

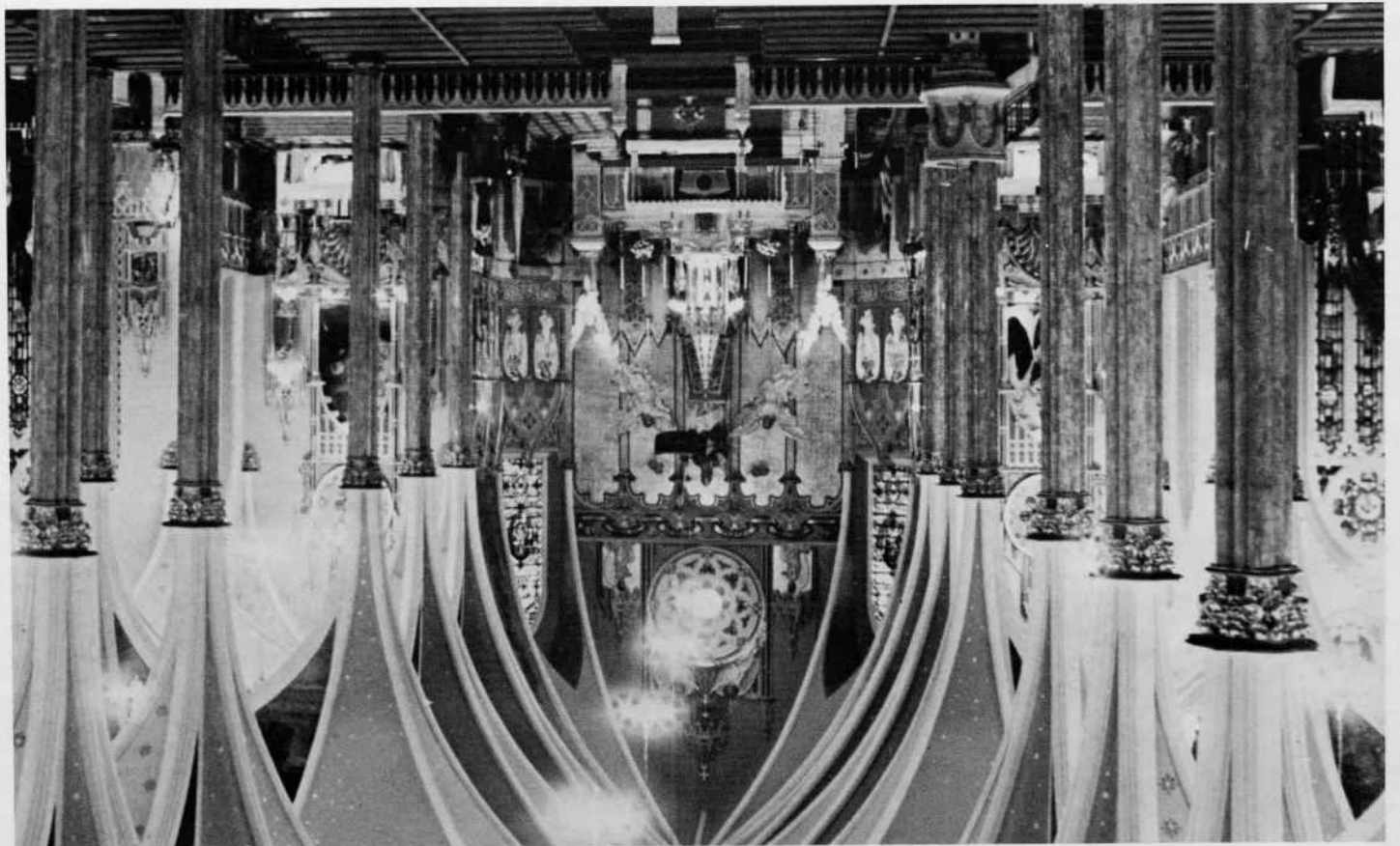
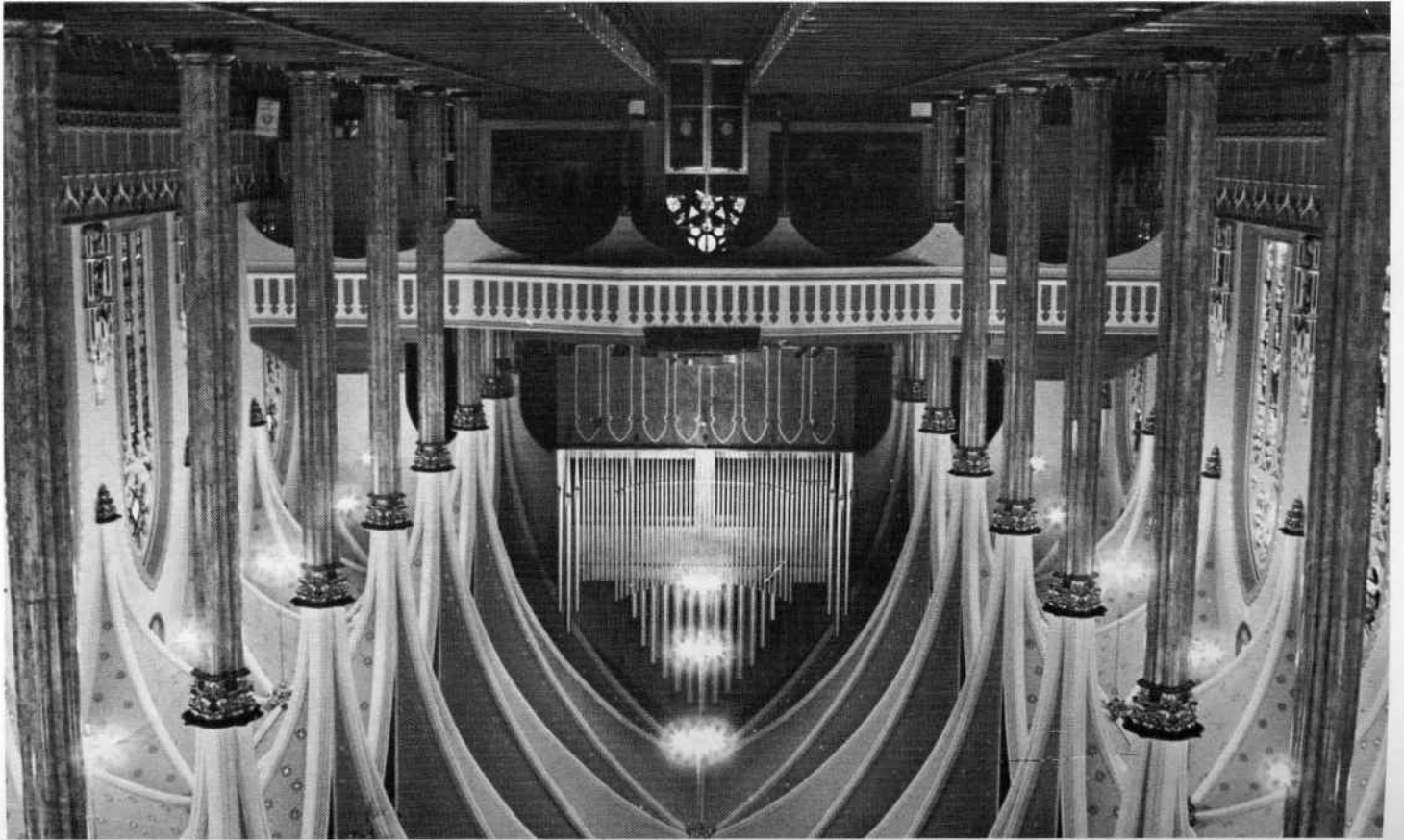
DETROIT'S OLDEST
POLISH PARISH



ST. ALBERTUS

1872 - 1973

Centennial



*Barry A. ...
St. Albertus Parish
St. Clair Mich.*

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DETROIT'S OLDEST POLISH PARISH



ST. ALBERTUS

1872 - 1973

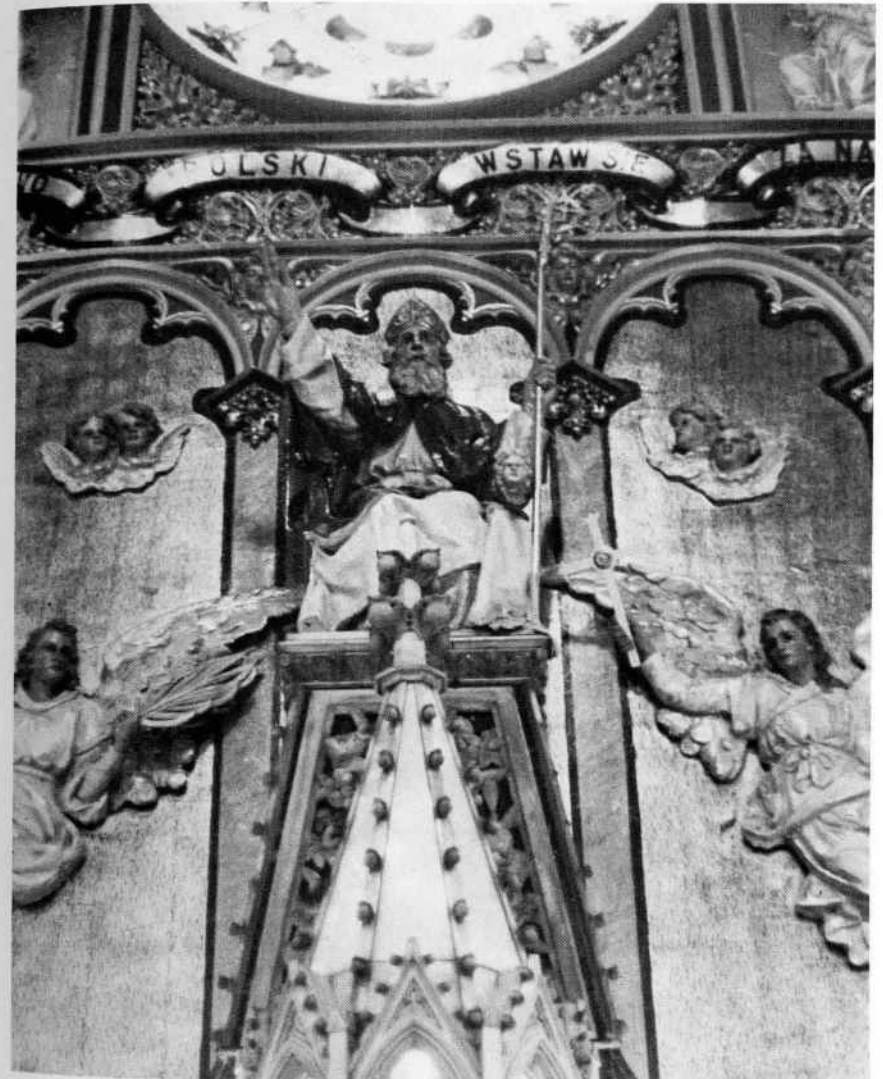
Centennial

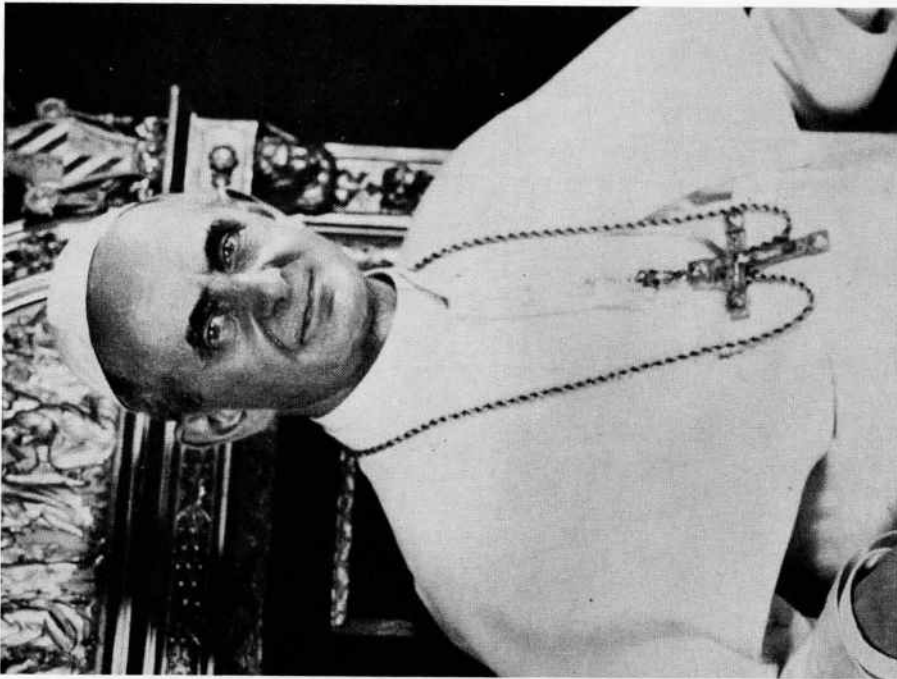
DETROIT'S OLDEST POLISH PARISH
ST. ALBERTUS
Detroit, Michigan
1872 - 1972

History by
REV. JOSEPH SWASTEK

Polish History by
REV. JOHN SZOPINSKI, S.J.

