



# Alliance News

Toledo-Poznań Alliance quarterly newsletter – Winter 2015

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## Christmas traditions in Polish homes

Year by year the centuries old tradition is preserved and repeated in Polish homes in the U.S. and around the world. Families engage in the same ceremonies and the same dishes appear for the Wigilia supper. There is excitement in the air on the Wigilia day because people go to the tree farm and pick out a Christmas tree, in Polish it's choinka. Once its prepped and ready to bring it inside, the tree is then decorated with paper chains made with colored paper that all kids would make in school; then small apples that you force a nail in and tie a string around it; then walnuts that were hanged the same way, with a nail and a string. Then just a few pretty little ornaments. The last thing would be candles that had a clip attached to the bottom so that the candles could be clipped to the strongest branch. To light the candles, it was only allowed by adults. Amazingly enough, there was never a problem with fire. Once the tree was decorated, the children's task then was to watch for the first star in the sky in early evening.

Since Wigilia was always a day of fasting, it was agony for the kids to wait that long. Even though the Church doesn't require fasting on that day any more, many Poles still observe it. When the first star appeared, the family could then sit down and start with the traditional sharing of the opłatek (in English the Communion wafer). The meaning of the opłatek was a symbol of love, forgiveness, contentment and family unity. Mother would start sharing her opłatek with Dad then everyone else around the table. The old tradition required to have an extra place set for whoever might knock on the door that night. Also the old tradition required to place a sheaf of wheat on the table or to spread some hay under the tablecloth as a remembrance of the manger. The tablecloth was always white to make this meal more festive, and twelve dishes were always served because of the twelve apostles. The meal would always start with a couple of different types of fish such as marinated herring and baked or fried carp. Two kinds of soups was always served, mushroom soup and czerwony barszcz (red beet soup) with miniature dumplings. Then pierogi a couple of different kinds, such as farmers cheese, sauerkraut and mushrooms

served with sauerkraut stewed with wild mushrooms, followed with fruit compote and a variety of pastries, including poppy seed cake, babka (Polish coffee cake). When the meal was completed, Christmas Carols were sung and at last Santa Claus, the bearer of gifts, would come. Santa Claus always came on Christmas Eve. Then at Midnight the whole family would walk to Church for Pasterka (Midnight Mass). There would almost always be snow on Christmas Eve, which made it more cheery and jolly. After Midnight Mass, there would be hot chocolate and pastries.

On Christmas Day no cooking is done in Poland. It is a day of rest and happiness for all. Poland enjoys a second day of Christmas, (the day after) where everyone is off work and school and when families get together visiting and more sharing of food with a baked goose. Christmas trees are kept in Polish homes until the day of the Magi on January 6.

## Wesołych Świąt !



**Wigilia - see insert in this newsletter for information on Wigilia hosted by PACT on December 13, 2015.**

## Jane Babula (1922-2015)

One of the founding members of TPA, Jane Babula, passed away on October 6, 2015. She was born in Coatbridge, Scotland. While living in Scotland, she met Roman Babula who was serving in the Polish Forces overseas and was stationed in Falkirk, Scotland. They married in 1943 and in 1951 came to the U.S. and settled in Toledo with their children. She learned to speak Polish from her husband and of course with a Scottish accent. Jane was active in the Polish community in her younger days in the Kuschwanz neighborhood. She will be remembered for her active role in the early years of TPA and had donated Polish items to the Silent Auction for our Dozynki celebration.

## New Year's Eve Dinner Dance

St. Charles & St. Hyacinth Parishes are sponsoring this event to be held at St. Hyacinth Parish Hall. It starts with Mass at 5:30 pm. Hall doors open at 6:30 pm and the traditional Polish dinner is served at 7 pm. Beer and setups included/BYOB. From 8 to 12:30 there will be music and dancing. It is catered by Malczewski's with music by Badinov. Tickets are \$25 each and secure parking is available on the parish grounds. Tickets are on sale from November 7<sup>th</sup> to December 21<sup>st</sup> at weekend Masses, the Parish Office or by calling Michael Pence at 419-349-6856. St. Hyacinth Parish is located on the corner of Parkside Blvd. & Victory. Please join us for the New Year Celebration.

