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## A Season of Reflection - Pre-Lent

### Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop

Within our holy Polish National Catholic Church, for the three Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent, we spend a short season of preparation to enter into that time fully ready to take up the spiritual work of amendment and discipline to bring ourselves closer to the passion and death of our Lord. During this two-and-a-half-week period we take stock of where we stand, spiritually and morally, in our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Readings of these Sundays, this year, taken from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, lead us in taking stock of this relationship and evaluating our own spiritual lives.

We begin on the first Sunday of Pre-Lent with the reading known as the Sermon on the Plain. Although not as well known as the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel, this portion of Scripture sounds many of the same themes. Luke tells us: "[Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. Then He looked up at His disciples and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full

now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.'" (Luke 6:17, 2-26)

As a reflection on this portion of Scripture, we must look beyond the surface of the words. Certainly, we would not consider it blessed to be poor, hungry, weeping or rejected and it is not woeful to be rich, fed, laughing and accepted. But rather if we go a bit deeper, we see that the concern is whether or not we are satisfied exactly where we are. The well-fed person does not need more food. The rich person does not need more money. The laughing person does not need more entertainment. The accepted person does not need more friends. These individuals are not in need of anything.

But, as Christians, we must recognize that we are all truly in need. We are in need of the presence of God in our lives. We can never have enough of His love, His forgiveness, His mercy. We are never truly satisfied with it; we always need more. So therefore, we are like the poor person, the hungry person, the weeping person or the rejected person. There are things we need. And we know that only God can supply them.

On the Second Sunday of Pre-Lent, we again turn to the Gospel of St. Luke. Jesus continues, "Give to anyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those

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who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.” (Luke 6:30-33)

We see within these words that we are challenged to reflect on the actions and thoughts we have and see if they align with the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. We often think about ourselves as being “pretty good.” But Jesus challenges us to consider that even the worst of sinners, still loves those who love them. They can still do some good to someone who will return that goodness. The challenge to the Christian is to see where we truly stand in regard to our acts of loving kindness and set before ourselves the example of our Lord. Jesus says, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:35-36) In reflection on these words we are called to go beyond where we presently stand in our good thoughts, words and action. We must strive to be more merciful, more giving and more loving.

Lastly in the days just before Ash Wednesday, we will hear these words from the Gospel of St. Luke, where Jesus says, “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” (Luke 6:41-42)

We acknowledge here that it is often so easy to see the sins in others in the world. We see them in those who surround us each and every day, and we see them when we read the newspaper and watch television. But it seems so very hard to acknowledge that we too need to confront the sins and weaknesses in our own daily lives. We see the ‘specks’ that others have and not the ‘logs’ that we suffer from ourselves. So, my brothers and sisters, take these short two and a half weeks to reflect on your own life and decide

what exactly you need to confront in the coming season of Lent. If we can take the time to do this now, then when we place the ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, we can truly acknowledge that we need amendment and we can take the season of Lent to discipline ourselves. This will begin with the practice of fasting, prayer and giving, but in reality through these disciplines we will be growing closer to Christ in all of our thoughts, words and actions. We will be conforming ourselves to Christ in all aspects of our lives.

Again, Jesus tells us in the Gospel of St. Luke: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:43-45)

Within the Polish National Catholic Church, we have labeled these weeks: The First Week of Pre-Lent – The Week of Recollection; The Second Week of Pre-Lent – The Week of Self-Examination and the last few short days following the Third Sunday of Pre-Lent – The Days of Decision.

Let’s all take the time to reflect during this season of Pre-Lent. Spend time in recollection on where you stand in your relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Spend time in self-examination taking stock of our own spiritual and prayer practices, as well as the morality of your day-to-day life and interactions with others. And finally approach the end of this season of Pre-Lent ready to truly change and grow close to Jesus. Seek to build up the ‘good treasure of the heart’ that Jesus speaks of.

#### **Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian**

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Your servant. Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brothers and sisters, for blessed are You, unto ages of ages. Amen.



## P.N.C.C. Future Direction February 2025 Nicea at 1700

### Introduction

In this year of 2025, we will spend some time considering the treasures that were left to the Church at the Council of Nicea in the year 325 AD. This year we honor 1700 years since the time of this important Ecumenical Council of the Church. We will examine, not only the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, but also other aspects of this Council that are important to us in the Polish National Catholic Church today. We will see within this tradition the conciliar aspects of the governance of the church and also the canonical aspects concerning how the church operates in the present day.

### Nicene Creed

I believe in One God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. **I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.** For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary AND BECAME MAN. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life Who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### Scripture

*I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,*

John 20:28 – Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Acts 16:31 – They answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”

1 Corinthians 8:6 – Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and through Whom we exist.

*The Only Son of God,*

Matthew 3:17 – And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, the Beloved, with Whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 16:16 – Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.

*Eternally begotten of the Father,*

Psalms 2:7 – I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you.”

John 1:1-2 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

*God from God, Light from Light,*

John 1:4 – In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

John 8:12 – Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 – For it is the God Who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*True God from True God,*

1 John 5:20 – And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him Who is true; and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

*Begotten, not made,*

John 1:1-2 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

*Of one being with the Father.*

John 10:30 – The Father and I are one.

*Through Him all things were made.*

Hebrews 1:1-2 – But in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom He also created the worlds.

John 1:3 – All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being.

### **Reflection**

In this second reflection on the Nicene Creed, we examine the first portion which deals with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In particular, this section was the most highly argued section at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 AD. The main question that was being discussed was, “Was Jesus a created being, or is He co-eternal with the Father. Throughout this portion of the Creed, we see strong language that shows us that Jesus is the eternal God just as the Father is the eternal God, but He is a separate person. Although these sorts of distinctions can certainly be somewhat confusing, we see that the wording used in the Creed reflects the understanding of Scripture and what is revealed there.

This confession of our Lord and Savior becomes especially important when we connect it together with the reflection that we will take up next month. Here we confess that Jesus is truly God, eternal as God just as the Father is. In the second portion we will see that He becomes human for the forgiveness of our sins and the granting of renewed life. Jesus then is both truly God and truly human. Because of this, Jesus brings to us the presence of God in our human reality. Because He became human, He offers to us the opportunity to become closer and closer to the divine. This process is known as “theosis.” This theosis is accomplished through a life of prayer, the reception of Holy Communion and then our striving to build the Kingdom of God on earth through good thoughts, words and actions. Through our entire religious life within the Church, we strive to grow ever closer to God.

### **Action Item**

As an action item, pray the Nicene Creed during Holy Mass with some intention. Realize that the same Lord Jesus Christ that we confess during the Creed is the same Christ that is present and comes to each of us during the celebration of Holy Mass. We encounter Him in the forgiveness of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance. We encounter Him in His teaching and example in the Sacrament of the Word of God. We encounter Him especially in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, the receiving of His body and blood, His true presence in Holy Communion.