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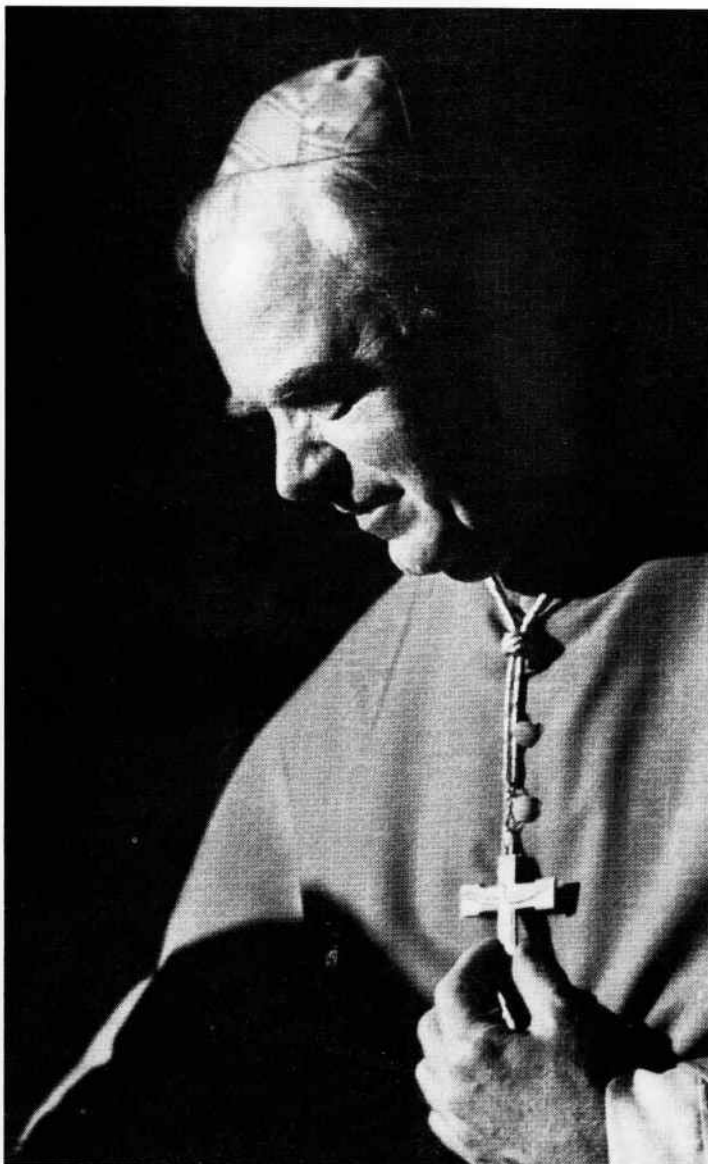
HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI

Most Holy Father

The Rev. Joseph J. Matenga humbly begs for the Parishioners of St. Albertus R. C. Parish, Detroit, Mich., on the occasion of the Centennial Year, a special Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of divine graces and favors.

St. Dominus Constantinus Apostolicus Legatus Titulus Petrus de 11. + 73

+ Antonius M. Pravia Archiep. Aemur. S. F.



JOHN CARDINAL DEARDEN, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF DETROIT



OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT
1234 WASHINGTON BLVD.
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

May 26, 1972

Dear Parishioners of St. Albertus' Parish:

I welcome the opportunity to offer you my personal congratulations on the occasion of your 1973 centennial celebration.

The spiritual and historical significance of St. Albertus' as being the first and oldest Polish-Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit makes your centennial commemoration especially unique. Your celebration of one hundred years as a community united in faith, hope and love adds to a millennium of Christian tradition and recalls the rich contribution of the Polish-American community to the Church of Detroit. Too often, we take for granted the rich heritage of the faith that has been brought to us with strength and beauty.

I know that your celebration will be a time of thanksgiving and renewal. We all share the hope that the blessings of the past may find new strength and bear fruit for the future.

Cordially yours in Christ,

John Card. Dearden
Archbishop of Detroit

Parishioners of St. Albertus' Church
4231 St. Aubin Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48207



**Najstarszej
Parafii św. Wojciecha B-pa Męczennika
na 100-lecie**

**Wiernej służby Ludowi Bożemu
Polowi w Detroit
oddając w macierzyńskie Dłonie Maryi
Królowej Polski - Matki Kościoła**

całym nam błogosławieństwem
+ Stefan Kard. Wyszyński
Knyas Polki
Warszawa, 1972 R.P.

ODPIS

PRYMAS POLSKI

WARSAWA, DN. 14 czerwca 1972 r.
UL. MIODOWA 17

N.1865/72/P.

Drogi Księżu Proboszczu,
Ukochani Rodacy Parafianie!

Wasza Parafia św. Wojciecha obchodzi dnia 14 lipca 1972 RP. setną rocznicę swego istnienia. Jest ona pierwszą parafią polską w Detroit.

W połowie XIX wieku przybyli tutaj Kaszubi jako pierwsi osadnicy polscy. Najważniejszą dla nich rzeczą było zachowanie skarbów duchowych prawie tysiącletniej polskiej kultury i tradycji katolickiej, które-jako zawsze wierni Bogu i Ojczyźnie, pragnęli przekazać swoim dzieciom. Aby to skutecznie zbudowali sobie kościół najpierw drewniany a w 1872 roku murowany, którego setną rocznicę istnienia obchodzicie właśnie w bieżącym roku. Ta Wasza Parafia stała się centrum życia religijnego i kulturalnego tamtejszej Polonii przez całe ubiegłe stulecie.

Na plebanii tej Parafii w 1873 roku Ks.Prob. Teodor Gieryk założył Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie, dziś po Związku Narodowym, największa organizacja polonijna w Stanach Zjednoczonych.

Na terenie Parafii w 1887 roku Ks.Józef Dąbrowski zorganizował Polskie Seminarium Duchowne, które 1909 roku przeniósł do Orchard Lake, Michigan.

Tutaj tenże Ks.Dąbrowski sprowadził z Polski Siostry Felicjanki, gdzie powstał dom macierzysty, skąd rozeszły się one na swą tak bardzo owocną pracę wychowawczą wśród dziatwy imłodzięży polonijnej po całej Ameryce.

Tu także powstały dwa polskie dzienniki z których "Dziennik Polski" stale jeszcze wychodzi i podtrzymuje ducha polskiego w mieście i dalekiej okolicy.

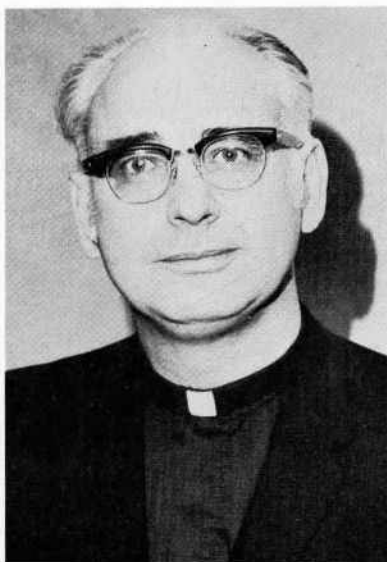
Aby na dalsze stulecie Parafia św. Wojciecha w Detroit była ogniskiem żarliwego życia religijnego i duchowego dla tamtejszej Polonii, oddaję ją pod opiekę Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej, Matki Kościoła i Królowej Polski, życząc dużo Łask Świątek, Mocy i Pocięch Bożych w dalszej ofiarnej służbie Bogu i Braciom, oraz ślę błogosławieństwo prymasowskie dla wszystkich Braci Rodaków.

W miłości bratniej

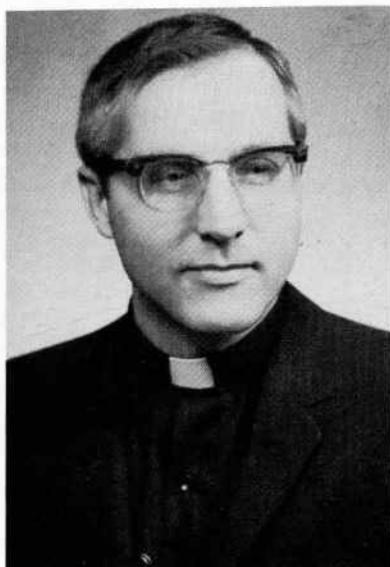
/-/+Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński
PRYMAS POLSKI

Przewielebny
Ks.Prob.Józef J.Matlenga
4231 St. Aubin Ave.
Detroit, MI. USA

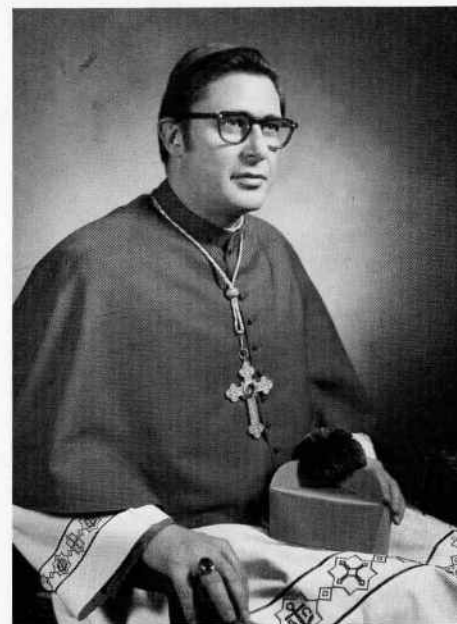
DETROIT AUXILIARIES



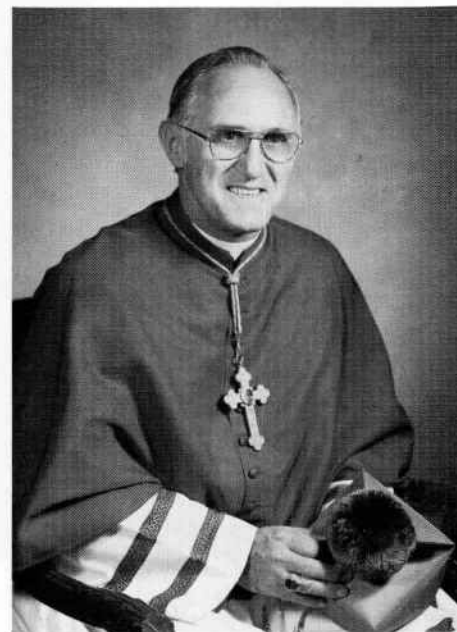
MOST REV. WALTER J. SCHOENHERR, D.D.



MOST REV. THOMAS J. GUMBLETON, D.D.



MOST. REV. JOSEPH L. IMESCH



MOST. REV. ARTHUR H. KRAWCZAK



REV. JOSEPH J. MATLENGA

St. Albertus Church

4231 ST. AUBIN AVE.
DETROIT MICH. 48207
TE 2-5388

To the Parishioners:

I extend my warmest congratulations on the occasion of 100 years of service to God and the Polish community.

I salute the early pioneers, who established and built the St. Albertus Church. The Parish was established, developed and matured in an era of mighty change for mankind. Through years, the Parish was beset by trials, disappointments and hardships but it braved these vicissitudes with courage, sacrifice, hope and trust in God.

May the heritage and devotion to Our Lord, which the founders of this Parish left us, be passed on with the same reverence and enthusiasm to those who follow us in these turbulent times.

Rev. Joseph J. Matlenga



MOTHER MARY COLUMBINE RADZILOWSKI
PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR of LIVONIA PROVINCE

1971

FELICIAN SISTERS

36800 SCHOOLCRAFT ROAD
LIVONIA, MICHIGAN 48150

August 30, 1972

Rev. Joseph J. Matlenga
St. Albertus Church
4231 St. Aubin Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48207

Dear Father Matlenga and Parishioners of St. Albertus,

All the Felician Sisters of the Livonia Province join me in extending our congratulations to you and our heartfelt gratitude to God for a century of service in this cradle of Christian heritage for the Poles of Detroit.

It was truly a century of stride in Christian growth. One hundred fruitful years proclaim the deep faith and loyalty to the Church of our forebears. St. Albertus Church stands as an eloquent monument in brick and stone to the sacrifice of poor immigrants who put their money where their hearts were--in the worship of God and in their Christian living. Today, that same deep faith and loyalty is manifested in the worshiping community that still gathers to hear the Good News and to spread its message.

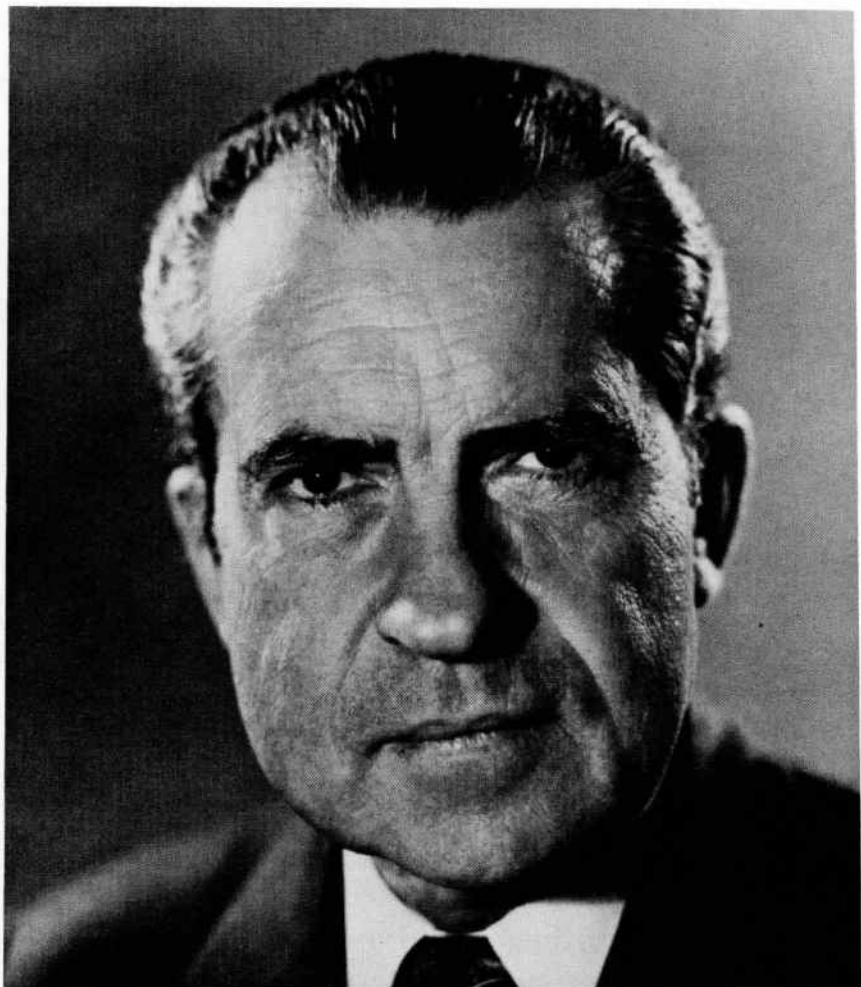
The Felician Sisters are humbly grateful and can point with pride to a real harvest of souls consecrated to the service of God whose vocations were nurtured in this parish environment. We have always been good neighbors on St. Aubin, benefiting from each others service and community support.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that the blessings of a century of grace in this parish may continue in greater abundance in succeeding years, measured out, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing.

