

PARISH PROFILE

Polish Catholics keep traditions alive in local parishes

Ministry to Polish community in Western Washington dates back to 1892

BY KEVIN BIRNBAUM

For Sts. Peter and Paul in Tacoma and St. Margaret of Scotland in Seattle, two parishes with large Polish populations, it all comes down to prayer.

"The language of prayer is Polish for these people," explained Society of Christ Father Piotr Dzikowski, pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. Thus the importance of the several Masses celebrated in Polish each week at the two parishes, which carry on a legacy of Catholic ministry to Western Washington's Polish community that dates back to the days of the old Diocese of Nesqually.

Sts. Peter and Paul in Tacoma was established in 1892 as a specifically Polish parish. St. Margaret of Scotland, though founded in 1910, only became home to the Polish Catholic community of Seattle in 1992. A third Polish community, tiny Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Aberdeen, no longer celebrates Masses in Polish and hasn't had a regular weekend Mass in several years because of its small size.

Serving a need

Both Sts. Peter and Paul in Tacoma and St. Margaret of Scotland draw members from several surrounding cities. "Almost every family has quite a distance to get here to the church," said Society of Christ Father Stanislaw Michalek, priest administrator of St. Margaret of Scotland.

"In Seattle, there's actually no Polish neighborhood," he continued. "So one part of our parish — the most important, of course, is to gather and celebrate the Eucharist and sacraments and grow in God's grace — but the other part also would be social meeting ... so on Sundays they can meet and have coffee and talk."

The communities consist largely of immigrants and their families. It was an influx of Polish refugees during the Solidarity movement in the 1980s that led Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy in 1992 to give approval for the Polish community to share the facilities of St. Margaret of Scotland.

Carrying on traditions

With Corpus Christi processions, Easter basket blessings and an extra-long Christmas season, among many other practices, the parishes keep alive the traditions of their homeland. "We keep the (Christmas) decorations up until Feb. 2, the Presentation of the Lord," said Father Dzikowski. "During this time we sing all the time Christmas carols."

"We have special celebrations, we have dances, we have performances in Polish language, we celebrate Polish Independence Day, the whole year we have celebrations," he continued.

The Polish communities at Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Margaret of Scotland also pass on their cultural heritage with Sunday-morning catechism and Polish culture classes for the children, taught

Sts. Peter and Paul, Aberdeen

Founded: 1907
Households: 12
Pastor: Father Dennis E. Robb
Street Address: 813 W. First St.
Mailing Address: c/o St. Mary Church, 306 E. Third St., Aberdeen, WA 98520
Phone: 360-532-8300
E-mail: stmarycc@comcast.net

PASTORS:

Father Constantine Brzoska 1907
Father Joseph Pokorny 1917
Father Joseph Meissner 1917
Father Constantine Brzoska 1920
Attended from Ss. Aegidius and Mary, Aberdeen 1938
Father Joseph Dominic 1952
Father James D. Picton 1996
 (regional pastor)
Father Roger Smith 1998
 (regional pastor)
Father Paul Magnano 1999
 (priest moderator)
Father Martin J. Bourke 2001
Father Dennis E. Robb 2007

St. Margaret of Scotland, Seattle

Founded: 1910
Households: 370
Priest Administrator: Father Stanislaw Michalek, SCh
Street Address: 1408 W. Dravus St.
Mailing Address: 3221 14th Ave. W., Seattle, WA 98119
Phone: 206-282-1804

PASTORS:

Father J.B. McDonald 1910
Father James G. Stafford 1912
Father James F. Lanigan 1919
Father Patrick Kirby 1924
Father Thomas Madigan 1927
Father Philip F. Corboy 1928
Father Thomas Pitsch 1976
Father Andrew J. Squier 1979
Father James van Gogh 1982
Father David Linehan 1991
Father Joseph Calik 1992 (Polish ministry)
Father Kevin Moran 1994
Father Robert Camuso 1996
Father Stanislaw Michalek 2004
 (Polish ministry)
Father Stanislaw Michalek 2006



Sts. Peter and Paul, Tacoma

Founded: 1892
Households: 180
Pastor: Father Piotr Dzikowski, SCh
Street Address: 3422 Portland Ave., Tacoma, WA 98404
E-mail: stpeterpaultacoma@comcast.net

PASTORS:

Father Michale Fafara 1892
Father Joseph Brzoska 1896
 (priest administrator)
Father John Organiski 1898
Father Lawrence Piotrkowski 1910
 (priest administrator)
Father Henry Rozycki 1925
Father Richard Cebula 1977
Father Michael Szwej 1985
Father Joseph Calik 1989
Father Wojciech Baryski 1992
Father Piotr Dzikowski 1995



Marian grotto at St. Margaret of Scotland



Historical photo of St. Margaret of Scotland



Historical photo of Sts. Peter & Paul, Tacoma

partially in Polish.

And with only a couple hundred Polish families, St. Margaret of Scotland even has some advantages over parishes in Poland. "In Poland, the parishes are very much bigger and people are more anonymous, but this parish is very much like a family," said Father Michalek, who, like Father Dzikowski, came to Western Washington from the Archdiocese of Poznan in Poland.

St. Margaret of Scotland is home to the Seattle chapter of the Friends of John Paul II Foundation, and a memorial room and library dedicated to the late Polish pope will be dedicated at the parish on April 1.

Since coming to St. Margaret of Scotland in 2004, Father Michalek has been

working to integrate the Polish community and the "traditional" American community at the parish. On Thanksgiving and holy days of obligation, he now celebrates bilingual Masses, and

there is an all-parish festival each June. As he says, the parish is now "one community of faithful people who have different languages of worship."