Give thanks to God for sending His Son into the world that through His life, death and resurrection we have received forgiveness of our sins, and we have been offered the gift of renewed life in Him, through Him and for Him.

We continue to implement the five themes the Synod determined for our Future Direction Committee:

Growth and Membership

Increase Spirituality

Lifelong Learning

Sacred Vocations

Community Involvement and Presence



## Union of Scranton Theological Conference Mainz, GE



Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, and Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich, Jr., Secretary General of the Union of Scranton and Ecumenical Officer of the P.N.C.C., attended the annual Union of Scranton Theological Conference at the Mainz Conference Center in Mainz, GE, from January 30 - February 2, 2025. The theme of this year's conference was The 1700th Anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea.



Some of the topics presented at the conference were “Council of Nicea 325 AD” co-presented by Rev. Dr. Scott J. Lill (via Zoom), pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Lilly, PA, and Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich, Jr; “Nicea: A Key to Faith, Truth and Understanding” presented by Professor Dr. Svein Rise from the Theological University of Bergen; “The Prayer of Truth - Nicea and the Liturgy” presented by Professor Dr. Thole from Halle-Wittenberg University; and “An Ecumenical Vision - The Way Forward” presented by Prime Bishop Mikovsky.



On February 1st, Bishop Ottar Myrseth of the Nordic Catholic Church celebrated Holy Mass in the 10th Century St. Martin's Cathedral in Mainz. On February 2nd, Prime Bishop Mikovsky concluded the conference by celebrating a Pontifical Holy Mass in a medieval chapel. During this Mass, candles were blessed on Candle-mass Day (Solemnity of the Presentation of our Lord) followed by blessing of the throats of all gathered, asking the intercession of St. Blaise, whose Feast Day was February 3rd.



Thank you to Bishop Ottar Myrseth, Rev. Dr. Daniel Gerte - Nordic Catholic Church Vicar General (Germany), and all who made this conference a tremendous success. May we bring the light of Christ to our darkened world today by living as He taught!



### Welcome

Rev. Jim Konicki, National Vocations Director

Welcome to the Savonarola Theological Seminary Newsletter which you will now find included in issues of God's field. You will find articles by our Prime Bishop, seminarians, Fr. Konicki and members of the Vocations Commission, instructors and students from the Diaconate Program, and the seminary's Vice-Rector.

We currently have five men in formation for the priesthood, one who recently completed seminary studies, and another three studying for the diaconate. There are several more who are considering the priesthood and diaconate.

We have been so blessed with God's provision of workers for His vineyard. In this issue we offer articles themed on getting to know our seminarians and deacon. You will be encountering these men in ministry as they advance through the seminary program as well as at National and Diocesan Church events. Perhaps in encountering their journeys you will connect with the call the Holy Spirit is prompting you to follow. In future issues they will share insights and other reflections.

This wonderful gift from God is being expressed in other ways throughout our Church such as those involving Spójnia Farm and the Bishop Hodur Retreat and Recreation Center, in youth programs, the Men's Spiritual Retreat, at national events, and at the level of parish ministries and outreach. There is more to come too.

Please keep our seminarians as well as all those in our Diaconate Program and their instructors in your prayers. If you can, provide support to the Seminary Fund. Faithful member's support is vital to keeping the lights on and the seminarians' educational needs are met. Donations can be sent to The Savonarola Theological Seminary Fund, c/o The Office of the Prime Bishop, 1006 Pittston Ave., Scranton, PA 18505-4109.

### Who am I?

Deacon Sean Dodd

My name is Deacon Sean Dodd. I am a 27-year-old deacon and seminarian at Savonarola Theological Seminary from Tyler, Texas. I was born and raised as an evangelical in East Texas, but by the guiding of the Holy Spirit, I found myself drawn to Catholicism.

In 2018, I visited St. Martin and St. Rose Parish in San Antonio, Texas. I became a member and began making monthly visits, despite the five-hour drive. In 2020, I was confirmed into Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. In 2022, I moved to the seminary in Scranton, PA. The following spring, I received the minor orders, and in the spring of 2024, I was ordained a deacon.

I enjoy learning foreign languages, especially Japanese, though I have studied many others casually. This interest has given me a deep appreciation for different cultures and a passion for ministry within them. I also enjoy many things typical for men my age—video games, music, and television. Additionally, I have a strong interest in theology and philosophy. While I don't have a favorite theologian, as I admire many, my favorite philosopher is Plato.

What drew me to the Polish National Catholic Church was its commitment to preserving the historic liturgy, theology, and practices of the ancient Church. Many young people like me have begun to take an interest in the Ancient Churches—P.N.C.C., Rome, and Eastern Orthodoxy—because of how they faithfully maintain what was handed down to them, rather than simply adapting to modern trends or chasing after passing fads.

I love the blaring organ in St. Stanislaus Cathedral, the solemnity of the liturgy, and the rich aroma of incense. But most of all, I love how all of these elements serve to unite me intimately with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who becomes truly present before us on the holy altar at Mass. This, above all, is the greatest privilege of being a Polish National Catholic.



## Why I Chose to Enter the P.N.C.C. Seminary

Todd Godwin

My name is Todd Godwin. I am from Georgia and Tennessee but have spent much of the last thirty years living abroad, mostly in Japan, but also in the UK (where I did a doctorate in Eastern Christianity, and the Middle East and six months in Thailand, where, along with Japan, I was an English teacher at times). I started traveling and exploring the world as an English teacher, and any other way that I could, after finishing my undergraduate degree in the 1990s in Philosophy and Comparative Religion, and then an MA in Early Christian Studies. I am now so old that I am self-conscious about even saying how old I am, but you can probably make a rough guess of this based on what I have said thus far. I have been married to a wonderful Japanese woman now for 26 years and have a 12-year-old daughter with her.

I was raised by sincere, God-loving Protestants. Because of my parents and my swaths of Baptist relatives, and because about five of my K-12 schooling years was done in Christian schools, I developed a deep faith in Christ by my high school years. Studying the things I did at university rolled straight out of this; as did my interest in exploring the world, studying languages, and studying the Church's vast history globally and its interactions with other religions and cultures. I joined the Roman Catholic Church in my mid 20s and then the Orthodox Church in my 40s.

So why did I decide to enter the P.N.C.C. seminary in the fall of 2024? I had in fact never even heard of the P.N.C.C. until about the beginning of Covid era (2020). I was living in Japan for the third time in that period working for a hotel and museum that was connected to a Workaway program, which hosted foreign and Japanese travelers to work in our vegetable gardens next to the hotel. Southern Japan has more Catholics than anywhere else in the country, but still, out in the countryside where I was, any church I could go to was an hour away at least. The nearest Orthodox Church was literally three hours away.