## Polish Pride Anyone?

Being Polish is no joke. For ten million people of Polish ancestry in the U.S., as well as many who have settled in other countries since the fall of communism, it is a heartfelt matter. With all the travel guides and books on the Polish language, folklore, customs and other facts, there is no single, comprehensive, reader-friendly reference on what it means to be Polish. *The Essential Guide to Being Polish*, by Anna Spysz and Marta Turek, is the go-to concise resource for anyone looking to reconnect with their culture. Family and friends can learn something about their heritage.

Divided into three sections to make for an easy-to-follow format (Poland in context, Poles in Poland, and Poles Abroad), this guide covers just about everything and does so in a style that is fun to read and very informative. The book features the country's history and geography, wars, Jews in Poland, the communist past, the post-communist past and present, language, kings and queens, religion/Catholicism (with special focus on Pope John Paul II), holidays, food and drink. What is a

real Polish wedding all about? That is addressed clearly and with flair in this book. Other chapters cover literature, music, art, famous scientists, Polish men and women, Poles in America, Poles in the United Kingdom, Poles in the European Union, and last but not least, Polish pride.

Author Anna Spysz, a Polish-born American, earned an MA from the Jagiellonian University. She now lives in Krakow, Poland, working as a freelance writer and translator.

Author Marta Turek emigrated to the U.S. as a child with her parents from Poland. She moved back to Poland in 1993 and lives in Rokietnica, Poland. She earned an MA in English linguistics from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

The book is published by New Europe Books. It is in paperback format with 336 pgs. Cost is \$19.95. *The Essential Guide to Being Polish* can be ordered through Amazon.com or BarnesNoble.com. It can also be interlibrary loaned from the Toledo Library.

*Submitted by Walter Palicki. Source: Amazon.com*

## Dożynki 2015

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dozynki was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October at Lourdes University. Through the dedication of the Dozynki Committee of Sister Ann Francis, Kathy Grabel, Jackie and Pat Konwinski, David Chelminski, Stan Machosky, Walter Palicki, Rosalie and Chuck Hinde, and Tom Sorosiak the afternoon event was very successful. Guests arriving were greeted with the music of Fredrik Chopin played by Ms. Alice Peterson on violin and Ms. Norma Sherman Kelling on piano. The room was decorated with commemorative vases adorned with the Polish eagle and the date of this year's Dozynki. Each vase contained a red and white carnation symbolic of the flag of the Republic of Poland. Each guest received this for their attendance. A harvest table was decorated with the flag of Poland, and contained all the fruits and vegetables that are blessed and harvested in Poland. A special addition was the names of the fruits and vegetables written in Polish on the table.

There were many items from Poland in the silent auction and a special raffle items this year were the 15 Polish coffee cakes baked by Sister Gretchen of Lourdes University. There 20 chrysanthemums which were from each table also in the raffle.

The program began with Father Paul Kwiatkowski being greeted by the lord and lady of the village, along with children in traditional Polish dress carrying the

autumn wreath, bread and salt to be blessed. A procession followed through the attendees, while a recording of Czarna Madonna was sung by Jan Lewan and those in attendance. Malczewski catering prepared the Polish dinner which included a delicious mushroom soup.

Honorees this year were Sister Ann Francis Klimkowski and Father Paul Kwiatkowski for their 60 and 50 years of vocational dedication to the communities they served. Their comments shared with those in attendance displayed the sincerity that they have shared with all of us through the years. The four scholarship recipients were named and two that could be present read their essays. The money for the scholarships comes from money raised through events of this kind in TPA and also in P.A.C.T. Also, the children in the orphanage in Poznan, Poland will have a very nice Christmas because of the donation TPA will make from money raised this year at Dozynki. The program closed with an appeal for continued support of Dozynki and the TPA.

**Save the date for Dożynki 2016  
Sunday, October 2, 2016**

### **Dear Toledo-Poznań Alliance Members:**

The 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Toledo-Poznan Alliance is upon us. With the success of the Dozynki this past October we can now look forward to 2016 and the celebration of the signing of the agreement with our sister city in Poznan, Poland 25 years ago. I am confident that 2016 will be a grand celebration of Polish Culture in the Toledo area.

To continue with the traditions of our family's Polish heritage, it is important that we work together to make this possible. This begins with membership and the willingness to help when needed. I have already addressed the issue of membership at the last Dozynki. Now, I am bringing it to all the members in this newsletter. Beginning with my own children, I am going to pay for their membership in the Toledo-Poznan Alliance. They will be able to read with each newsletter the events planned, historical information and traditions explained, and most importantly they will hear about our cultural heritage from someone other than myself.