In Christ Jesus,

Mother Mary Columbine

Mother Mary Columbine
Provincial Superior



*Mr. RICHARD NIXON
President of the United States of America*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 6, 1972

TO THE CONGREGATION OF ST. ALBERTUS CHURCH

Your one hundredth anniversary is a source of satisfaction not only to you but also to the nation whose moral fiber you have strengthened by your religious commitment.

It is my hope that the pride you derive from this significant milestone may give you all the confidence you will need to face an even more challenging future with the same high purpose.

By this pride in your past and by the spiritual values of your Faith, may you continue to advance the goals of the true human brotherhood we seek -- and may this nation and all mankind benefit from your work.

Richard Nixon



WILLIAM G. MILLIKEN
GOVERNOR



STATE OF MICHIGAN

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

LANSING

WILLIAM G. MILLIKEN
GOVERNOR

St. Albertus Church
4231 St. Aubin Avenue
Detroit, Michigan

Greetings:

May I offer personal and official congratulations on this very special 100th anniversary for St. Albertus Church.

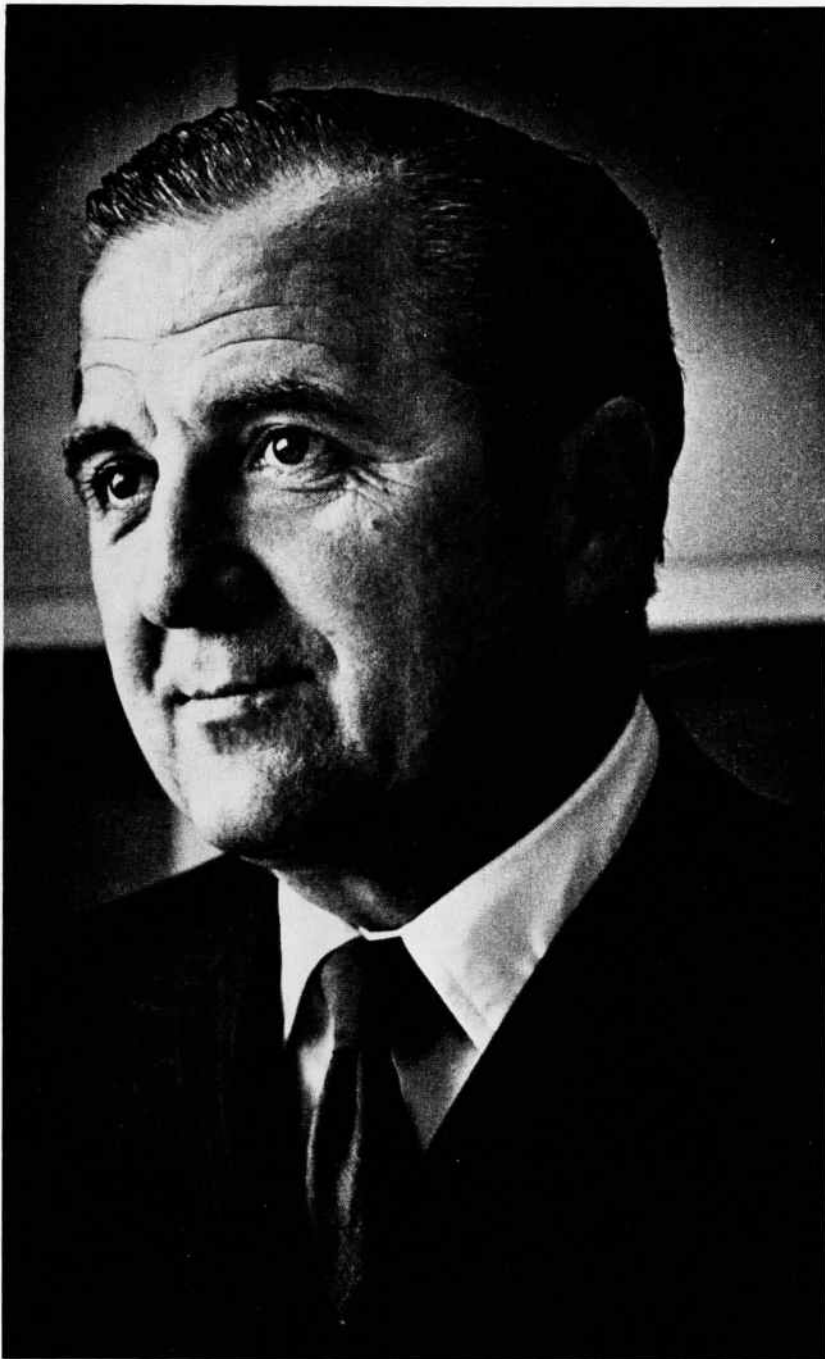
This centennial provides an excellent opportunity for the parishioners of St. Albertus to draw inspiration from the achievements of those who have worked so hard during the past century so that the coming years may be even more fruitful.

This event will certainly mark a most important milestone in the history of your church, helping each of you to realize the importance of St. Albertus and the accomplishments which can be realized in the future.

Sincerely,

William G. Milliken

Governor



ROMAN S. GIBBS
MAYOR

City of Detroit

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

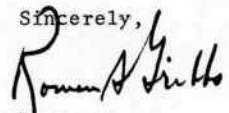
ROMAN S. GIBBS
MAYOR

To the Parishioners
St. Albertus Church

I offer congratulations and sincere best wishes during the Centennial observance of the organization of your church.

St. Albertus was the first Polish Roman Catholic Parish in the City of Detroit. Over the years its religious and lay leaders have played significant roles in preserving national customs.

Many in this community share with you the national pride of Poland. On behalf of them, I express gratitude for the dedication and devotion to our mutual ethnic traditions displayed by Pastor Matlenga and the priests and parishioners of St. Albertus.

Sincerely,

Mayor



ANTHONY J. RATHNAW
HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE



FRANK AND PHYLLIS KOSS, JR.



ANTONIO AND ARLENE PULICE

CO-CHAIR PEOPLE



EDWARD AND JULIE PISARSKI
TREASURER

INTRODUCTION

1. TOPIC

This book attempts to tell the story of Detroit's first Polish ethnic parish within the framework of fifteen pastoral profiles of the priests who had charge of the immigrants and their descendants that made up the congregation over a period of 100 years. While concentrating on the parish's pastors, the account also calls attention to the various socio-religious factors which conditioned the origins, foundation and subsequent vicissitudes of the parish. The study likewise takes into account the contributions of the bishops of the diocese and the lay members and teaching sisters of the parish; their combined assistance not only variously influenced but also considerably contributed to the parochial functions of the priests.

The years from 1872 to 1972 cover the present existential span of St. Albertus Parish. Founded a century ago, in the ethnically pluralistic society that made up both the total urban and the Catholic population of Detroit, the parish aimed to preserve the Polish ethnicity as well as the traditional Catholic faith of its members. In the course of ten decades, under pressure of changing urban and diocesan circumstances, St. Albertus Parish has undergone various modifications but it has managed to retain its identity. Once a large Polish parish in a predominantly (if not exclusively) Polish ethnic neighborhood of East Side Detroit, it now is a small bi-lingual parish in a dominantly Black section of the city. Yet it remains, and continues to be regarded as, a Polish Parish.

This dualism of persistent identity along with progressive transformation — its character, causes and consequences — constitutes the basic theme of the present study viewed through the prism of the personalities of its priestly leaders. The author hopes that the results will help illumine the role played by ethnic parishes in the history of Catholicism in Detroit.

2. WRITINGS

Over the years more than a dozen persons have written about various aspects of St. Albertus Parish, but so far no one has produced a comprehensive parochial history. What has been published differs in value as well as coverage. Only the more significant items are mentioned here.

Special value attaches to the work of Rev. Wacław Kruszcza (1868-1937). The eleventh of his thirteen-volume chronicle of Polish parishes in the United States, published between 1905 and 1908 under the title *Historia Polska w Ameryce* (Polish History in America), contains a chronologically unreliable, factually incomplete, and interpretatively biased (though in some respects also indispensable) account of St. Albertus Parish's first three decades (to 1902). All subsequent chroniclers of the parish have borrowed freely and uncritically from its contents — not only citations from lost or unavailable primary sources but also inaccuracies in statements and interpretations of facts, not always acknowledging their indebtedness or credulity to "the Nestor of Polish historians in America."

Similarly not wholly reliable, yet still required for its biographical and pictorial materials, is the commemorative volume of another early chronicler, Wincenty Smolczyński (1847-1936), published in 1907 under the title *Przewodnik Adresowy i Historia Osady Polskiej w Detroit, Mich.* (A Directory and History of the Polish Settlement in Detroit, Mich.). Intended to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Polish settlement in Detroit, the work contains an interesting summary of St. Albertus Parish along with biographical sketches and pictures of some of its priests and parishioners.

Less valuable because based largely on Fr. Kruszcza and Smolczyński, but notable to the extent that they carry the historical account of the parish to the fiftieth and seventy-fifth anniversaries, are the chronicles published by St. Albertus Parish in 1920 and 1947 respectively. The first, titled *Album Pamiatkowe w 50 Letnia Rocznice Zalozenia Par. Sw. Wojciecha w Detroit, Mi.* (The 50th Anniversary Commemorative Album of the Founding of St. Albertus Parish in Detroit, Mich.) was authored by Rev. Joseph Czarkowski who lists and annotates twenty-two parish societies in his volume; the second, titled *Diamantowy Jubileusz Historia Parafii Sw. Wojciecha* (The Diamond Jubilee — A History of St. Albertus Parish), appeared anonymously in a special anniversary issue of the parish weekly, *Parafjanin*. The chief value of this account lies in the list (which is incomplete) of priests and nuns who came from St. Albertus Parish and entered the service of the Church.

The last and most rounded of the jubilee chronicles, however, comes from the pen of Rev. John Szopinski, SJ. Titled *Historia Parafii Sw. Wojciecha* (History of St. Albertus Parish), it appeared serially in Detroit's *Dziennik Polski* (Polish Daily News) once a week in the Friday-Saturday editions from mid-September 1971 to the end of August 1972. Fr. Szopinski's weekly column also contained newsworthy items about happenings in St. Albertus Parish.

Other informative but partial accounts of St. Albertus Parish (some more dependent on earlier secondary sources than others) appear in the third volume of *Historia Zgromadzenia SS. Felicjanek na Podstawie Rekopisow* (A History of the Felician Sisters Based on Manuscripts, 1932) which gives the Felician version of the Kolasinski Crisis. F. W. Dziob's *Sto Lat Historji Polskiej w Detroit* (One Hundred Years of Polish History in Detroit), published in 1937 to commemorate the centennial of Polish settlement in Detroit, contains some interesting unsupported statements about the first St. Albertus School. Sister M. Remigia Napoliska's *The Polish Immigrant in Detroit to 1914* is a scholarly monograph published in 1946 with excellent background material on the first three decades of the living and working conditions of the members of St. Albertus Parish. Rev. George Pare's *The Catholic Church in Detroit 1701-1888* (published in 1951) is indispensable for the early religious background of St. Albertus Parish. The first (and only) volume of the *Polish American Encyclopedia* edited by Rev. Francis Bolek in 1954 gives some interesting statistics about St. Albertus School. The authoritative work of Rev. Edward T. Janas CR, *The First One Hundred Years: A Study of the Apostolate of the Congregation of the Resurrection in the United States 1866-1966* throws light on the origins not only of St. Albertus Parish but the earlier Resurrectionist Mission in Parisville.

Last, but not least deserving of notice, is the intensive research and considerable manuscript work, not yet completed nor signalled in print of

three dedicated scholarly students of Detroit's Polish past upon whose knowledge and generous assistance this writer has freely drawn. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Sister M. Tullia of Madonna College, without whose scholarly essay on St. Albertus School as well as other manuscript materials relating to Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, an important aspect of St. Albertus development would have been left unexplained. To Dr. Edward A. Skendzel goes a special *Bog Zaplac* for his generous sharing of treasure-trove of information gathered with indefatigable zest from yellowed newspaper files about the stormy career of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski and the colorful, if sometimes explosive, lives of Polish Detroiters in the 1880's and 1890's. And without Mr. Allen Treppa's patient researching of the real estate transactions, building construction and neighborhood growth of St. Albertus Parish this account would be a mere name without a habitation.

3. SOURCES

The primary sources for the history of St. Albertus Parish are basically of four kinds: physical remains, unpublished documents, published materials, and surviving parishioners, priests, and nuns with personal information about the parish or its personnel.

The architectural remains do not include any of the parish's first frame structures; only the second church, the second rectory, and the third school remain. All stand on the locations on which they were originally built.

The unpublished documentary sources repose chiefly in two depositories: the parish archives in the St. Albertus Rectory and the Chancery archives of the Archdiocese of Detroit. The former contains nearly forty volumes of registers (baptisms, marriages, confirmations, Holy Communions, and deaths) and a card index file of present parishioners. The latter contains some (not all) miscellaneous records pertaining to St. Albertus Parish (deeds and abstracts to church property, parish reports submitted by pastors, copies of confidential correspondence between priests and bishops, records of priests' ordinations and appointments, business transactions, permissions for loans and repairs, also parish committee appointments, and a long but incomplete run of Catholic Directories.

