

In Poland, it is customary to celebrate "Imienin" or Namesday, the feast day of one's patron saint. To allow the many Josefs to celebrate their namesday, the Church would grant a dispensation from the rigors of Lent on March 19. Because St. Joseph's Day is a Lenten solemnity, the tradition has been to serve meatless foods so that the meal becomes a "festive fast." St. Joseph, patron of the universal Church, patron of families, patron of workers, patron of social justice, patron of the dying, and patron of fathers, is a very important and beloved saint.

(Images of St. Joseph most often depict him with the child Jesus in his arms, with the Holy Family, at a work table, with carpenter's tools, or with a lily.)

St. Joseph's Day in Chicago Polonia: A Polish-American Hybrid

While Poles most certainly honor and revere St. Joseph, in American Polonia these values have flourished in interesting and hybrid ways. Especially in the earlier waves of immigration (1890s - 1930s), Polish and Italian immigrants were faced with an American Catholic church hierarchy controlled largely by Irish clergy, most often unsympathetic to the newcomers whom they often regarded as inferior, primitive, overly demonstrative, and superstitious. In the face of this disdain for Southern and Eastern European Catholicism, Poles responded by forming their own Polish language parishes (i.e. St. Stanislaus Kostka in Chicago) while Italians responded by preserving their religious traditions in the form of "Feasts" (*Festa*) run by patronage societies from their home villages and cities. This tension found curious expression in Chicago, America's largest Catholic Archdiocese.

Run by a largely Irish political and church elite, the city visibly celebrated the Feast of St. Patrick on March 17. In Chicago, this included a prominent parade and turning the Chicago River green. In multi-ethnic parochial schools this found expression in "the wearing of the green" visually marking those of Irish heritage. As is often the case in diasporic immigrant culture, the importance of St. Joseph's Day escalated and found new significance in a new context. In immigrant Polish and Italian communities this provided an alternative form of cultural identification and expression of loyalty. Just two short days later, Polish and Italian Americans dressed in red, celebrating their patron and publicly showing their ethnic identity. (Both national flags include this color as opposed to the Irish green). Especially in those of school age, this created a curious linking of the two ethnic groups, who identified against the traditions of the Irish. (The author is indebted to Mrs. D'Matteo who has created a St. Joseph's Day table in her childhood parish for over 40 years.)

Along with this new festive significance came a blending of ethnic traditions. The ancient Sicilian custom of *tavole di San Giuseppe* [St. Joseph's tables: an elaborate feast complete with home altar to St. Joseph and emphasis on feeding the poor] was celebrated in Italian parishes and homes, multi-ethnic parishes with Italians and Poles, and eventually throughout the city of Chicago's Catholic community. The traditional Italian Giuseppe cake (*zeppole*) (often called *s'fingi* on the East Coast) is found in Italian bakeries and restaurants throughout Chicago on that day, but is consumed by many Poles as well! The St. Joseph's table most often includes a statue of the saint with flowers, holy cards of St. Joseph, a bowl for free-will donations to be given to the needy, and sometimes a special St. Joseph's bread formed in the shape of the staff of St. Joseph. The bread is blessed ceremoniously before the feasting begins.

Having formed our identity in the cauldron of Chicago and Milwaukee's parochial schools, our Polish-American family celebrates St. Joseph's Day with a St. Joseph's Table in our home, which is decorated with red and white for the saint and for Poland. Holy cards and St. Joseph candles adorn the dining areas. Our American *Polskość* (Polishness) requires *zeppole* from Il Giardino Bakery on Harlem Avenue in Chicago as well as Sicilian St. Joseph's pasta (meatless, of course) alongside the *pierogi* and *makowiec* (Poppy Seed Cake)!

The Prayer of Blessing for the St. Joseph's Table

All-provident God, the good things that grace this table

remind us of your many good gifts.