But one day I got a Facebook messenger message from Sean Dodd, now a P.N.C.C. Deacon, but at that time just another of my many online friends with *either* an interest in Christian missionary work, *or* Asia or the Middle East, *and/or* the ancient apostolic churches and their history and theology as applied to the contemporary world. But Sean's interest in Japanese culture and missions and the possibility of how the apostolic and sacramental churches could missionize Asia in a way that Protestants sometimes cannot, was as intense as mine. As a result, we became fast friends. The British owner of the hotel/museum/gardening program eventually became more and more difficult to deal with as my sense of emptiness and not getting to be involved with the life of a parish grew.

As Sean entered the P.N.C.C. seminary and began to hear more and more about it (keep in mind this is all through online contacts as I was living in Japan), I began to see many things in a new way. The Orthodox would never accept me into their seminary since my wife is a Buddhist and just cannot leave her family's traditions (though was happy to allow my daughter to be baptized into the Orthodox Church). I could of course never become an RC priest since I am married. I also began to see how the P.N.C.C. was more creative and "light on the ground" in some ways as compared to the Orthodox Church and the RC Church. I also began to see that the P.N.C.C. was more relaxed and open about other Christians and had similarities with some Protestants—they placed great emphasis on preaching and made it a sacrament and stressed individual piety and the need to for all Christians to carry the message and not just leave it all to the leadership. But at the same time, the P.N.C.C. had an Ancient Church understanding of sacraments, follows and studies the consensus of the Church Fathers, followed their own liturgy but one based on the Roman Rite, and had a faith structure that was consonant with the Orthodox, had the Ancient Church's three-fold of order of deacons, priests, and bishops, and a synodal decision structure. The P.N.C.C. also feels to me like the perfect middle point between Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and certain core elements of Evangelicalism.

My wife and daughter are not yet living with me here in Scranton. I do not know how all of this is going to work. My family has deep ties to Japan. Though my daughter spent her first six years in the states and my wife has lived abroad several times and speaks fluent English, it's my wife's culture, my adopted culture, and my daughter's country for the last six years. We don't know how we are going to negotiate our deep, literally blood-ties to Japan yet, and how our life within the P.N.C.C. will mesh with this. But I have learned to take it one small step at a time, and know that God has led me into the church and that He has His plan, and that if I am quite enough to listen to for it, and try to follow it with the help of the church, that as Julian of Norwich (not yet a saint but on her way seemingly) said "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

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### **Why I Chose to Enter the P.N.C.C. Seminary**

David Dudzinski

My name is Dave Dudzinski and I chose to enter the P.N.C.C. Seminary after a long period of discernment. This involved attending different denominations, working hospice and learning all I could about God and His Church. I was raised Roman Catholic but felt much of Roman Dogma was added on, things like Papal Infallibility and the like. It was this singular desire, to find the truly pure, truly reformed Catholic Faith that led me to the P.N.C.C., and after speaking to Fr. Jim Konicki and Prime Bishop Mikovsky, I put in my application to Savonarola Seminary.

But what else do I have going on? I was born and raised in New Jersey, have a wife and 2 dogs in Southern New Jersey- about 40 miles outside Philadelphia- and as the last name suggests, come from a Polish family. Interestingly enough, my Great Grandparents hail from the Scranton area and worked in the coal mines. Eventually they moved to Northern New Jersey where, down the line, I was born. My Polish heritage has always been important to me, and during my short time in Savonarola I have really “learned to live my Catholic Faith through my Polish heritage,” something Prime Bishop Mikovsky has helped me see. I served in the National Guard as a Chaplain Assistant, and it was there that I first got my toes wet in ministry.

Another thing I value, besides family, heritage and my military service, is my faith. I believe we Western Catholics do sacramentals better than any other church on the planet! We have such vibrant, living practices that it's almost too much to remember sometimes! The Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic Adoration, the Daily Office, all serve to really nurture the faith. Pair this with many Polish traditions like Gorzkie Żale, Opatki, and various litanies, and you truly cannot lose!

I come with previous ministry experience, including Hospice Chaplaincy, Military Ministry, Clinical Pastoral Education, a certification in Biblical and Pastoral Counseling and am a certified Police Chaplain. I am really looking forward to diving into ministry in the P.N.C.C. and am passionate about Liturgics, Ecumenicism, Church Planting and Pastoral Counseling. I also love just sitting and chatting!

My advice to anyone thinking about the P.N.C.C. in general and The Seminary specifically, is just ask, no one is hiding anything! There's plenty of community, from the YMS of R Men's Retreat, to KURS and coffee hour, and if you feel God is calling you to serve His Church as a Priest or Deacon, simply email Fr. Konicki (frjim@holynamenc.org). If he can't help you directly- which is rare- he can point you in the direction of someone who can. I had plenty of Sacramental questions, due to my hospice chaplaincy, and provided guidance every time.

I hope this has provided you, my dear brother or sister in Christ, a brief glimpse into who I am and why I am here. I look forward to serving you in Jesus's name, knowing it is not my ministry, but His!

### **This Was Where I Was Being Called**

Joel Smith

My name is Joel Smith. I'm a Canadian who has spent the last eight years as a missionary and Senior High School English teacher in Tokyo, Japan. I was raised in a Pentecostal environment and began my missionary journey within that tradition. However, as I regularly studied the Bible and co-pastored a Filipino church, I started to appreciate and eventually fell in love with apostolic Christianity. I delved into the writings of the Church Fathers and studied Orthodoxy in depth. I even began attending a Romanian Orthodox Church from time to time while still living in Tokyo. Yet, something about it didn't quite sit right with me, mainly because I wasn't allowed to pray with Christians outside of Orthodoxy. This left me feeling stuck; I knew I wanted to be part of an apostolic church but didn't feel called to be Orthodox or Roman Catholic. I prayed to God, questioning why I had this longing for a liturgical and sacramental Christian church when I felt uneasy about the two I was familiar with. I wondered if I would have to settle for being a Protestant. After a couple of weeks, I was introduced to Deacon Sean (who was Cleric Sean at the time). He brought to my attention the Polish National Catholic Church. After reading about them and exploring their beliefs, I knew almost immediately that this was where I was being called.

Why did I decide to become a Polish National Catholic Seminarian? For a long time, I felt a calling to the clergy, but I never fully pursued it. Becoming a missionary was like taking a half step towards that calling while also responding to another path. I believe God knew I wasn't quite ready to embrace the full calling of my life,

so He placed me in a situation where I could grow into the man I needed to be. My certainty about becoming a clergyman solidified right after the COVID pandemic when I was asked to co-pastor a Filipino church after the pastor sadly passed away from the virus. That period of my life was transformative; I learned and grew a great deal in the year I spent pastoring there until a full-time pastor could be found. With this renewed sense of calling, I sought the Lord once more.

Being a missionary often means struggling financially, typically living below or just around the poverty line. With this calling reignited in my heart, I turned to God and prayed, “If this is truly Your calling for me, either provide the funds for seminary or send someone willing to support me, or make a way for me to attend for free.” It was around this time that I met Sean, who came into my life during a crucial moment in my ministry in Tokyo—he was truly a Godsend. I shared my calling with him, and he introduced me to Fr. Jim Konicki.