With that, I ask every member to follow my lead and do the same for your children or family member. Send in a **new membership** in their name(s) so that they can become the next generation of TPA members to carry forward what our parents and grandparents did for us. I would like to see a growth in membership of 100 new members for 2016. The cost for a membership is \$5 for a student, \$10 for an adult, or \$15 for the entire Family. This is a very small donation to ensure that your children continue to stay connected with all the traditions that we grew up celebrating. With so many of our family members moving distances from our home, the ability to enjoy the gathering of family members becomes less opportune. This membership will bring to their mailbox all the news that makes the Polonia in the Toledo area special.

Thanks to all of you for your continued patronage towards the TPA and most importantly remaining the "Torch Bearer" for your family's Polish heritage.

*Tom Sorosiak, President of TPA Board of Trustees*

### **New Prime Minister of Poland**



Beata Szydło took the oath of office as prime minister of Poland on Friday, November 13, 2015. Szydło, a member of the Law and Justice Party, becomes the third female prime minister. Born Beata Maria Kusinska on April 15, 1963 in Oświęcim, Poland, her father was a miner.

She graduated from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 1987. Kusinska studied philosophy, history and ethnography, and became a social worker. She married Edward Szydło, and they have two sons Tymoteusz and Blazej. One son is studying to be a priest while the other pursues medicine.

Szydło was elected mayor of Brzeszcze, her hometown, in 1998. A Law and Justice Party candidate, she was elected to the Sejm in September of 2005, with 14,447 votes in the 12 Chrzanow district. She led the presidential campaign of Andrzej Duda in the May 2015 election. She characterized herself as a woman of ordinary people who struggle in a difficult economy. Law and Justice garnered 36.7% of the vote; Civic Platform earned 24.1%.



The Law and Justice Party or Prawo

i Sprawiedliwosc (PiS) is a Polish national conservative party. PiS took a strong stand against corruption and for traditional Roman Catholic values. It is soft Eurosceptic stressing how the European Union could help Poland rather than Poland helping the EU. PiS is also Atlanticist or cooperating with the United States and Canada on political, economic and defense matters. Led by Chair Jaroslaw Kaczynski, it has majority of seats in the Parliament from the recent elections, the first party to do so since 1989.

## Platforma Obywatelska

Civic Platform or

Platforma Obywatelska (PO) is a liberal-conservative, Christian-democratic party. It believes in Pro-Europeanism, which supports industrial, political, legal, economic, social and cultural integration through the European Union and other ways.

After her selection, Szydlo remarked, "It's a huge responsibility, but I believe deeply in the people with whom I will introduce a plan to fix the republic." The fix could include generous welfare spending, an increase in the minimum wage, a decrease in the retirement age, new taxes on banks and foreign-owned supermarkets and no entry for migrants.

Her cabinet includes Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski, Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz, Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro, Intelligence Service Coordinator Mariusz Kaminski, Europe Minister Konrad Szymanski and Development Minister Mateusz Marowiecki.

Foreign policy will be Eurosceptic, anti-Russian and pro-American. Poland wants the Russian government to release the wreckage of the jet, which crashed in Smolensk killing President Lech Kaczynski in 2010. Poland also objects to the European Union's plans to build a second pipeline to pump gas from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea. Polish media has criticized the selection of hawks Macierewicz, Ziobro and Kaminski by a weak prime minister with no experience in foreign affairs. There is concern over the influence of party chairman Kaczynski. On the other hand, there was praise for Marowiecki who successfully led Bank Zachodni WBK through the 2008 global recession.

Prime Minister Beata Szydlo, the "fresh face" in Polish government, must meet domestic and foreign challenges.

*Submitted by Jackie Konwinski. Source: The Guardian, Chicago Tribune, Beata Szydlo's website.*

### Holiday Parade took place on Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> and it was well represented by TPA, PACT and TPGS



Photo by Pat Konwinski

#### Save the date!

**Annual meeting for all TPA membership,  
March 6, 2016, 2:00 pm, Franciscan Ctr.  
Conference Rm. Refreshments will be served.**

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Toledo-Poznan Alliance

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