Additional archival documents are found in the Archives of the Felician Sisters Motherhouse in Livonia (information about school attendance, principals, teachers, vocations from the parish, curricular programs, methods and teaching aids). The recently established School Records Center in Detroit's Sacred Heart Seminary complex also has some St. Albertus School pupil records on file. The Burton Historical Collection in Detroit's Main Public Library contains, in addition to newspaper files with material about the parish or its members, early maps showing the location of the first St. Albertus Church near the city limits, pictures of the buildings and the neighborhood comprising the parish complex, some biographical sketches of priests and people who belonged to the St. Albertus Congregation, and, of course, a collection of invaluable City Directories.

The Resurrectionist Fathers' Generalate in Rome, Italy, contains the correspondence of several priests who were pastors of St. Albertus Church (although not all of them were members of the religious order): Fathers S.

Wieczorek, T. Gieryk, J. Wollowski, and J. Dabrowski. Some letters of Detroit Bishops Peter Lefevere and Caspar Borgess are also to be found there, or in the archives of the Canadian Resurrectionist Province in Hamilton. The Archives of the Orchard Lake Schools have the surviving papers of Rev. Joseph Dabrowski and the Polish Seminary which came into existence during the Kolasinski Crisis.

The most ample, though unfortunately not the most reliable, published sources pertaining to St. Albertus Parish consist of local Detroit newspapers — English, German, and Polish. Prominent among the first for their reports of parochial development, particularly church construction and factional dissention within the parish as well as pastoral disregard of episcopal injunctions (with special emphasis on the Kolasinski Case) were *The Detroit Free Press* and *The Evening News* (the forerunner of *The Detroit News*). These, along with other contemporary newspapers that have not survived financially and journalistically to the present, may be consulted at the Burton Historical Collection, the Detroit Main Public Library, and the Wayne State University Library.

Of the twenty-two Polish weeklies and dailies launched in Detroit between 1874 and 1924 only two are still in publication. *Dziennik Polski* (The Polish Daily News), which started in 1904, is on file at the Alumni Memorial Library of St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Mich. *Glos Ludowy* (The People's Voice), which began appearing in 1923, retains its back files in its own newspaper morgue. Aside from two chance copies of *Gazeta Narodowa* (October 30, 1884) and *Swoboda* (October 29, 1897), in the Burton Historical Collection, the Alumni Memorial Library has five volumes of the *Niedziela* (Sunday), a weekly published by the Polish Seminary in Detroit in the 1890's and early 1900's. None of the other Polish newspapers — with the exception of *Ognisko Domowe* (The Home Fireplace), and *Rekord Codzienny* (The Daily Record) — seems to have survived the ravages of time and human neglect. Some of the Detroit Polish papers have, however, been located in several university and research libraries in Poland.

Among the most regrettable source casualties (from the viewpoint of the historian of St. Albertus Parish) has been the nearly total disappearance of *Paraffjanin*, the bi-lingual parish monthly bulletin started by Rev. Joseph Herr in 1928. It was still in publication in October 1947, in its nineteenth year, when the parish observed its diamond anniversary.

General works, though limited in the information they contain about St. Albertus Parish, offered several minor consolations (along with background material) to the parish historian. Perhaps the most notable among them were Silas Farmer's *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan* (1890) and C. M. Burton's *The City of Detroit, Michigan 1701-1922* (1922). The biographical sketches, information about the origin of street names as well as subsequent changes in these names, the changing boundaries and ward districts of the city, and the remarkably fine line drawings of old church and school buildings made these general works a pleasure to consult.

And now a final word about oral sources. The author has talked with various persons about their recollections of St. Albertus Parish — its plant, personnel, property, people, practices. The consultation was often rewarding, but in every instance was followed by documentary confirmation, if at all possible.

The author offers no apology or excuse for the omission of footnotes. The publication operated with a tightly limited budget. It barely met the cost of printing the text which exceeded the original expectation in length. But students who may be interested in pursuing certain issues in greater depth will find scattered throughout the text enough bibliographical signposts to provide them with leads to further research and the satisfaction of working out a historical problem to its last detail.

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CHAPTER I THE FOUNDING PASTOR

St. Albertus Parish was founded 100 years ago as the first Polish parish in the city of Detroit. During the century, it has had fifteen resident pastors — men of divers backgrounds and views, personalities with varying degrees of influence upon the parish and its people, all of them keepers of tradition, some of them priests of exceptional vision and insight who left an imprint not only upon the parish but also upon the wider community of which St. Albertus Parish was an integral part. A notable figure among them was Rev. Simon Wiczorek CR, a Resurrectionist missionary and the founding pastor of St. Albertus Parish.

1. FREEDOM-FIGHTER AND RESURRECTIONIST

Simon Wiczorek stands at the beginning of St. Albertus Parish almost like an Old Testament patriarch leading his spiritual progeny to a new life in another land. Such a prospect was dim not only in Prussian-Poland whence came the pioneer Poznanians and Kashubs who comprised the original membership of the parish but also in Russian-Poland where Simon Wiczorek was born in 1834. His birthplace was the town of Cmielow which numbered about 1300 residents and was located in Opatow County of Sandomierz Province (renamed Radom in 1845). The Russian ravagers who, together with their Prussian and Austrian accomplices, had seized the Polish land and people during the partitions of the eighteenth century not only reorganized them administratively but also made the lives of the inhabitants "a burden with drudgery."

Almost nothing is known of Simon Wiczorek's early years except that in his mid-twenties he entered the Diocesan Seminary in Sandomierz to prepare for the priesthood. But in 1863 he interrupted his theological studies to join the Polish January Rising against Czarist Russia, though he was already twenty-nine years old — half a decade past the canonical minimum age required for ordination. After fighting with the partisans till the independence movement was crushed toward the close of 1864, he escaped to Austrian-Poland. Imprisoned as an undesirable intruder, he was freed after several months and permitted to leave the country.



REV. SIMON WIECZOREK

From September 1866, when the thirty-two year old "Seminarist" Simon Wiczorek is mentioned by Rev. Alexander Jelowicki CR, superior of the Resurrectionist mission house in Paris, France, as a potential missionary to America, Simon's life is illumined by and made part of the story of the Resurrectionist Congregation. Various documents in this chronicle, including over a dozen letters by Fr. Simon, provide clues to his movements and activities during the next decade.

The Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (CR) derived its name from the Catholic revival launched among dispirited Polish exiles by Bogdan Janski, Peter Semenenko and Jerome Kajsiewicz, after the ill-fated November Rising of 1830 against Russia. Initiated in 1836 in Paris, the movement offered anguished refugees and displaced soldiers the hope of a fresh start under the impulse of religious idealism and personal spiritual renewal. On the Easter Feast of the Resurrection in 1842 four supporters of the movement,

newly-ordained to the priesthood in Rome, banded together to form a new religious order dedicated to the ideal of renewal in the spirit of the Risen Christ.

The new Congregation began its apostolate of renewal among Polish refugees in Paris. Soon its idealism attracted French, Italian and German members who expanded the order's mission sphere. In 1857 a German Resurrectionist, Rev. Eugene Funcken CR, established the Congregation's first permanent mission in the New World, ministering to Germans and Bohemians in the vicinity of St. Agatha within the Canadian Province of Ontario. From here, eight years later, in 1865, came the first Resurrectionist missionary to the United States, Rev. Francis Breitkopf CR, who began ministering twice yearly to the Polish farmers settled around Parisville in Michigan's Huron County.

The prospect of preaching and living the Resurrection ideal of new life among Polish immigrants in America must have fired the imagination and stirred the zeal of Simon Wiczorek, former seminarian, freedom fighter and political interneer. He seems to have been attracted to the new Congregation in Paris where many of the harried Januarists sought refuge after the rising. It is not clear when he became a postulant, but in September, 1866 "Seminarian Wiczorek" was scheduled to accompany Bishop Claude Dubuis and a seven-man mission band of five priests and the two seminarians to the Polish settlements in Texas. But Simon arrived too late from Orleans to make the journey, and had to wait almost two years for his next opportunity to come to the United States.

This presented itself in the fall of 1868. Earlier that year, in Rome, Wiczorek was ordained to the priesthood in his thirty-fourth year, and on May 29 made his profession as a Resurrectionist. In June, Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere of the Detroit Diocese (which then embraced lower Michigan) completed negotiations with Rev. Eugene Funcken CR and the Congregation to have the Resurrectionists take over the permanent care of Parisville and "our destitute Poles in Michigan." When the agreement was approved by Rev. Jerome Kajsiewicz, the head of the Resurrectionists, Bishop Lefevere at once dispatched a draft for \$350 to pay the passage of the two missionaries who were to come.

As a matter of fact, in August 1868, three Resurrectionists arrived and together with Fr. Funcken presented themselves to Bishop Lefevere who received them with "great cordiality." The three missionaries included Fr. Simon Wiczorek, who was to be pastor of the Parisville mission, Fr. John Wollowski, a one-armed ex-chaplain who was to serve as Fr. Simon's assistant, and Brother Horace Cajone CR, a jack of all trades.

During this interview on August 15, (later reported by Fr. John Wollowski CR to Rome), Bishop Lefevere expressed high hopes from the presence of the Resurrectionist Order in the diocese: he (wrote Fr. Wollowski) "is confident that this will not be our last mission in his diocese; that we will accept many more. He wishes us to establish a minor seminary here."

With these glowing anticipations, the three Resurrectionists hurried to Parisville where they arrived Sunday, November 1, 1868. Settled in the 1850's

by Polish Silesian and Poznanian immigrant farmers from Canada, Parisville had been first visited not by the Polish Franciscan Father Julian Maciejewski from distant Kent County, but by an itinerant Moravian Redemptorist, Father Francis Krutil, from Detroit. He came to the Polish farming community sometime after January 1856, when he was appointed by Bishop Lefevere "to look up the scattered Catholics of Huron County." Two years later, when the county received its first resident priest, Father Peter Kluk from the Posen Diocese in Prussian-Poland, Parisville became one of four stations he attended regularly from Adams Corners (later named Ruth) about four miles east.

During Fr. Kluk's five year ministry from 1858 to 1863, Parisville rose to the status of a mission with the title of the Immaculate Conception conferred by Fr. Kluk in 1860, along with a plot of land deeded by Anton Slowik to Bishop Lefevere in October 1861, plus a set of purple vestments, and a stack of logs cut down in 1862 for a blockhouse chapel. Fr. Kluk's departure had interrupted further progress, but immediately after Fr. Francis Breitkopf's visit in May 1865, upon the conclusion of the Civil War, the Parisvillians had begun clearing land for a wooden church and a parsonage in expectation of their first resident pastor.

When Fr. Simon came to Parisville in November 1868 (three years later), he found a "large church" with a makeshift altar on a dirt floor, without benches, decorations, candlesticks, organ and bell, alongside a small unpainted rectory with two cubicles and a kitchen. Nearby stood stumps of recently cut trees and beyond, all around, lay forests. The parish covered a ten-mile area and comprised 127 families, mostly Polish but also some French, German and Irish, living in homesteads "scattered like mushrooms throughout the forest."

During Fr. Simon's three-year pastorate (November 1, 1868 to October 1871), Parisville attained parochial status under the title of St. Mary's Parish. Brother Horace seems to have returned to Canada after only a brief stay. Fr. Wollowski was transferred to Chicago in October 1869, leaving Fr. Simon alone to supervise the completion of the church's construction and equipment. By mid-1871 he put a final finishing touch to the church, by adorning it with a 450 pound bell of which he was very proud. But he was more pleased early in 1869, when he launched a parochial school taught at first by Fr. Wollowski and a Miss O'Connor, and subsequently by himself, as he apparently loved to teach. And by June 1871, he was in the midst of plans for a new rectory.

At the same time, Fr. Simon engaged in outside missionary work. He extended his parish ministry from a ten to a forty mile radius that embraced (according to his estimate) 2,000 souls of half a dozen nationalities to whom he ministered in Polish, French, German, and English (which he learned from Miss O'Connor). He visited Polish settlers in various parts of Michigan - Detroit, Wyandotte, Bay City, Coldwater, and Grand Rapids. He even journeyed to Brighton, Iowa, to attend Polish families there.

This promising Resurrectionist pastorate met with an abrupt and unexpected end in October 1871. A raging forest fire that swept through eastern Huron and Sanilac Counties destroyed St. Mary's Church and rectory along with

the homes, crops and stock of over 10,000 inhabitants, terminating Fr. Simon's (and the Resurrectionists) labors in Parisville.

2. AMONG KASHUBS AND POZNANIANS

The next phase of Fr. Simon's priestly career consisted of his pastorate in Detroit from mid-October 1871 to June 7, 1873, a period of about twenty months. The length of the tenure cannot be determined with precision since its starting point, the date of the appointment (or the transfer from Parisville) has not been recorded. It seems that after the Parisville disaster, Bishop Caspar Borgess (who took over the administration of the Diocese May 8, 1870) simply appointed Fr. Simon by word of mouth to take charge of the incipient Polish parish in Detroit.

Fr. Simon, then thirty-seven years old, had been in touch with the Polish settlers in Detroit since some time in 1870, when he began visiting the Poles living on the city's East Side north and south of Gratiot Avenue between Riopelle and St. Aubin Streets. During these occasional visits, he held services for them in St. Joseph's German Church in that area, with the result that by September, 1871 (less than a month before the Parisville fire) Bishop Borgess used him "as an intermediary to unite the Poles in Detroit and to build a Polish Church," which would be under the care of the Resurrectionists. By then, according to Fr. Simon's report to Rome, there were more Poles in Detroit than in Parisville.

These Detroit Poles who formed the nucleus of the new parish started coming to the city in the 1850's and 1860's from Prussian-Poland — that portion of the former Polish Commonwealth which had been incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia during the successive partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795. Emigrating chiefly from the Provinces of Poznan and West Prussia, they brought with them certain characteristics which differentiated them from their compatriots in Russian-Poland and Austrian-Poland. "Prussian-Poles" were likely to speak German as well as Polish, or at least to mix their Polish vernacular with Germanisms and to have their names Germanized by officials or sometimes by personal choice. In addition, "Prussian-Poles" displayed certain regional folk traits and cultural localisms that manifested themselves in varied dialectal speech patterns, folkways, and attitudes distinctive of Poznanians and Kashubs.