Over the next few weeks, we discussed the P.N.C.C. and the possibility of me attending their seminary in Scranton. After prayerful consideration, I decided to apply. The application process included a meeting with the Prime Bishop, which went incredibly well and reassured me that this was indeed where God wanted me. Then I began the journey of moving back to Canada after living abroad for eight years. Surprisingly, everything went much more smoothly than I had anticipated; it felt as though God was clearing the path for me and guiding me home to the P.N.C.C.

### **My Journey to the Savonarola Seminary**

Jon Johnson

Praised be Jesus Christ!

My dear friends, I am so honored to share with you a little bit about myself and my journey to service in Christ’s holy church and my journey to Savonarola Seminary. My name is Jon (Jonathan) Johnson, and I was born and grew up in Duluth, Minnesota. I was fortunate to be blessed with good and Godly parents, Walter and Ramona, and one sister, Becky, three years older, and a brother, Jim, 9 years younger. My grandparents on both sides were a great influence in my upbringing, and both sides also lived with us periods of time over the years, or we stayed with them when they needed assistance. We grew up in a Fellowship of Christian Assemblies church, (Pentecostal) of which my grandparents on my mother’s side, the Norbergs, were founding members. I had many relatives, aunts, uncles and cousins that served the Lord in ministry and from a very early age, I knew I was somehow to serve the Lord in some kind of ministry, too. I just wasn’t sure what the Lord had in mind for me.

I was sent to Catholic Junior High and later High School, where the Catholic faith spoke to me. It seemed like there was so much more to what I had been taught and experienced about Our Lord. While still in school, I worked as a volunteer and later an employee in several roles for the Benedictine Sisters in Duluth. There, I met many good, orthodox sisters who helped me along in my journey as well and I became a Catholic in 1986.

I eventually moved across the bridge from Duluth to Superior, Wisconsin. There, I became very active in a few Catholic Lay Apostolates, and in my parish of Holy Assumption in South Superior. I served at Holy Assumption in the choir, one of the parish organists and later also as Religious Education Coordinator. At this same time, I went to work for the Duluth Clinic in the Business office and later took my business skills to the Information Technology (I.T.) department, where I was able to attend classes at the Epic medical software company in Madison, Wisconsin. Through this opportunity, I was able to obtain several certifications in the Epic medical software, which I still use in my current job today. It also opened the door for me to the consulting industry, where I spent sixteen years doing practice management consulting, either working from home or traveling to various clients throughout the continental United States.

In 2005, I had the opportunity to move to the Jamestown, North Dakota area. I immediately volunteered my services in music ministry to my local parish, St. Margaret Mary’s in Buchanan, ND. This parish was paired with St. Michael’s in Pingree, ND., and I spend the next 15 years serving as parish organist for both parishes, assisting at several other rural parishes and the Basilica of St. James in Jamestown. I also worked part time as a bartender and cook in several of the small town “cafes”, where I developed skills as a restaurant cook. In 2019, I was laid off from my full-time job, and because of its specific qualifications, I found that had to move elsewhere to continue to work in the medical software industry. It was very hard for me to leave North Dakota, and I prayed very hard about this move.

(Continued on Page 12.)

(The Savonarola Theological Seminary Newsletter- Continued from Page 11.)

A former client I had done consulting work for, Lehigh Valley Health Network, in Allentown, reached out to me about a fulltime job. I had enjoyed working for them, and after much prayer, I decided to move to Pennsylvania. It was amazing how everything fell in place and everything that happened seemed to be in the Lord's hands. My farmstead sold in three days. I had a big moving sale, and all my vehicles, tractor and stuff I knew I couldn't take with me sold. Every bit of it! Looking back, I can see God's hand and His Providence in everything that happened to bring me to Pennsylvania.

After being in Pennsylvania for a couple of months, I decided to look into the P.N.C.C. I found that McAdoo was the closest to me, so I visited there. I found a small, but wonderful group of friendly people, a beautiful parish, a reverent, meaningful celebration of the Eucharist and a good priest. And I kept going.

I ended up joining Saints Peter and Paul's in McAdoo, and offered my services as organist, as we didn't have one, and became involved in the parish. I was able to use my skills in accounting and business, serving as parish treasurer, and my acquired skills in cooking in our parish Sunday meal ministry and through our numerous and successful food sales. I was very honored when Bishop Nowicki appointed me to the Diocesan Music Commission, and later to the Diocesan Tribunal.

One day, in prayer, I asked the Lord what he wanted me to do with the rest of my life. "I'm getting old, and it seems like there is much more I need to do for the Lord, but is this what I should be doing? Is this all you have for me?" It seemed like there was more and time is running short. I had felt that call to minister, but was this really where I should be? I felt perhaps I should look into the Diaconate and see if they would accept me. That very day, one of our parishioners said to me, "you should be a priest." Just a week later, another parishioner, who was not part of the other conversation said the same thing. That was very convicting, and it hit me hard. Ok, maybe a deacon, but a priest?

After having the opportunity to speak with Deacon, (then, Seminarian,) Sean Dodd and Fr. Jim Konicki, I knew that applying for the seminary and studying for the priesthood was very much what the Lord wanted me to do for the rest of my life. I hope to be able to finish my studies and serve God's Holy Church for many years to come.



### **Hymnal of the Polish National Catholic Church, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2011.**

Over 300 Hymns, including Service Music for Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Vespers and Penance Service. Numerous hymns in both Polish and English with additional hymns in English.

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## Time to Renew or Get Your New God’s Field Subscription

Thank you all for your continued support of *God’s Field*. It is that time of year to renew annual subscriptions or sign up for a new subscription.

Because of increased material and shipping costs, the subscription rate is now \$54.50 per year for 12 issues mailed within the U.S. and \$75.00 per year for 12 issues mailed to Canada. This rate is based on the increased cost of printing, mailing supplies and U.S.P.S. First Class Flat Rate (U.S) and International First Class Flat Rate (Canada) mailing costs. Single issues of *God’s Field* are available for purchase from the National Church Center for \$2.40 each (pickup). These rates will remain in effect until further notice.

Please note that the gratis online version of *God’s Field* will continue to be available to everyone on our website at [pncc.org](http://pncc.org).

If you want to continue to receive *God’s Field* for the March 2025 - February 2026 subscription year, please send a check or money order in USD, payable to God’s Field, along with current name and full mailing address. Please include zip+4 (U.S.) or postal code (Canada) to ensure delivery of your subscription; if you do not include a complete, valid mailing address including zip+4 or postal code we cannot guarantee delivery by the Post Office.

Only paid subscriptions will be mailed, so please make sure your payment is received in the God’s Field office prior to the end of the annual subscription year (February 28, 2025). If your annual subscription is not paid on time, you may experience a gap in monthly issues of *God’s Field*. The order form (below) and payment should be sent to:


God’s Field  
National Church Center, P.N.C.C.  
1006 Pittston Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18505

Thank you.