Bless this food,

and may the prayers of St. Joseph

who provided bread for your Son and food for the poor,

sustain us and all our brothers and sisters

on your journey toward your heavenly kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Poland's president wants legal guarantees securing present shape of new EU treaty

A March 16 Associated Press article on the *PR-inside.com* website Warsaw, Poland (AP) - Legal guarantees are needed to prevent future changes to the European Union's new treaty, the Polish president said Sunday - marking a sharp contrast with his country's own government. President Lech Kaczyński warned that the treaty should not be ratified until special measures were included in the ratification bill to ensure Poland's sovereignty and prevent future changes to the so-called Lisbon Treaty - which sets out rules for running the EU and replaces a draft EU constitution that was rejected by France and the Netherlands in 2005.

Kaczyński had been among the EU treaty's fiercest challengers, which helped Poland win major concessions from fellow EU countries in the final draft. Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk has vowed that Poland would be among the first of the 27 EU member states to ratify the treaty. But Kaczyński's comments on Sunday suggest the country's opposition - led by Kaczyński's twin brother and former prime minister, Jarosław Kaczyński is demanding even more assurances.

"In my opinion the new ratification law should ensure the farthest-reaching security," President Lech Kaczyński told reporters. "Simply speaking, it should be as hard as possible to change whatever has been signed." Specifically, he said he wanted provision protecting the predominance of Poland's Roman Catholic faith, marriage as union of a man and a woman, and individual ownership rights on lands acquired after World War II.

Kaczyński said the discussion was open to compromise, and was not an intention to quarrel, but to adopt the best solution for Poland and for the nation. Poland's parliament planned on Tuesday to debate whether to approve ratification of the treaty. The government and allies are a few votes short of the 307 majority required. □

Pulaski Day from 6

Reflecting the people

Holidays such as St. Patrick's Day, Columbus Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day commemorate the person, but each also is meant to recognize their respective cultures, Kulczycki said. This is even more true of Pulaski Day, because Pułaski never left the colonial states and therefore had no specific connection to Illinois.

Some may be disappointed that Pulaski Day is less recognized than the other holidays, he said. "It is a sign of how marginalized these communities can be that ... schools are deciding not to recognize it." □

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Szpakiewicz from 7

4,100 lawsuits filed against U.S. immigration in fiscal year 2007. The suit asked a federal judge to force immigration officials to adjudicate the case. Despite their efforts, the defendants could not meet the government deadlines, which resulted in an extension of seven months, instead of the initial agreement of 60 days. Before the final court hearing date, however, the USCIS decided to grant Szpakiewicz permanent residency on March 6.

We hope you'll help celebrate this remarkable achievement by sharing Szpakiewicz's story with your audience.

Marek Szpakiewicz Cello Recital

Award-winning Polish Cellist Marek Szpakiewicz will perform a cello recital on Saturday, March 22, 5 p.m. at United University Church at the University of Southern California, located at 817 West 34th Street in Los Angeles.

The program will include American composer Samuel Barber's Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op.6 and Polish composer Frederic Chopin's Etude Op. 25, No.7 to celebrate Szpakiewicz's journey from Poland to the United States.

Admission is free, and the concert is followed by a reception. □

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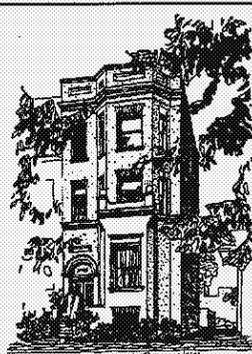
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Whats Your Legacy

Many people talk about leaving their will to worthy causes, but don't have a will, and do not realize it requires a will to do so. The laws of most states make it clear that personal property goes automatically, by law, to your nearest relative, even if they are quite distant ones, unless you have a legal will that says otherwise. If you have no relative, it goes to the state. More than half of all adult Americans die without having made their wills. Most of them undoubtedly planned to do so, but never got around to it. Some had wills but didn't keep them current. When you have a will, you should update it every few years as conditions change. Also, always name an executor who will carry out your wishes. Besides money, non-cash possessions can also be used in contributions and various donation plans can be carried out. Be a philanthropist: leave your stocks, bonds, real estate, art, valuable collection or insurance to continue the Polish - American traditions. Your will is the most important way of giving. When you're gone, it is a legacy that is not forgotten. In your will, you can specify what you would like your donation to be used for. For help in making your will, contact a competent lawyer. **The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that needs your help and legacy.**

The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc.

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