The speech of the Kashubs inhabiting the regencies of Danzig (Gdansk) and Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) in the coastal Province of West Prussia, still remains the subject of controversy among linguists. Most regard it as a dialect of Polish with marked German accretions, but some consider it as a separate West Slavic language closely related to, yet distinct from, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Lusatian. Part of the incipient Polish state formed toward the end of the tenth century, the Kashubs twice came under protracted German subjugation (from 1309 to 1466, and from 1772 to 1918) but both times they reverted to union with Poland. They began emigrating to the United States increasingly after 1848,

when agents of the Maritime Navigation Company of Hamburg offered them free ocean passage to America until 1860, so that Kashubian villages might be opened to German colonization.

The Poznanians inhabited the regencies of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) and Posen (Poznan), comprising the Province of Poznan lying to the south of West Prussia. Their name, of popular rather than academic origin, was at times used by contemporaries as a synonym for "Poles." Its usage paid homage not only to the city of Poznan as "the cradle of Poland," where the first Polish bishopric arose and the "polonez" (the national dance) was born, but also to the inhabitants of the province as the most Polish-minded of all the regional folk groups that comprised the partitioned nation in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Upon coming to Detroit, partly in search of bread and partly in quest of freedom (as Henryk Sienkiewicz succinctly put it in speaking of Polish immigrants coming to America in the 1870's), the "Prussian-Poles" settled along Gratiot Avenue in the German neighborhood as this expanded toward Mt. Elliott, the city's eastern municipal limits set in 1857 and not extended till 1885. They attended the two German Catholic Churches in the vicinity — St. Mary's on Antoine and Croghan (present Monroe) founded in 1835 and St. Joseph's on Gratiot between Riopelle and Orleans established in 1856. Since the latter was closer, most of the Polish newcomers of the 1860's and early 1870's went there for Mass.

In the spring of 1870, as a result of overcrowding, St. Joseph Parish began planning the construction of a new church. This example, as well as that of the Czechs who though fewer in number than the Poles were also contemplating the erection of St. Wencelous Church for their new parish, coupled with steady Polish immigration into Detroit and the presence of the Resurrectionist Order in the diocese as a potential source of priests, provided the Poles with the incentive to organize their own parish. Later chroniclers would claim that the initiative for this fateful decision originated with a group of laymen who then founded St. Stanislaus Kostka Society to gain additional popular support, collect funds, and, above all, gained the approval of Bishop Borgess for the new parish. Though not conclusive, fragmentary contemporary evidence points rather to Fr. Simon as the initiator of the idea calling for the formation of the first Polish parish in Detroit. Spurred by the appearance of new Polish settlements in Michigan and encouraged by the ethnic pluralism and polyglot character of the Catholic population of the diocese, he envisioned Detroit as the focal point of Resurrectionist renewal activity radiating to all of the state's Polish communities.

Neither is it known who was responsible for the choice of the Bohemian-born St. Albertus as the patron of Detroit's first Polish parish. Local tradition, unsupported by contemporary evidence attributes the choice to the alleged fact that since the day on which members of St. Stanislaus Kostka Society held their meeting and decided to organize a Polish parish was the Feast of St. Albertus, he was unanimously elected as the patron saint of the new congregation. But most likely, again, the suggestion came from Fr. Simon. As a Resurrectionist, he was sensitive to influences that might promote spiritual renewal and parochial growth. Personal contact attuned him not only to the

religious needs but also to the religious traditions and preferences of Detroit's Prussian-Poles. Most of them came from that portion of the old Polish Commonwealth in which St. Albertus was best known and most revered. His martyred remains were enshrined in Gniezno Cathedral in the Regency of Bydgoszcz. Throughout the provinces of Poznan and West Prussia, St. Albertus (or Wojciech as he was known among Poles) was the first great adopted patron of the Polish nation almost from the beginning of the Polish state, venerated for over eight centuries not only by religious devotion, architecture, music, painting, and sculpture, but also by popular sentiment, legend, and folklore as the Protector of the Poles.

Fortified with the intercession of their favorite saint as well as the encouragement of Fr. Simon, the Detroit Poles sent a delegation sometime in 1870 to Bishop Borgess for permission to proceed with the organization of their first Polish parish. The bishop listened with sympathetic interest tempered by administrative and hereditary caution.

Born forty-four years earlier, August 1, 1826, in a west German village near Essen of tenant farmers, he had grown up in an atmosphere of hard work, thrift, and humble circumstances. At twelve, he came with his parents to America, settling finally in Cincinnati where he studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1848. Twenty-one years later, after honorable service as pastor and chancellor of the Cincinnati Archdiocese, he was appointed Bishop of Detroit to fill a vacancy that had lasted eleven months since the death of Bishop Lefevre March 4, 1869.

By disposition a retiring and unostentatious man with a distaste for publicity and a preference for quiet, efficient and orderly performance of duty, he came to a diocese which was in a somewhat ambiguous if not disorganized condition. Canonically Bishop Borgess (as had been Bishop Lefevre before him) was only the administrator of the diocese, since the episcopal title was still held by the first bishop of the diocese, John Rese, who had resigned in August, 1840, but "remained in fact bishop of Detroit until his death," living out his last years a "tottering old man at Hildesheim" until December 30, 1871.

In addition to this juridical ambiguity, Bishop Borgess came into possession of a diocese covering Michigan's lower peninsula. He presided over a polyglot Catholic population of "at least 150,000," comprised of some native Indians, Americans, and descendants of early French settlers, but mostly of German, Irish, Polish, Bohemian, Belgian, and Dutch immigrants and their children. To minister to these ethnically diverse Catholics grouped into seventy congregations with resident priests, the bishop depended on the help of eighty-eight priests, representing eight nationalities: thirty-nine Belgians, twenty-one Germans, nine Irishmen, six native-born Americans (including four Michiganders), five Frenchmen, and two Poles.

Along with this, Bishop Borgess took charge of a diocese that had been administered in a somewhat flexible financial and disciplinary manner. Schooled in orderly procedures in the Cincinnati Chancery, he planned to operate the Detroit Diocese according to a more efficient system. He was determined not only to curb excessive or useless spending by parishes already in existence but also to restrict and control the establishment of new parishes until the congregation could offer definite assurance of being able to cope successfully

with the financial expenses entailed in the undertaking. At the same time, he pointed out to eagerly hopeful parish planners the limited number of priests available for service in existing parishes, much less for appointment to organize new ones.

The introduction of this efficiency program did not contribute to Bishop Borgess' popularity either among the clergy or among the laity. He was represented as being "cold, severe, caring little for social intercourse, always unbending." In reality he was a man with a strong sense of duty, interested in promoting the welfare of the diocese as a whole, and not afraid to risk unpopular decisions designed to save the petitioners from the consequences of their own misjudgements or mistakes.

This last sentence sums up the initial tangled relations between Bishop Borgess and the Polish-Prussian founders of St. Albertus Parish between 1870 and 1873. Later chroniclers, lacking sufficient documentary evidence as well as discriminating judgement, have unjustly caricatured Bishop Borgess as a Pole-hater and an enemy of Polish education in Detroit.

As a matter of cold historical fact, Bishop Borgess was neither. His two confrontations with the founders and first pastor of St. Albertus Parish, usually cited against him by Polish chroniclers relying uncritically on Fr. Kruska's incomplete and one-sided presentation, actually reflect credit on the bishop's good judgment when the controversies are examined in their proper context and judged in the light of the bishop's surviving correspondence.

3. PAY OR BE EXCOMMUNICATED

The first confrontation grew out of the building of the first St. Albertus Church. While details of the somewhat lengthy and protracted discussions between the organizing committee and the bishop which finally eventuated in the permission to build the church are lacking, the general tenor of the discussions and particularly Bishop Borgess' position can be reconstructed from a letter the bishop wrote to Fr. Simon November 24, 1872. By then the confrontation had come to a critical point.

Recalling the origins of St. Albertus Church, Bishop Borgess wrote: "Before I granted permission for the building of the church, I instructed the committee which had been sent to me that they should under no conditions begin the building of the church until they were fully convinced that they could not get into any difficulties. For a whole year I hesitated to grant permission, feeling that the people might be too hasty and thus get into difficulties. Again and again the petitioning committee came to me and gave me the assurance that the permission to build a church would not cause me any inconveniences, and they, together with the whole community would vouch for everything."

An additional factor which helped influence Bishop Borgess' decision in favor of the committee was the assurance he was in the process of receiving from the Resurrectionists that they would send two priests to Detroit at the earliest opportunity to staff the new Polish parish. The details of the agreement were worked out in October 1871, when Rev. Jerome Kajsiewicz, the superior general of the order, visited Bishop Borgess at Monroe. Like his immediate predecessor, Bishop Lefevre, Bishop Borgess was also willing to pay the travel expenses of the two Resurrectionists from Europe. He expressed a strong desire to have the

order work in his diocese and spoke with satisfaction of Fr. Simon's organizing work among the Detroit Poles who numbered 350 families. At the same time the bishop insisted (and obtained Fr. Kajsiewicz's promise to that effect) that an assistant priest be sent as soon as possible to aid Fr. Simon in his ministry among the Poles.

The agreement, at the moment limited in scope, opened new promising horizons in the Detroit Diocese not only for Resurrectionists but also for the Polish Catholics, particularly those forming St. Albertus congregation. Empowered by the bishop's permission to act on behalf of the new parish, the committee began collecting funds in November 1871 both among Polish and non-Polish Catholics. During Fr. Simon's pastorate of approximately twenty months, the parish revenues of St. Albertus amounted to \$11,100.58. They came chiefly from collections taken up by the trustees and the pastor among Poles in Detroit and Wyandotte and among "strangers"; to a much smaller degree, the income derived from picnics, concerts, and raffles and well as donations from "unknown persons" and "some specified individuals" (Bishop Borgess - \$60.00).

The expenses for the same period amounted to \$17,882.81. As a result, the parish ended with an indebtedness of \$6,783 some of which represented loans made to the congregation by individuals (or by Fr. Simon not taking his salary for several months) to pay pressing bills. This indebtedness represented a danger signal which apparently neither the pastor nor the parish committee noted, despite the bishop's initial insistence on this very point.

With initial funds on hand the committee began examining locations for the new parish complex which, upon completion, was to include a church, a parsonage, and a school. After looking at several likely spots, the committee, instead of choosing a site located more or less centrally among the Polish residents, decided on a place on the northeastern fringe of the Polish neighborhood, at the corner of St. Aubin and Fremont (present Canfield). The property lay just within the two-mile circle of the city hall and lay near the northeastern limits of Detroit. The premises, according to the subsequent recollections of a Polish Detroitier were part of boggy farm lands beyond which stretched the commons, (or Komensy, as they were called in Polish-American patois), while further away lay wooded areas abounding in rabbits hunted by the more venturesome Polish veterans of the Franco-Prussian War. The center of the Polish community, at the time, lay nearer north of Gratiot and east of Beaubien, extending north and northeast in increasingly less compact and more scattered areas of cabins and shanties.

The plot purchased by the parish committee composed of Jan Lemke, Jan Kolodziejczyk, Anton Treppa, and Anton Ostrowski comprised lot thirty-six of the old French St. Aubin Farm. Measuring 100 feet wide and 270 feet deep, situated on the western side of St. Aubin Avenue below the southern corner of Fremont, the land cost \$600.00 which was paid in full to the owner Phillis Beaubien. The deed was made in the name of Bishop Caspar Borgess as the new owner of the property. The transaction was completed November 9, 1871.

On this first parcel of St. Albertus Parish real estate property (which did not include the corner lot on which the present church stands) arose the congregation's first "church and priesthouse." The building contract, dated October 11, 1871 (before Fr. Simon's assumption of pastoral duties and before

the purchase of the real estate parcel was finalized) was signed by architect John Wiesenhoefer and thirty charter members of the parish. The names of these charter parishioners were: Jacob Mindak, Jan Lemke, Jozef Moszinski, Stanislaus Melin, Ant. Ostrowski, Anton Detloff, Jakub Lorkowski, Frank Gajewski, Martin Koss, Jozef Hildebrandt, Jacob Koss, August Jaskolski, Johann Klebba, Telesfor Tomalczyk, Anton Treppa, August Morzegon, Anton Swiontek, Joseph Tuske, Joseph Basemann, Albert Melin, Joseph Grenka, Michael Baseman, Adolph Hic, Aug. Frida, and John Lorkowski. Eighteen of the signers used x marks, and this may account for some of the linguistically inept versions of the surnames written apparently by a person unfamiliar with their correct Kashub or Poznanian spelling.

The contract (subsequently approved and ratified by Bishop Borgess) stipulated that "the Committee for the Polish Congregation" (apparently the patronal title had not yet been definitely decided upon) agreed to pay the sum of \$8,860 in four installments for the two frame buildings. The rectory (which by itself cost \$1,600) was to measure thirty by forty feet and rise fifteen feet high; it was to stand behind the church. The church was to be fifty-four feet wide, 130 feet long and thirty feet high, with a bell tower rising 165 feet. The seating capacity was estimated somewhat generously at 1200; a more realistic figure would be nearer to 800 at most. Construction was to be finished "before the fifteenth June next" (1872).

In spite of a strong windstorm which destroyed part of the frame scaffolding during the construction of the church, Wiesenhoefer finished his work on time, though not entirely to the satisfaction of the trustees who, in consequence, temporarily withheld the final payment called for by the terms of the contract. Nevertheless, the dedication of St. Albertus Church took place on Sunday, July 14, 1872. Bishop Borgess presided over an impressive ceremony in which not only Polish but also German, Irish, Belgian and Czech Catholics participated, marching with twelve societies and two bands from St. Mary's Church on Antoine Street along Antoine, Lafayette, Riopelle, Gratiot and St. Aubin to the new church, the thirteenth Catholic edifice in the city. Paul Giese a prominent German-Catholic who had assisted the trustees in collecting funds for the church was chief marshal of the parade which began at two o'clock in the afternoon. The prominent and numerous German participation in the dedication casts doubt on subsequent allegations by some chroniclers that St. Albertus Church was founded as a reaction against German discrimination toward Polish members of their congregation who were supposedly required to occupy certain specified pews in the church.