The Staff and Management of *God’s Field*—*Rola Boża*



### God’s Field Annual Subscription Form March 2025 - February 2026

Name:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	Make check/money order payable to God’s Field. Return form & payment to: God’s Field 1006 Pittston Avenue Scranton, PA 18505	
Street Address:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
City:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
State/Province:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
Postal Code:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	Renewal or Subscription (Circle One)	
(Zip+4)	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	Check No. and Amt: <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	
		\$54.50 U.S./\$75.00 Canada	

## APPEAL FOR 2025 EASTER GREETINGS



Please send in your greetings and payment

(U.S. \$20.00 check or money order, payable to God's Field)



Line 1:

Line 2:

Line 3:



It is the time of year for us to appeal to the parishes, the organizations and the individual members of the Polish National Catholic Church -- to publish your Easter greetings in the Official Publication of the Polish National Catholic Church, *God's Field—Rola Boża*.

In past years your responses to our appeals have been very enthusiastic and we sincerely hope your generosity and support will continue this year.

The cost for publishing Easter greetings for individuals, parishes and organizations is \$20.00. Due to space constraints in the *God's Field* page setup, greetings are limited to up to three (3) lines of text.

Example greetings:

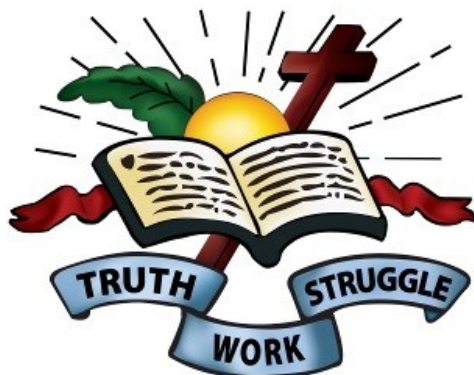
Adoration Society of St. John's Parish, Everytown, USA  
Eve Adams, President  
Wesołego Alleluja!

St. John's Parish, Everytown, USA  
Rev. Abel Adams, Pastor  
ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!

**ALL GREETINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY PAYMENTS, MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 1, 2025 IN ORDER TO ENSURE THEY ARE INCLUDED IN THE EASTER 2025 ISSUE. We no longer publish greetings submitted without payment, so please be sure to send in your payment with your greeting.**

Detach, complete and submit the form, above, along with your payment, to:

God's Field Easter Greetings  
National Church Center, P.N.C.C.  
1006 Pittston Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18505



## NOTICE TO PARISHES

**If your parish is in need of financial assistance and you seek to request Clergy Aid from the Polish National Catholic Church, you must follow the procedures as outlined by the XIX General Synod.**

**All individual parish requests must be sent through the proper Diocesan Bishop or Administrator as soon as possible before **March 14, 2025**, along with all of the required supporting financial documentation.**

**The Diocesan Bishops/Administrator must forward all parish requests to the Office of the Prime Bishop no later than March 21, 2025.**

**PLEASE NOTE: Only Canadian Diocese submissions can be sent to the Office of the Prime Bishop. Requests sent by other diocesan parishes directly to the Office of the Prime Bishop and not through the proper Diocesan Bishop/Administrator Office will be returned to the parish. This may result in delayed paperwork and missed deadline submission.)**

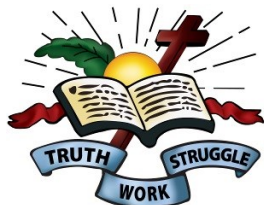
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### Prayer for the Unity of the Church

**(From A Book of Devotions and Prayers Polish National Catholic Church)**

O Lord Jesus Christ, before Your passion and death You prayed to Your Father for the Apostles “so that they may be one, even as We are one ... so that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” Reveal to the members of Your Church the peace, love and unity that comes through living in accordance with Your Word. Good Shepherd, lead us and make us one flock, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.





**Polish National Catholic Church  
Young Men's Society of Resurrection  
2025 Bowling Outing  
Holy Cross P.N.C.C. - Hamtramck, MI 48212**



Holy Cross Polish National Catholic Church in Hamtramck, Michigan will be hosting the P.N.C.C./Y.M.S. of R. Bowling Outing on May 16 - 18, 2025. We are very excited as we try out a new format to this long-standing event. Our theme is “New Day – New Way”. We humbly invite you to participate in this outing as either a bowler or a guest. Although this event is centered on bowling, we realize that Jesus is our **true** center and He is with us always. Whether we bowl strikes, spares, or gutter balls, Jesus is with us all the way! The fact that we are able to share such an event with others from the P.N.C.C. is truly a blessing!

The following pages contain information to allow you to register for the bowling and award events, secure your lodgings, and plan for a truly enjoyable weekend with us here in Southeast Michigan. We encourage you to gather the necessary information and payments and respond back to us by the registration deadline of **March 31, 2025**.

We hope you can find the time to join us for fun-filled competition, great Christian fellowship, and be able to pray together with us. Our Church family prays for good health and God's blessings for all of you throughout the New Year. We hope to see you in May!

2025 Bowling Outing Committee

Go to [P.N.C.C./Y.M.S. of R. Bowling Outing - The Polish National Catholic Church](#) to access the Entry Form, the Entry Fee Remittance Form, The Children's Bowling Event Registration Form, the 2025 Awards Dinner Form and Information on placing an ad in the 2025 Commemorative Journal.



**P.N.C.C./Y.M.S. of R. Bowling Outing  
“New Day—New Way”**

**Rules and Format**

Rule #1 — You must have fun!

Format:

You may have noticed we dropped the word “**tournament**” and replaced it with “**outing**”. We have decided to try a different format this year, recognizing that change is often needed for either growth, or existence.

This outing will be an **all scratch** event – remember Rule # 1. Bowling on Friday will consist of the **Doubles Event**. On Saturday, we will bowl a

**4-person Team Event**. The scores bowled during Team Event will also count towards a **non-bowled Singles Event**. Prizes will be awarded for all **three** events, yet **you will only pay and bowl for two!**

The make-up of any doubles pair or team may be all male, all female, or any combination thereof. Remember Rule # 1.

During each bowling session we will hold a mystery game jackpot and also a 50-50 raffle. The proceeds from the 50-50 raffles will go to the P.N.C.C. Clergy Pension Fund.

A Children's Bowling Event will occur on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, also at 1:00 pm. The Children will bowl next to our Team Event Lanes. Holy Cross Teen Club is the sponsor of the Children's Bowling Event and will cover the cost of the games and shoe rental. They will be well-supervised.



