said that when the Japanese soldiers weren't raping the women, "They took great pleasure in forcing fathers to rape their daughters and sons to rape their mothers." British historian Antony Beevor says in Berlin: The Downfall 1945 that the Russians raped millions of women as they moved west, pushing back the Germans in the final months of World War II. These women were not only German women but also Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, and the women in the liberated concentration and death camps.

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Memorable Christmas Story

It might be happy, funny, or tragically sad. We would love to have you share your experience with us.

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Polish Club of Laguna Woods

Christmas Celebration

By: *Irena Glowacka-Lawyer*

Polish Club will celebrate Christmas Eve by a very old Polish Tradition.

Saturday, December 15, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. Clubhouse Seven.

In Poland, Christmas Eve is considered more important than Christmas Day itself.

The table was covered with hay and then with a white linen tablecloth. Girls decorated the Christmas tree. Prayer for all the blessings of the past year, followed by sharing of the "Oplatek" with wishes of good health, good luck, and good fortune. Tradition dictates that this is a meatless dinner and there should be an uneven number of dishes served. (13)

Number 13 as it represented the number that sat down to the Last Supper.

There are dishes made from: beets, cabbage, beans, potatoes, herring, fish, noodles, with poppy seeds, cake, fruits and compote made with dried fruits.

Time after supper was a great time for the family to gather to sing carols.

Program: 5:00 PM Wishes for Happy Holidays with Oplatek 5:30 PM Traditional Polish Christmas Eve. 7:00 PM Entertainment and Christmas Carols and Gifts. Cost for dinner members \$23 guests \$28. Please make reservations by sending checks to:

Polish Club of Laguna Woods.

310-B Ave. Castilla

Laguna Woods, CA 92637.

The deadline for reservations is December 7. For information call (949) 206-9122.

Everybody is invited. Reserved seating. Holiday attire suggested. □

Poland's Prime Minister sees a need for caution on euro entry

An Associated Press article in the International Herald Tribune dated November 6 2007 states... Poland will likely adopt the euro by 2012 or 2013, but needs to be cautious about the possible impact on living costs for Poles, prospective Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Tuesday.

"Caution is warranted," said Tusk, whose Civic Platform Party won the most votes in Oct. 21 general elections. He told reporters at a news briefing that his government would carry out "simulations on how this step will affect the cost of living."

Tusk is expected to form a coalition government with the Polish People's Party, also known in the past as the Polish Peasants' Party, after he is formally designated to do so by President Lech Kaczyński.

The prime minister-to-be told reporters that he and People's Party leader Waldemar Pawlak, who will be deputy prime minister and economy minister in the new Cabinet, agreed that Poland should "move quickly" to meet eligibility criteria for euro adoption.

The EU's Maastricht Treaty sets strict requirements for public finances, domestic interest rates, inflation, and currency stability for all euro-zone entrants.

For most Central European countries, the most challenging requirements have been keeping general government deficits below 3 percent of gross domestic product and annual inflation within 1.5 percent of the average in the three lowest-inflation EU countries. □

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