During the lengthy dedication ceremony, the congregation had an opportunity to hear three sermons. Two were in Polish, preached by visiting Resurrectionists from Chicago, Fathers Adolf Bakanowski and John Wollowski, who also conducted a short mission in the parish during the ensuing week. Bishop Borgess spoke in English, extending his felicitations to the parishioners and exhorting them to continue their support of the parish and maintain its solvency. After the ceremony, in a private conversation with the priests, the bishop reaffirmed his warning to the pastor to live within the parish's financial means and expressed the hope of seeing some new Resurrectionists soon in Detroit. Fr. Bakanowski gathered from these remarks that the bishop was not entirely satisfied with Fr. Simon's somewhat openhanded financial administration of the parish.

But before any further repercussions of the bishop's changing attitude toward Fr. Simon came to the surface, the new pastor of St. Albertus began to busy himself with the minutiae of parochial administration. With the church blessed and the parishioners spiritually renewed by a mission, Fr. Simon began the parish register of births, and marriages inscribed in a neat and distinctive script: *Registrum Baptisatorum et Matrimonii in Ecclesia Sti. Adalberti...* Here Fr. Simon used St. Wojciech's confirmation name, Adalbertus, which became, in its anglicized form of St. Adalbert, the official title of thirty-three of the thirty-four churches dedicated to this saint in the United States.

Only Detroit's congregation adopted St. Albertus as its English title for some reason that remains obscure to this day. During the early decades of the parish, it was known in Detroit newspapers and City Directories, and in the Catholic Directories as well as on the parish's official stationery and in chancery records, as St. Albert's Church. In fact, when Bishop Borgess recorded the dedication of the church in the chancery ledger under the year 1872 in terse Latin, he wrote: "On the 14th of July, I blessed the new church under the title and invocation of St. Albert in the City of Detroit." Saints Albert and Adalbert are two different persons; and the name of neither one is a correct English equivalent for the Czech Vojtech or its polonized version Wojciech. But at this date it is perhaps too late to make the correction.

Fr. Simon started the baptismal register of St. Albertus Parish with the name of Julian Melin, son of Stanislaw Melin and Anna Rohr, baptised by Fr. Simon Wednesday, July 17, 1872, with the assistance of sponsors Julian Piotrowski and Antonina Mindak. The first marriage recorded in the register was that of Antoni Basman age thirty-two and Emilia Stober age twenty-four blessed by Fr. Simon Monday, August 5, 1872, in the presence of witnesses Jozef Muszynski, Antoni Basman, and August Freda. The first recorded funeral was that of Edward Matilda, three months old, buried July 19, 1872. Before leaving St. Albertus, Fr. Simon baptised eighty-six persons, blessed thirty-seven marriages, and buried fewer than a hundred children and adults.

As the founding pastor, Fr. Simon not only made available to St. Albertus parishioners the life-energizing graces of the sacraments but also explained to them the spiritual wisdom of Holy Scripture. He initiated the series of daily Masses offered to parishioners as their spiritual staple for decades to come. He assisted Bishop Borgess at the parish's first confirmation service, Sunday, September 15, 1872, when 130 individuals received the sacrament, and when, also, the first church bell was blessed. Fr. Simon, too, began transmitting those features of the Polish style of Catholic piety and worship which find expression and formulation in distinctive christological and mariological hymns, prayers and devotions, in preferences for particular saints, Christian names, and spiritual ideals.

Fr. Simon also helped to develop (if not to organize) and to incorporate into the St. Albertus Parish structure its two earliest organizations: St. Stanislaus Kostka Society and the Rosary Guild. Both arose, if not late in 1870, then sometime in 1871. The first was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the foundation of the parish; its founders included: J. Lemke, K. Rohr, A. Treppa, F. Sikora, S. Melin, J. Klebba, J. Lorkowski, A. Ladensack, and J. Hildebrandt. The Rosary Guild was initially composed of men; its founders were A. Ostrowski, J. Gneba, L. Olszewski, and J. Drogosz.

Fr. Simon also worked with (and most likely selected and trained) the first lay officers of St. Albertus Parish. The earliest individuals designated as trustees on documents relating to his pastorate were Jacob Mindak, Jan Lemke, Anton Ostrowski, Anton Treppa, and Martin Treppa. Their names appear on a report of "Expences [sic] of St. Albertus Church and Priest House from the beginning: since the 15 November 1871 until 15 December 1872." Dated December 23, 1872, the report was submitted to Bishop Borgess at his express request.

This request was in part the result of a problem which surfaced in November, 1872, four months after the blessing of the church and provoked the first serious confrontation between Bishop Borgess and St. Albertus Congregation. Architect Wiesenhoefer filed two liens upon St. Albertus property (the buildings and the land) for nonpayment of contractual obligations amounting to \$2,096.63. Bishop Borgess reacted swiftly to this court action by writing Fr. Simon (and the parishioners) a pained rebuke for disregarding his reiterated cautions and breaking their repeated promises to live responsibly within their parochial means and to avoid involvement in projects beyond their resources. The bishop closed his letter dated November 24, 1872 with these strictures:

"If therefore the committee and the whole community does not make any effort to avoid the court procedure and to pay the debts, and thus fulfill the promises given me, I shall be forced to punish all proportionately.

"Therefore I ask you Rev. Father, to inform the committee and the community that if after two weeks the judicial procedure has not been revoked, and the matter has not been settled with the architect, that is, on the 8th of December, 1872, St. Albertus Church will be under interdict, and the community under excommunication, and your jurisdiction for the community will be revoked on that day."

Fortunately this first confrontation was resolved without the use of any of the drastic penalties indicated in the bishop's letter, which suggested overreaction to a situation before all the facts at issue were presented by the parties involved. When Fr. Simon and the parish committee informed the bishop of their willingness to come to terms with the architect and to pay the money due him if Wiesenhoefer on his part agreed to repair the shoddy roofing on the church and to make certain finishing touches on the building in accordance with the contract, Bishop Borgess readily accepted the proposal and withdrew his threatened penalties. Early in December, with the help of a loan, the parish paid off the architect who in turn posted a \$2000 bond with the bishop as surety for the fulfillment of his part of the agreement.

Nonetheless, to forestall any similar mishap in the future, Bishop Borgess on December 11, 1872, issued a special cautionary letter to Fr. Simon and the people of St. Albertus Parish. In the first two of five specific points, the bishop summed up the basic terms on which the court action between the architect and the parish was to be settled without appeal to law but with the help of "expert persons" who would pass judgment on the completion of the building in accordance with the contract. The fourth point required "the Rev. Pastor and the existing so-called committee" to submit to the bishop and to the congregation before the end of that year "an accurate report concerning all income and expenses of St. Albertus Church from the beginning until the end of the report..."

Most crucial, however, were points three and five which (as subsequent events proved) contained the seeds of the second and more painful confrontation between the bishop and the parish. Point three provided: "That until the question of debt has been met in every respect, neither the Rev. Pastor nor the so-called committee nor both jointly, should pay any money which belongs to the community, or which was subscribed or will be subscribed by the community." Point five stipulated: "That after all this has been done, all future orders shall be given by me in writing to the community so that every misunderstanding will be avoided."

The bishop's strictures reflected not only his policy of orderly, cautious procedure in financial matters but also his growing disenchantment with Fr. Simon's somewhat flexible application of that program in St. Albertus Parish. This disenchantment was likewise shared by an increasing number of parishioners who felt that the pastor's projects for parochial improvement and expansion, requiring sizeable outlays of funds, should be subjected to closer scrutiny and control by themselves as well as the bishop. These views found expression in a letter of attorney Joseph Kuhn, used by the bishop to mediate the successful resolution of the Wiesenhoefer court challenge.

Voicing the sentiments of "many" parishioners who "expressed their opinion [sic] to me with a view that I should present them to you," Kuhn wrote to Bishop Borgess December 14, 1872: "...if the management of the financial department be left entirely in the hands of father [sic] Simon, without any supervision on your part, Expenditures would run soon very high and the good will of the Congregation would be destroyed."

4. AN UNPARDONABLE DISOBEDIENCE

Apparently unaware (or unmindful of these sentiments as well as of the bishop's strictures), Fr. Simon himself planted the seed which sprouted into his second and final confrontation with Bishop Borgess, and ended Fr. Simon's stay at St. Albertus Parish. Within two weeks after the lifting of the Wiesenhoefer liens, Fr. Simon drew up a petition for the erection of "an Anglo-Polish school near St. Albertus Church under the supervision of the pastor." Signed by 131 persons, the petition was presented December 30, 1872, to Bishop Borgess for his approval. He responded the same day with a "permission to erect a parish school house at St. Albertus Church...under the following conditions:

"1st that this permission should not revoke the condition number 3 given on the 11th of December, 1872:"

"2nd, that the Rev. Pastor and the church committee must sign and submit to me in writing a memorandum concerning the possible debts which will be made thereby."

The extant documents do not indicate whether or to what extent Fr. Simon complied with the bishop's conditions. The exeat or dismissal letter Fr. Simon subsequently received from Bishop Borgess expressly charged him with failure to obey the stated stipulations.

In any event, to Fr. Simon the school represented the crowning parochial achievement; without a school no parish was complete. Fr. Simon viewed the

school as a guarantee of the parish's future growth in the Resurrectionist spirit of renewal; more importantly, still, he saw the school as a supplier of Resurrectionist missionary vocations, providing a new generation of American-born priests who would preach and spread the Resurrectionist ideal throughout Michigan, using St. Albertus Parish as their spiritual missionary base of operations.

That is why Fr. Simon's earliest organized endeavor in Detroit's Polish community was the opening, not of a Polish church, but of a Polish school. Shortly after October, 1871, after he had settled in the city in the wake of the Parisville fire, he started a private school in a house owned by John Lemke on Willis Street near St. Aubin. He was the school's first teacher until preoccupation with the construction of the church compelled him to relinquish the post to a lay teacher, Robert Rucinski, who had forty children under his care.

Once the church was built and blessed, Fr. Simon was anxious to transform his primitive incipient private school into a full-fledged parochial elementary institution — the greenhouse of his Resurrectionist vocations — as soon as possible. In his eagerness to materialise this hope (in which he had the support of numerous parishioners), Fr. Simon acted with greater faith than financial acumen. Once Bishop Borgess' conditional permission came to hand, he set to work with dispatch, more concerned about the speedy completion of the project than about compliance with episcopal red tape or the subtleties of real estate transactions. And this led to his eventual undoing and disaster.

On Saturday, January 11, 1873, three members of the parish committee — John Lemke, Jacob Mindak, and Anton Ostrowski, "trustees of the Congregation known as the church of St. Albertus [sic] in the city of Detroit" — purchased from Mary E. A. Moran lot forty-two of the old French St. Aubin Farm. The parcel ran along the southerly line of Fremont (Canfield) Street, occupying the corner on which the present church of St. Albertus stands. The terms of the transaction involved "a certain bond" and a mortgage deadline which provided for the return of the property to Mary Moran should the trustees fail to meet their obligations by the specified time. The indenture was then duly submitted to Bishop Borgess for his perusal and he instructed his lawyer to examine the document.

In the meantime, the parish committee began construction of the school, assuming that everything was in order and that the building would be ready for student use in the fall term. At this point Bishop Borgess, acting on the legal advice of his lawyer who discovered that the indenture for the school real estate was cloudy, issued an order prohibiting further work on the school until the legal difficulty was cleared up.

This action of the bishop gave rise to various misconceptions and false rumors in the parish which later chroniclers uncritically and credulously incorporated into their accounts of this incident. Bishop Borgess was represented as being opposed to the Polish school because it was a divisive institution; he was reported as trying to abort the construction of the school by the use of delaying tactics, such as the refusal of approval for the building plans; most frequently, he was charged with opposition to the school because the original indenture had not been made out in his name as the owner of the property.

Bishop Borgess himself gave this explanation of his position: "inasmuch as it was found out that the Church Committee in the composition of the bill of sale

for the school-house made a big mistake, it became necessary to forbid the building of the school-house on this location until this mistake was rectified. Many times we explained this matter to the Rev. Pastor Simon Wieczorek and his Committee, and informed the Rev. Sir that under no condition should the school-house be built until the legal title of the piece of property had been cleared up."

Not only was the bishop's order calling for the temporary suspension of the school's construction disregarded but his growing concern about the pastor's leadership and the parish's financial stability were further deepened when his earlier fears about the indenture proved correct and St. Albertus parish became involved in its second financial crisis. When Bishop Borgess learned that Mary Moran, exercising her contractual rights, intended to execute foreclosure proceedings on the school property Friday June 7, 1873, since the parish committee had failed to live up to its bonded obligations, he penned a letter dated June 6 to "The Rev. Fr. Simon Wieczorek and the Members of St. Albertus Parish in Detroit."

After summing up the circumstances under which the parochial school had been launched and indicating the attendant difficulties and warnings and prohibitions, Bishop Borgess concluded with this paragraph: "Inasmuch as we ourselves with our own eyes convinced ourselves that the building of the school-house of St. Albertus Church was begun against our prohibition and the prescriptions of the permission of the 30th of December, 1872 were not observed, and inasmuch as the Rev. Pastor, as well as the Church Committee, have shown an unpardonable disobedience, we declare herewith that St. Albertus Church in Detroit is closed for every Catholic divine service of any kind, and that every and all jurisdiction in this diocese has been taken away from the Rev. Simon Wieczorek."

After this general communication to the entire St. Albertus Congregation, Bishop Borgess made Saturday May 7, 1873 — the day on which Mary Moran officially foreclosed the contract and repossessed her land along with the incipient structure on it — still more memorable to Fr. Simon by sending him a formal third-person letter in convoluted Latin. The short missive informed Fr. Simon that his priestly ministry in Detroit was at an end for this reason: "Since, contrary to our recent order given explicitly both in writing and in repeated oral communication, he [Fr. Simon] began building a school or at least permitted others to start it, and did not submit to us any specifications of this projected construction as required by our letter of December 30, 1872, we hereby send him away in peace."