**P.N.C.C./Y.M.S. of R. Bowling Outing Schedule of Events**  
**May 16 - 18, 2025**

**ASTRO LANES**  
 32388 John R Road  
 Madison Heights, MI 48071  
 (248) 585-3131

**HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS**  
 400 Stephenson Highway  
 Troy, MI 48083  
 (248) 528-1900

**HOLY CROSS PARISH**  
 2311 Pulaski Street  
 Hamtramck, MI 48212

**FRIDAY, May 16, 2025**

**Doubles Events** – *Astro Lanes* – 1:00 p.m., 12:30 p.m. check-in

**Open House** – *Holiday Inn Express Hospitality Room* – Following the bowling

**Guiding Committee Meeting** – *Holiday Inn Express Hospitality Room* – 7:00 p.m.

**Hospitality Room** – Reopens following Guiding Committee Meeting

**SATURDAY, May 17, 2025**

**Team Event** – *Astro Lanes* – 1:00 p.m., 12:30 p.m. check-in

**Children's Bowling** – *Astro Lanes* – during Team Event

**Awards Dinner** – *Holy Cross Parish Hall* - Dinner 6:00 p.m.

**Hospitality Room** – Reopens following the Awards Dinner

**SUNDAY, May 18, 2025**

**Holy Mass** – *Holy Cross Parish* - 9:00 a.m.

**Breakfast** – *Holy Cross Parish Hall* – following Mass

The purpose of this outing is to share in Christian fellowship. We cannot think of any better way to promote such fellowship than to share the Eucharist with our fellow Polish National Catholic Church members from across the states. We know some of you will be traveling long distances to get home, but hope you will take the time to be with us. We will pray for your safe journey home and that you will be renewed in faith and your parishes will become revived by your experiences here at this outing. We invite all our guests to enjoy a farewell breakfast, which will be served by our Y.M.S. of R. following the Mass.

We were able to secure blocks of rooms at reduced rates at the

***Holiday Inn Express & Suites***  
 400 Stephenson Highway  
 Troy, MI 48083  
 248-528-1900

**\$129.99 King - Non Smoking** (up to 2 people)

**\$139.99 2 Queen Beds - Non Smoking** (up to 4 people)

Of course, there will be taxes added to these rates - we can never escape those!

Reserve your rooms by

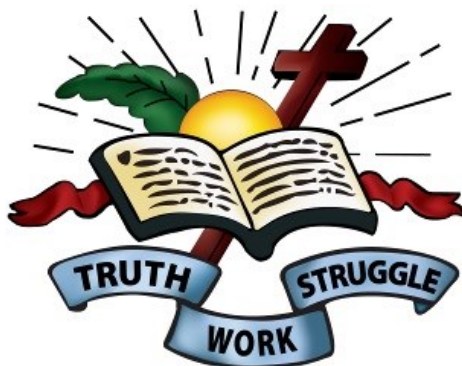
**Thursday, April 24, 2025** in order to receive the discounted rate.

Our group name is: **HOLY CROSS P.N.C.C.**

Complimentary Express Start Breakfast, fitness center, indoor pool. Coffee makers, iron & board in each room.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH COMMISSION  
OF THE  
POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

# STIPEND APPLICATION



Undergraduate Stipend Program  
available to qualified P.N.C.C. members  
who are enrolled in a college or university.

## The applicant:

- Must be an active member of a P.N.C.C. Parish.
- Must be an undergraduate student currently attending a college or university.
- Must complete and sign the application form.
- Must include both the Fall and Spring Semester Tuition Bills; an unofficial transcript from the college or university and/or schedule of classes specifying the number of credits taken or completed for the fall and spring semester for that academic year.
- Must include a letter from the pastor of the P.N.C.C. Parish you are currently a member of stating your involvement within that Parish.
- Must include a list of the P.N.C.C. activities you participate in currently or in the past. Please use additional sheets if needed.
- Applications must be submitted to:  
Education and Youth Commission  
National Church Center  
1006 Pittston Ave  
Scranton, PA 18505
- All applications must be postmarked by **May 15<sup>th</sup> of the Current Year** to be eligible for the stipend award.

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH COMMISSION STIPEND APPLICATION OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Applicants Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last                      First                      Middle

2. Applicants Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Contact Information: Home phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

5. P.N.C.C. Parish Name/Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. College/University Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City & State: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Current Class Status:        \_\_\_\_\_ Freshman        \_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore  
    \_\_\_\_\_ Junior                      \_\_\_\_\_ Senior

8. Fall Semester Credits \_\_\_\_\_ Spring Semester Credits \_\_\_\_\_

9. Applicants Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Attach a copy of the fall and spring tuition statements/unofficial transcript and/or schedule of classes including the credits taken for both fall and spring semester.

11. Please attach a letter from your Pastor and a list P.N.C.C. Activities current and past.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Applicant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

## Central Diocese

### Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish Concludes Another Successful Winter Clothing Drive Dupont, PA

The annual winter clothing drive at Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish in Dupont, PA, concluded in early January. Many thanks to the volunteers who sorted and packed everything as well those who donated so many clothing items.

Submitted by Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid



Gianna Conforti, Debbie Fritz, Rose Kazinetz, Al Micka, Joyce Jopling, Paul Kazinetz, Dorothy Kishel, Fr. Sr. Zbigniew Dawid



All of the collected winter clothing items were packed in several boxes for donation.

## Schenectady Shares Launches Annual Campaign to Restock Food Pantry Shelves

WAMC Northeast Public Radio | By Jesse Taylor

Published January 8, 2025 at 3:30 PM EST

An effort is under way to replenish food pantry stocks after the busy holiday season.

The all-volunteer Schenectady Shares began launching campaigns to restock food pantries after the busy holiday season three years ago. It works to restock food pantry shelves and collect donations for food pantries to purchase items from the Regional Food Bank. Democratic Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy said Tuesday the group is a “remarkable model” in raising awareness of food insecurity:

“The community volunteers have come together to help close that gap and to make a difference and bring stability into so many people’s lives. It’s really a great record, a great performance that the team has put together here. I thank the volunteers; I thank St. Luke’s,”

During the campaign, Schenectady Shares will collect food from more than 50 collection sites throughout the Schenectady County.

Volunteers then sort through the non-perishables and give the donations to providers like the Daily Bread Food Pantry at St. Luke’s Church in Schenectady. The organization deposits funds collected from donations into the food pantries’ Regional Food Bank accounts, which they can then use to purchase items.

Last year’s campaign collected more than 22,000 pounds of non-perishables and about \$25,000 for the 20 pantries that participated. This year, the all-volunteer organization wants to collect 30,000 pounds of food and raise \$30,000 for 28 food pantries. Jacqueline Clute, volunteer executive director of the food pantry at St. Luke’s, says she sees a lot of senior citizens utilizing the services:

“They rely on food pantries, their neighbors, their communities, their places of worship. So, we see a lot of that, we see a lot of people who have been here for a few years and still there’s some language barriers, so working, they have part time jobs but it’s not enough to help them,”

Clute notes that anyone might need the support at some point.

“You know, you could have a car and crash it and need to pay to replace it and have no money left for food. Where would you go? You’d go to a food pantry, so we’re like a stop gap,”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate in Schenectady County is 14 percent while the poverty rate in the city of Schenectady is 23 percent.

Schenectady Shares co-chair Carmel Patrick — a Schenectady city councilor — says the Daily Bread food pantry has seen a 25 percent increase in need in the last year.

“Many of the people that we are seeing at this food pantry are immigrant populations, people for whom English has not been their first language, and the working poor, I mean I think that that’s something that I really want to make sure folks understand that, you know there are a lot of people out there that are working. But because of the inflation, because of the rise of prices they still have a hard time.”

The effort ran until February 15.



On January 7<sup>th</sup>, Rev. Jim Konicki, pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Schenectady, NY, attended the 2025 Schenectady Shares kick-off. The food and funds gathered helps to support the Daily Bread Food Pantry in its main location at St. Luke’s and the satellite at Holy Name of Jesus.

## Happenings at the Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa Parish, Latham NY

### FAITH LOVE COMMUNITY

#### New Parish Sign



The Parish has been working for more than a year to replace the sign at the entrance to the church and is grateful for the Enlivening Grant that allowed this undertaking! Now a beautiful new sign welcomes visitors and parishioners and all who pass by.

#### Parker Fitzgerald Installed as Altar Server



On February 2nd during Holy Mass, the parish family witnessed as Fr. Mark installed Parker Fitzgerald as an Acolyte to serve at the Table of the Lord. Thank you for your service to God and to our parish, Parker!

Before attending SOCL class with Ms. Kelly, the Sunday School children enjoyed a pancake breakfast provided by the Y.M.S. of R. and a delicious cake as they congratulated Parker on becoming an Altar Server.

#### Mikaela Hofer Received Music Scholarship Certificate



During Holy Mass on January 26, Mikaela Hofer was presented with the Bishop Bonczak Youth Award by Fr. Mark and Regina Pollack. The P.N.C.C. designates the 4th Sunday in January to acknowledge the musicians who serve our parishes. The National United Choirs offers scholarships to parishioners who are taking music lessons and who are dedicated to serving the Church. This is Mikaela's fourth music scholarship award! Congratulations, Mikaela!

#### Choir Lutnia News



There is no age barrier in our Choir Lutnia! We all learn from one another and enjoy singing together - whether at weekly rehearsals or at Holy Mass. Mikaela Hoefler and Mary-Lou Epner share the spirit!

Before the solemn and busy season of Lent begins, the Choir is inviting family and friends for an evening of FUN. Guests will enjoy a delicious homemade pasta dinner are encouraged to bring board games and cards to further enhance the evening. The dinner will be held on Friday, February 28th.

**Honoring Our Nonagenarians**



The parish family honored its two newest nonagenarians. Ed Sawczak celebrate his 90th birthday on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Grandchildren Alexandra and Michael traveled from Florida to honor their beloved grandfather! Ed is a very active parishioner and wonderful role model. He serves as a Greeter for Mass, is our special ambassador at every food sale and is there every Wednesday to mop the floors in the hall.

A group of parishioners came bearing good wishes and a birthday cake to Shirley LaClair. Shirley turned 90 years young on January 10th! She was delighted by the visit, especially since she is no longer able to come to church.

God bless you, Ed and Shirley! Sto Lat *and more!!!!*



**Goalie Emme Fazziola – A Three-Time Gold Medal Winner!**



At the Empire State Winter Games in Lake Placid, NY last weekend, Emme Fazziola, the youngest player on her hockey team, helped bring home the gold medal with her awesome goalie skills! This is Emme's third gold medal at the Winter Games. Her entire family was there to cheer her on. Congratulations, Emme!

**Annual Congregational Meeting**



At the January 19th Congregational Meeting, the parish heard Fr. Mark's report, financial and audit reports, and organizational reports from the ANS, Choir, PTO/SOCL, and Y.M.S. of R. The 2025 Budget was approved and the 2025 Parish Committee was introduced.

Submitted by Regina Pollack

**Eastern Diocese****Soup Kitchen Volunteers Feed Fall River Homeless During Brutal Cold:  
'We're here with you'****Dan Medeiros****Dan Medeiros - The Herald News - Published January 8, 2025**

FALL RIVER — John Arruda filled himself with hot soup, bundled in multiple layers against a stinging, bitter wind that made the mid-20s temperatures feel like the low teens.

In the summer, he and his partner Nicole Smith lost their apartment.

"I'm 50 years old, never been homeless in my life," Smith said. "I lost my apartment because a roommate didn't pay their half of the rent — so on the first of the month, that was that."

Arruda spent time living in a tent in a friend's yard when it was warmer. He and Smith lived in local motels for a while.

"But you know, \$750 a week, it gets expensive," he said. "We couldn't go to a cheaper place because we had our cat with us. We love our cat. We're not going to get rid of her."

That \$3,000 a month, he said, got them a bad hotel room infested with black mold.

"They just drained all our funds, and there's nothing we could do anymore," he said. "So we ended up out here."

"I cry every day," Smith said.

They live in a homeless camp near the center of the city. On Tuesday afternoon, in Britland Park, the Rev. Rob Nemkovich of Blessed Trinity Church and Christopher Silvia of Christopher's cafe teamed up to deliver hot soup, food, supplies and warm clothing to the city's homeless neighbors living near and around the Quequechan River Rail Trail on an especially frigid day.

"It's a drop of water in a big ocean," said Kathy Nemkovich, the pastor's wife, and one of several volunteers at the event. "But just for today, if you can feed them, give them something to keep them warm, that's what we're going to do."

**Volunteers keep Fall River homeless fed and warm**

Silvia and other volunteers kept busy, finding gloves and sleeping bags for people, dishing out hot soup, bagging food to go, and figuring out how to activate chemical hand-warmers.

Brendan Theriault, who is homeless, showed them. "It's activated charcoal. You shake it like this," he said, demonstrating, "and hope to your God that it's going to be warm, and then you sit there in your sleeping bag ... waiting for it to warm up, and it just doesn't."

Silvia said he, the Rev. Nemkovich and Sandra Henrique-Greenwood "decided that we had a bunch of soup that we made and we wanted to do this."

Blount Fine Foods donated the soup. The warm clothing was donated by customers to Christopher's, dropped off at his 1816 S. Main St. coffee shop.

"We put a plea out there and people just drop off, all day, long, scarves and gloves and things like that. Food, sometimes," Silvia said. "There's no shortage of people who are donating."

Other volunteers manned a table giving away cookies and other pastries, and where even stacks of paper napkins were precious items that visitors asked for and tucked away for later.

Zeke, who preferred not to give their last name, said they have a homeless friend living in the area. "He shared on Facebook his gratitude over Christopher's helping out with distributing city trash cans around homeless encampments. And I thought that was just awesome," they said.

"I saw that they do this sort of mutual aid community work all the time. ... I was free today. I went to the cafe



for coffee and they said they were doing this. So I figured I'd come up and help out.”

Among other volunteers was Mayor Paul Coogan, bundled up against the cold.