Before dismissing Fr. Simon from the diocese, Bishop Borgess discussed his case with Rev. Eugene Funcken, the Resurrectionist provincial in Canada. Along with a summary of the school controversy, the bishop wrote of his growing disenchantment with Fr. Simon's individualistic administration of St. Albertus Parish and spoke also of his disappointment at the failure of Resurrectionist authorities to supply him with promised priests or at least with a replacement for Fr. Simon. In conclusion, the bishop noted, with a sacerdotal humility he evidenced more than once toward priests who had been thorns in his side, that he wished to terminate his association with Fr. Simon in terms, not of suspension but, of compassion.

This ended Fr. Simon's pastorate at St. Albertus. He remained in Detroit until June 25, as Bishop Borgess in another show of compassion repurchased for the parish the foreclosed school parcel from Mary Moran for \$1,419.65 (the amount of the mortgage) on Wednesday July 11, 1873. Fr. Simon in the meantime was preparing his final financial reports with some difficulty and winding up his affairs in the city. Then he went to the Resurrectionist headquarters in Canada, where he wrote a letter to his superiors in Rome, giving his interpretation of the bishop's dismissal action. It was brought about (according to Fr. Simon), first, by Fr. Eugene Funcken's meddling in Detroit and, second, by the failure of the Resurrectionist authorities to send another priest to Detroit as had been promised to Bishop Borgess by Fr. Jerome Kajsiewicz in October, 1871.

Among the pleasant memories Fr. Simon took away with him, aside from his pastoral recollections at St. Mary's in Parisville and St. Albertus in Detroit, was undoubtedly the image of Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere. Though regarded as the second bishop of the Detroit Diocese, he was throughout his twenty-eight years (1841-1869) only its episcopal administrator, since his predecessor, Bishop John Rese, continued to retain the title of Bishop of Detroit and to live in Germany till 1871.

The son of a Belgian farmer, born in 1804 at Roulet, Peter Lefevere came to America at twenty-four. He studied for the priesthood in St. Louis and was ordained there in 1831. After only ten years of priestly labors, he became episcopal administrator of Michigan's disorganized and financially troubled Diocese of Detroit at the age of forty-one. He started with twenty-five churches and eighteen priests and ended in a territorially diminished diocese restricted to the lower peninsula with 160 churches and eighty-eight priests.

Like Fr. Simon, Polish Catholics today have several reasons for remembering Bishop Lefevere with gratitude and affection. He welcomed the first Polish priests into the Detroit Diocese — the first three from the Diocese of Poznan: Julian Maciejewski in 1852, Leopold Pawlowski in 1857, and Jan Kluk in 1858. And there were several others who came in the 1860's.

Bishop Lefevere was also the first Detroit bishop to provide for the spiritual care of Polish Catholics in the diocese by sending missionaries to Parisville and helping to establish there the first Polish parish not only in the diocese but also in the State of Michigan.

Bishop Lefevere likewise introduced the first Polish religious order of priests into the Detroit Diocese when he first welcomed the occasional visits of Rev. Francis Breitkopf CR to the Parisville mission in 1865, and then three years later formally brought Fathers Simon Wieczorek CR and John Wollowski CR to take charge of St. Mary's Parish at Parisville. As a result of this invitation, the Resurrectionists began their United States apostolate in Michigan and the Diocese of Detroit. And though Bishop Lefevere was dead when St. Albertus Parish was founded in Detroit, some of the credit for the city's first Polish parish must go to him, because the founding pastor was a Resurrectionist whose passage to America had been paid by Bishop Lefevere.

Bishop Lefevere also maintained correspondence with Resurrectionist superiors in Canada and in Rome. He was in touch with the early missionaries who labored in Parisville and whose reports are among the earliest "Polish"

archival records in the diocese. And last but not least, Bishop Lefevere was the first episcopal recipient of a donation from a Polish Catholic, when Anton Slowik deeded a portion of his land to Bishop Lefevere in October, 1861 as the site for the first Polish church that was subsequently built in Parisville.

Fr. Simon's priestly career, after his departure from Detroit's St. Albertus Parish, continued for over twenty-eight years in three states: Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio. He remained a Resurrectionist until December 19, 1874, serving briefly (prior to his egress) as administrator of St. Stanislaus Parish in Chicago. Then, as a diocesan priest, he ministered successively in the Diocese of Green Bay (1874-1878), the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (1878-1885), and finally the Diocese of Cleveland (1885-1901). He died at the age of sixty-seven, November 9, 1901, as the pastor of St. Hedwig Parish in Toledo, Ohio.

In the history of St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Simon played a decisive and fateful role as the founding pastor. During his brief but rapidly paced pastorate, he brought into existence a congregation of about 400 families that contributed over \$11,000 for the purchase of two parcels of land, the construction of a church and rectory, and the inception of a school to serve the Polish Catholics of Detroit. He served the parish well and he built with an eye to the future rather than to the immediate present. This forward-looking attitude, his impatience with administrative red tape, and the fact that he was a man in a hurry brought him into confrontation with episcopal authority and resulted in hurt not only to himself but also to the Resurrectionists. Fr. Simon's dismissal from the Diocese of Detroit also terminated the Resurrectionist apostolate in Michigan. A delayed vocation, he was anxious to make up for lost time, and unwittingly affected the course of Polish Catholic development in Detroit by opening it to the predominant influence of diocesan, rather than religious order, priests.

Though he left Detroit, Fr. Simon did so without harboring a grievance or a grudge against anyone in the city. He retained a warm spot in his heart for St. Albertus Church, returning in 1897 to preach at its silver anniversary. He joined in supporting the establishment of the Polish Seminary, inscribing his name on the scroll inserted into the cornerstone in 1885. He was also present at the opening of the Seminary in 1886. His death left a void in the hearts not only of his parishioners in Toledo but also of his numerous friends in Detroit.

CHAPTER 2 PASTORS IN PASSAGE

Three successive pastors ministered to St. Albertus Parish from the latter part of September 1873 to the end of March 1882. They are called pastors in passage not because their administrations were unimportant or ineffective. In fact, two of the pastorates were notable for decisions that exerted an impact on the parish for decades and, in two significant instances, carried the influence beyond parochial confines. The middle pastorate began full of promise but ended in disaster. Nonetheless all three priests fell short in one common respect: they failed to retain their pastoral posts for a sufficient length of time to leave a clear personal picture of themselves. Their stay at St. Albertus constituted an interlude in their otherwise adventurous lives.

The first of the three was Rev. Theodore Gieryk. Even his surname remains somewhat of a puzzle, because it appears in church records in at least three spellings: Goerigh, Goeryk, and Gieryk. The last represents the most frequently used form of his patronymic.

Fr. Gieryk's place of birth is likewise uncertain. He was born in 1837, probably in Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) Regency of Prussian-Poland, and is said to have served as chaplain in the Prussian army, possibly in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 out of which emerged Bismarck's German Empire.

After coming to the United States in 1872, the thirty-five year old, Fr. Gieryk soon found his way to Detroit where, September 24, 1873, Bishop Borgess appointed him pastor of the financially troubled and religiously somewhat disorganized St. Albertus Parish. For the preceding three months, following the dismissal of Rev. Simon Wiczorek CR, the congregation had been without a pastor. The bishop's order of June 7, 1873, closing the church "for every Catholic divine service of any kind" seems to have given way (like his final treatment of Fr. Simon) to the spirit of compassion the same day, when the parishioners begged the bishop's forgiveness through the intercession of attorney, Joseph Kuhn, who had assisted them during the first crisis over the church debt. In a personally delivered petition, the parishioners assured Bishop Borgess that in undertaking the school project they had acted in good faith. They stated that the pastor had not informed them of the conditions stipulated in the bishop's letter of December 30, 1872, but had merely told them that permission for the school had been granted. They had trusted the pastor implicitly and believed he had fulfilled all necessary requirements. They also had left the management of finances entirely in his hands, relying on his efficiency and honesty to handle parish business competently.

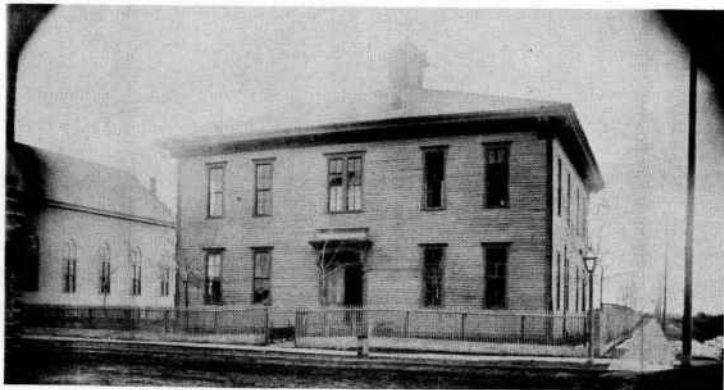


As a result, priests from St. Joseph's Church — Fathers John Friedland and Joseph Seyboldt — held services at St. Albertus although the altercation with the bishop led some families to attend and join the neighboring German parishes.

Fr. Gieryk's pastorate extended from Wednesday September 24, 1873, to Saturday April 3, 1875 — a period of one year and a half. This seems too short a time for any notable achievement, yet Fr. Gieryk engaged in at least three activities and proposed several others that make his administration significant not only to chroniclers of St. Albertus Parish but also to historians of Polish American Catholicism.

One of these projects was the completion of the first elementary school in St. Albertus Parish. Even before Fr. Simon's departure from Detroit, Bishop Borgess entered into communication with the parish committee and requested it once again to submit the congregation's school plan, already initiated commitments, and budgetary prospects. This time the committee responded by presenting "their plans and specifications . . . the contract entered into and a statement of the manner in which and how the same is to be paid for." On June 13, 1873, eight parishioners signed a declaration promising to pay \$300 apiece and one subscribed \$400 toward the school. The largest donor was Julian Piotrowski, while the other subscribers included John Lemke, Anton Treppa, Anton Ostrowski, Franz Rohr, Franciszek Sikora, Jacob Mindak, Stanislaus Melin, and Jacob Kolodziejczyk [sic].

After reviewing the documents in detail for three months, the Bishop's Council on September 16 resolved "unanimously that permission be granted to St. Albertus Congregation of Detroit to finish the school building and to borrow" up to \$3,000 for that purpose. Despite the fact that just about this time the Panic of 1873 erupted, the Council's decision was communicated on October 3 to the thirty-six year old Fr. Gieryk. Though hampered by the depression, he supervised the execution of the project which cost \$4,978.37, twice as much as had been originally anticipated. The building contractor was Francis Balowski.



THE FIRST SCHOOL

The exact date of the school's completion is not known, but the building was put to use either late in 1873 or early in 1874. It was a two-story frame structure which in its first year enrolled ninety-seven pupils (sixty-three of them boys) and next year housed 218 children (seventy-two of them girls). The first year's tuition revenue amounted to \$344.50 (an annual tuition average of \$3.55 per child), while the second year's income brought \$633.76 (indicating an average annual fee of \$2.95 per child).

Information about the teachers and the curriculum is both skimpy and secondhand, derived from local tradition. There seem to have been three lay teachers: two men — Robert Rucinski and Joseph Kedziora who was also the parish organist — and a Miss Thillen. Apparently she taught English, while the others gave instruction not only in Polish but also in the other school subjects. At first part of the second floor provided living quarters for the male teachers.

In any event, the erection of the school, no matter how limited in its facilities, provided the parish with an important social institution that both drew new families to the congregation and trained a generation of potential members for the parish's future growth.

Fr. Gieryk's second significant accomplishment occurred late in 1873, shortly after his arrival at St. Albertus Parish. And like the school's opening, its precise inception is also unknown. The project grew out of his concept of Polish history and Polish character, and particularly from his conviction that the partitions of Poland were due mainly to "dissent and disunity" which "destroyed Poland and laid it in the grave" rather than foreign enemies. Fr. Gieryk saw these same maladies operating to the injury of the Polish community in America. To forestall the occurrence of a similar disastrous peonage of the Poles in the United States, he proposed the unification of all Polish Catholics into a single country-wide organization designed to promote the betterment of the Poles in America.

Shortly after September 1873, Fr. Gieryk issued an appeal to the Polish weeklies published in New York City, Chicago, and Union, Missouri, explaining his proposed organization and inviting interested parties to a meeting at St. Albertus Parish sometime in November or December (the exact date remains unknown so far). Attended by representatives, both lay and clerical, from several states, the assembly founded The Union of Polish Catholics and drew up an ambitious program of specific practical objectives calling for the establishment of Polish institutions of higher learning, a hospital, a bank, an orphanage, an immigrant aid agency, a sister's convent, a teacher's college, and circulating libraries — all designed to serve Polish immigrants and their children and to improve their lot in America. Fr. Gieryk was elected first president of the Union.

After the convention, Fr. Gieryk issued a manifesto (recently discovered in a secondary source and possibly apocryphal in character) appealing in the name of the new organization to all Polish Catholics on behalf of "our widows and orphans," the unemployed hungry men, and the unschooled children, to put aside their differences (some of them artificially generated by the partitioning powers). In closing, Fr. Gieryk called on the Poles in the name of American

liberty and democracy to create a united Polish front for the common good "by majority vote" to which a dissident minority would be bound to accede.

When the Union of Polish Catholics held its next convention in October 1874, at Chicago, Fr. Gieryk participated in the deliberations with two members of St. Albertus Parish. Fr. Gieryk was reelected president for a second term, while John Lemke and Julian Piotrowski served on convention committees.

Fr. Gieryk's third achievement was to bring the first Polish newspaper to Detroit. Known as the *Gazeta Polska Katolicka* (The Polish Catholic Gazette), it served as the official organ of the Union of Polish Catholics and began appearing in the city in April 1874. A weekly published in Julian Piotrowski's bookshop (and apparently also a printing establishment), until October, 1875, the newspaper moved to Chicago where the Union established its new headquarters after Fr. Gieryk's departure from St. Albertus Parish.