“This is a good effort to help the community and get people something warm in their stomachs,” he said. “All these little efforts go a long way, and especially in winter.”

“We’ve serviced just about everyone on the rail trail today, so we’re happy,” Silvia said.

### **Fall River homeless coping with difficult lives in the freezing cold**

Temperatures are expected to remain low for the next few days, with high winds. On Saturday, snow is expected. Smith said she was hoping to get a motel room for even just a few nights, with the polar vortex predicted.

She said they've had trouble getting into and staying in Fall River's homeless shelter system.

Last year, the City Council passed an ordinance to outlaw camping on public property, essentially banning homeless encampments and requiring those living outdoors to take a bed if one is available or face fines. It's unknown if the ordinance has yet been enforced; Fall River police officers on hand Tuesday did not.

Smith was later taken from the scene by ambulance after suffering from a medical incident.

Theriault said he's been chronically homeless since 2020, "and it has been in my good fortune that for most of those years I ended up inside for the winter." He clarified that although he's lived outside in winter before, "This is my first time forever out in the winter."

In his time living outdoors, he's picked up tips for staying warm, including how to build makeshift camp stoves — though he noted that he was injured in a tent fire last year and was burned.

Like Arruda, Theriault grew up in Somerset and Greater Fall River, and has spent most of his time here. He's panhandled for cash, saying, "Every 40 people that see me, two people might give me two bucks. And at the end of the night, that might be enough to eat." Though passersby have yelled at him to get a job, he said, he knows that would be pointless.

"I can apply, but they're not hiring me. You know why? Because one, I can't show up in the same clothes every day," Theriault said. "Look, my pants are tied right there because they ripped the other day. I only have the one pair."

Also like Arruda, Theriault said his life was incredibly hard, but that he's trying to get by and survive his own way.

“We’re not a detriment to society," he said. “We just live in smaller communities outside of the regular communities.

"We're out here. We're here with you, not against you.”



**Sandy Greenwood ladles soup to hand out to the city's homeless neighbors at Britland Park in Fall River on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025**  
Herald News/Colin Furze



**Rev. Rob Nemkovich of Blessed Trinity Parish helps set up outdoor heaters at Britland Park in Fall River on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025**  
Herald News/Colin Furze

## **Prayer for Bishop Francis Hodur**

*from the Mass for Departed Bishops (2006 P.N.C.C. Missal):*



**Most Rev. Franciszek Hodur**  
**Organizer and First Prime Bishop**  
**of the**  
**Polish National Catholic Church**

**Born: Sunday, April 1, 1866**

**Died: Monday, February 16, 1953**

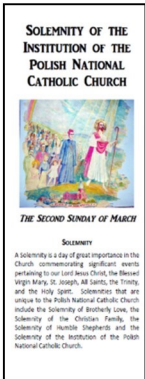
### **Let us pray.**

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Who did assure Your holy Apostles that the highest reward awaits those who strive zealously for the continuance of the Kingdom of God on earth, receive into Your glory the soul our Your servant, Francis Hodur, Bishop of Your Holy Church.

Have compassion on him as You had compassion on the erring Apostles. Mindful of his desire to bring souls to You, reward him with eternal happiness. For You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## The Solemnity of the Institution of the Polish National Catholic Church

The Solemnity of the Institution of the Polish National Catholic Church will be celebrated throughout the Polish National Catholic Church this year on Sunday, March 9, 2025. In celebration of this Solemnity, the P.N.C.C. is again offering to the parishes a full color brochure describing the Solemnity of the Institution and sharing some information on this unique feast of the Polish National Catholic Church. This is a perfect point of information to include in welcome packets or to have in bulletin racks.



25 brochures: \$8.50

50 brochures: \$15.00

75 brochures: \$21.50

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(All prices include shipping costs.)

Checks, payable to P.N.C.C. Book Department, should be sent to:

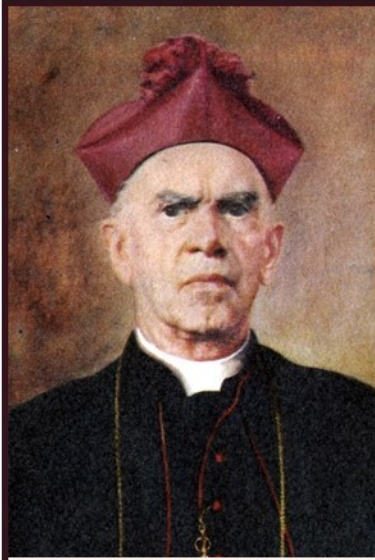
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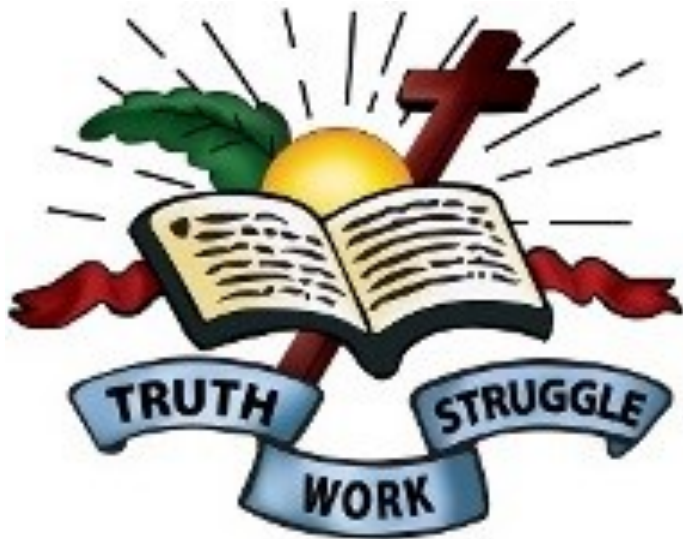
**MAY 30- JUNE 1 2025**



**In Honor of Bishop Franciszek Hodur**  
 From "Ode To Great Men and Great Things in Poetry and Prose"  
 Rev. Walter A. Hyszko

**His Voice Shall Never Cease**  
 (On the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bishop Hodur's Death)

Each year, his voice louder, more strong,  
 Thunders the words of our Church Song –  
 "So many years, O Lord, we did faithfully serve."  
 He pleads Grace for those who believed ... blessings deserve.  
 Since his passing, now will come the hardest trial –  
 He asks to forgive the selfish, those who defile  
 Their sacred oath to give their best  
 To the Church – often – fail the test.  
 Many voices, to his memory will be raised –  
 Prime Bishop Hodur, in high glory, shall be praised ...  
 They'll all praise his great deeds, the best he gave to the Lord ...  
 Yet, some will forget the true meaning of his word.  
 "Dear bishop – what your last breath whispered to be done ...  
 Of the vict'ry you sought on earth – is not yet won;  
 Thy faithful – giving their best, with tears in their eyes  
 Pray, that all who vowed – uplift their hearts to the skies.



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All proceeds will be used for future improvements to the Spojnia Farm Campus