The *Gazeta Polska Katolicka* was the eighth Polish newspaper founded in the United States and the first avowedly Catholic one. A lineal descendent of three earlier weeklies founded in Union, Missouri, between 1870 and 1873, the *Gazeta* was the first of forty Polish newspapers and periodicals during the existence of St. Albertus Parish. Its transfer to Chicago along with the Union of Polish Catholics was a distinct cultural loss to the Polish community in Detroit.

Fr. Gieryk is also credited by Rev. Wacław Kruszcza with the founding of a Polish Literary Society in Detroit sometime in 1874. This society, of which Fr. Gieryk was president, became, according to Fr. Kruszcza, the owner and publisher of the *Gazeta Polska Katolicka* in January 1875. If these assertions are correct (and so far no corroborative evidence has been discovered), then Fr. Gieryk was also the founder of the first Polish cultural organization in Detroit — one which, though shortlived, left its mark in Polish American history by publishing the *Gazeta* for several months (and apparently sponsoring literary lectures as well). Upon its transfer to Chicago, the newspaper became the property of a corporation headed by a group of Chicago's Polish businessmen.

Fr. Gieryk's parish-centered activities further demonstrated his effective community and priestly leadership. During his eighteen months' pastorate, he baptised 312 children, blessed 100 marriages, prepared over fifty children for first Holy Communion, and taught catechism to about 200 children on Sundays. In 1874 he founded the parish's first Young Ladies Sodality (or, as he called it "The Society of Virgins"). That same year, in his annual parish report to Bishop Borgess, Fr. Gieryk left a succinct yet, eloquent insight into his creative approach to parochial work, when he responded to Item 26 in the report requesting "... any other information which you will deem important to the interests of Religion in your district."

This is what Fr. Gieryk wrote: "I would suggest it important to build a Higher Polish Catholic School (College) erecting and founding Polish Catholic Library, Polish Literary Lectures, etc. etc., establishing of a Polish Catholic Temperance Confraternity." None of these suggestions materialized during Fr. Gieryk's pastorate; in time, however, the Felician Sisters and Rev. Joseph

Dabrowski did build "Higher Polish Catholic Schools" in the 1880's, the Sisters and Rev. Francis Mueller opened a "Polish Catholic Library" in the 1890's, and the professors of the Polish Seminary inaugurated "Polish Literary Lectures" during the same decade. Only the "Polish Catholic Temperance Confraternity" found no sponsors or members.

Fr. Gieryk worked effectively with the parish committee which during his pastorate included John Lemke, Frank Sikora, Anton Treppa, Jacob Mindak, Stanislaus Melin, and Franz Rohr. Together they tried to keep in touch with the families of the parish — estimated at "800-1200 more or less" by Fr. Gieryk in his report for 1874. The actual number was most likely considerably lower, since the following year's report by Rev. Alphons Dombrowski OSF listed only 500 families.

Nonetheless, the parish was growing both by immigrant influx and by natural birth. During the early 1870's, the *Detroit Free Press* noted periodically the arrival of "fifty . . . Poles to increase the settlement on Russell Street" (1873); "the Polish Settlement on the north end of Russell Street has lately received quite a number of recruits from over the sea . . ." (1873); "twenty-five Polish families, numbering about one hundred persons, arrived in this city . . . and took up quarters in the Polish settlement . . ." (1874); "fifteen Polish families arrived in Detroit yesterday . . ." (1875). The newspaper referred to the Poles as "a frugal people," who "brought considerable cash with them and will use it to build themselves houses" in "the north-eastern suburbs at the end of Riopelle Street," where they "have stores and shops of their own . . . A fine church is up . . . Poletown is the name given to the new village."

In the light of these developments, Fr. Gieryk's departure from St. Albertus Parish must have come as a surprise to the congregation. But the action was neither sudden nor unmediated on his part. At least three months before leaving Detroit, Fr. Gieryk submitted his resignation from the pastorate to Bishop Borgess on the grounds that he found it impossible to combine his obligations as president of the Union of Polish Catholics with his duties as pastor of St. Albertus Congregation. The bishop accepted the resignation on January 11, 1875, but asked Fr. Gieryk to remain at the post and complete the required parish reports for the preceding year.

The paper work (and presumably the bishop's efforts to find another pastor for the congregation) extended until April 2, 1875, when Fr. Gieryk submitted his last statement regarding the Parish's "contracted debts" amounting to under \$1,100. But even before this, on March 24, Bishop Borgess had issued favorable testimonial letters to Fr. Gieryk, enabling him to seek admission to another diocese. The precise date of his departure may have been Saturday, April 3, the day after his final report and also the day before his successor was to take over the administration of the parish. To complicate matters still further for subsequent fact-minded researchers, some unknown hand wrote the word "dismissed" across Fr. Gieryk's name in the ledger containing the list of parochial appointments made by Bishop Borgess.

Fr. Gieryk's life after his departure from St. Albertus was short — three and one half years. His hopes of devoting himself entirely to the management of the Union of Polish Catholics met disappointment within less than three months. The Union's third convention held in Milwaukee in June 1875, not only rejected his proposal to expand the organization by admitting all (and not only Catholic) Poles to membership but also repudiated his candidacy for reelection to the presidency. After this, his contact with the organization rapidly loosened, all the more so since he failed to gain admission into the Diocese of Chicago as he had hoped to do. Moreover, the Union fell increasingly under the domination of the Chicago Resurrectionists who subsequently not only changed the organization's name to the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America but also exerted considerable, if not controlling, influence over its policies.

Fr. Gieryk engaged in several brief pastorates elsewhere in Illinois and in Wisconsin. From April 1875, he pastored at St. Michael's Parish in Radom, Ill. (about 100 miles south of Chicago) belonging then to the Alton Diocese (presently Diocese of Springfield in Illinois). In July 1876 he headed St. Stanislaus Parish in Berlin, Wis., (preceding Fr. Simon Wieczorek here), and from January 1877 to January 1878 he ministered at St. Casimir Parish in Norheim, Wis., (succeeding Fr. Simon Wieczorek here). Then he returned to Radom where he died October 3, 1878, at the age of forty-one, and was buried in the parish cemetery.

Fr. Gieryk was a priest ahead of his time and, like many visionaries, he died a forgotten and broken man, further sullied by defamatory rumors of alcoholism. Succeeding decades, however, have somewhat redressed the scales of recognition. The Polish Roman Catholic Union acclaimed him as its founder in the 1930's, placing a granite monument over his grave in 1937 and naming a summer camp after him at Custer Park, Ill. in 1943. Less than three decades later, the Union moved his body to the American Czestochowa Shrine in Doylestown, Pa.

Thus far, St. Albertus Parish had done little for its second pastor. Local tradition still (though diminishingly) remembers him with some gratitude and affection, though also with more errors and omissions about his pastorate. A bronze tablet in the vestibule of the church carries his name along with those of former pastors.

Fr. Gieryk would seem to deserve more than this for what he did and envisioned for St. Albertus Parish. He found the congregation religiously disorganized and financially troubled; he left it considerably strengthened and enriched spiritually, socially, and culturally. He provided the congregation with its first true parochial school and its first Young Ladies Sodality. He put St. Albertus Parish on the map as a leading (if not at the moment the foremost) Polish congregation in America by establishing the Union of Polish Catholics, by bringing the first Polish newspaper and the first Polish Literary Society to Detroit. In addition, he left St. Albertus Parish and Polish Detroiters several challenging visions which inspired subsequent generations to turn these dreams into realities.

2. A FLAWED FRIAR'S FRAILTIES

The third pastor of St. Albertus Church is perhaps the most shadowy of the fifteen priestly administrators of the parish. Almost nothing is known about his life before he came to Detroit except his name, his Franciscan priesthood, and a couple hints about his background. Church records preserve his surname in a slightly anglicized form (Dombrowski) instead of its proper Polish spelling (Dabrowski). In two instances, the patronymic appears with prefixes (de Dombrowski and von Dombrowski) indicating likely descent from nobility. The German letters written by him to Bishop Borgess indicate a command of that language, the possibility of partial Teutonic ancestry, or at the very least origin in Prussian-Poland. Perhaps he was a Germanised Pole to whom the Polish heritage was secondary.

Father Alphonse was a Franciscan priest, a Friar Minor, who may have been affiliated with the St. Louis Province of the Sacred Heart, as a letter of Bishop Borgess to the superior there seems to imply. In any event, Fr. Alphonse came to Detroit in mid-March 1875. On Tuesday, March 16, he received two commissions from Bishop Borgess: first, to visit "the Catholics of the Polish language in Bay City" and particularly "the members of St. Stanislaus Church," and second, to exercise the care of souls in St. Albertus Church in Detroit. Apparently the Bay City visit took several weeks, because Fr. Alphonse did not officially assume pastoral duties in Detroit as Fr. Gieryk's successor till Sunday, April 4.

Fr. Alphonse's pastorate at St. Albertus Parish lasted almost four and one-half years — from April 4, 1875 to September 9, 1879. During these fifty-two months, the congregation grew from 550 families in 1875 to 750 families in 1879 (with a sharp not fully explained decline to 600 families in 1878). In March, 1876, the Polish Catholics in the twelfth ward on the city's West Side, in the area north of Michigan Avenue and west of Eighteenth Street, began planning a church of their own but gave up the idea after some exploratory discussions. Some of them continued to attend Mass at St. Albertus Church more than six miles away across town, while others worshiped at St. Boniface German Church about six blocks away.

The Polish settlers were apparently recovering from the hardships of the Panic of 1873 and getting ahead surely if slowly. When a medical team vaccinated 2,000 persons "in the Polish district" of St. Albertus Parish in January 1877, Fr. Alphonse "provided means to compensate the physicians" because he "did not wish it to appear that his people are mendicants."

This sense of national pride contrasted sharply with Fr. Alphonse's opinions about the moral and social condition of the congregation. On February 14, 1876, after having spent over ten months at St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Alphonse on his own initiative wrote Bishop Borgess a fourteen-page report in which he discussed in some detail, these five points: (1) the moral condition of the Polish Church, (2) my duties regarding these conditions; (3) the parish mission, (4) the

condition of the parochial school, and (5) the lack of unity among Polish priests in America.

In describing the moral condition of St. Albertus Congregation, Fr. Alphonse discussed the character of his parishioners, the sources of their disunity, their attitudes toward priests, the role the laity wished to play in parish affairs, and his own fear of possible reprisal at the hands of dissatisfied parishioners. Fr. Alphonse found the people pious but superficially religious and inadequately cared for by former pastors, predominantly of working class background, rude, hypercritical, quarrelsome, disunited, and dissatisfied.

Fr. Alphonse identified the sources of the parishioners' disaffection as consisting of their disappointment at the loss of their first two somewhat easy going pastors, who, coming from different regions of partitioned Poland had formed dissentient factions among the parishioners; the congregation's desire to control the administration of parish properties and finances through its own elected trustees; and the instigation of two leaders whom he does not name but merely designates as not being Americans.

In speaking of his parishioners' attitudes toward their priests, Fr. Alphonse mentioned the people's over-familiar expectation to drink beer with the priests and treat them as equals, coming to the pastor with their property and business troubles and expecting him to resolve these problems. Above all, the parishioners of St. Albertus Church wanted their priests to be "ultra Polish" and to support them in all their demands so that St. Albertus Parish would maintain its "reputation as the main center of the Poles in the United States."

Fr. Alphonse also expressed reservations about the Polish laity's role in parochial management. Coming from ancient Polish parishes, the people took it for granted that certain traditional canonically recognized practices would also be continued in America. Fr. Alphonse did not specify any of these practices he undoubtedly had in mind the right of patronage, whereby the founder or founders of a parish who promised to support and maintain the church were given a voice not only in the management of church property but also in the appointment and dismissal of the pastor. This form of European trusteeism had already been earlier transferred to America and became a source of friction in numerous dioceses during the nineteenth century. Fr. Alphonse spotted its influence at St. Albertus Parish in the existence of "two societies not approved by the church" without identifying either by name.

This repeated refrainment from naming names, perhaps reflecting some inner caution or inability to prove the charge in the event of an open challenge, did not prevent Fr. Alphonse from expressing, almost prophetic, fear that the parishioners might be dissatisfied with him, since he was a priest who preferred to keep to himself and to refrain from undue fraternization with the laity.

After describing this moral condition of St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Alphonse next outlined his pastoral program for remedying what he obviously deemed a highly deplorable situation. He would start not with repaying the relatively small

debt but with teaching the fundamentals of the faith. At the same time, he would avoid everything that might provoke complaint or criticism of his administration of church affairs and possibly interfere with the diminution of the debt. He would dispense justice to all with gentleness and prudence, and where necessary also with energy. He hoped that, since the parish was growing, an assistant priest might be sent him in due time to provide for the increasing needs of the congregation. In concluding his pastoral plan, Fr. Alphonse expressed another prophetic fear that the zealous priest in America all too often falls a helpless victim of vicious calumnious charges which destroy him like drops of water eventually dissolve a block of stone.

The shortest and most objective item in Fr. Alphonse's report dealt with the parish mission. It began Thursday, November 16, and concluded Thursday, November 23, 1876. It was conducted by three priests from Chicago: Resurrectionist Fathers Vincent Barzynski and Charles Lanz and a priest temporarily associated with the Resurrectionist Apostolate, Rev. Dominic Majer, a former Dominican. (He subsequently submitted his candidacy to the pastorate of St. Albertus Parish, but it was set aside in favor of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski's. Fr. Majer in 1883 became pastor of St. Adalbert's Parish in St. Paul, Minn., and was made a Monsignor in 1906, while Fr. Kolasinski's career followed a less sedate and honorable course.)

As for the 1876 parish mission at St. Albertus, Fr. Alphonse viewed it as an unqualified success. The spiritual climate of the parish improved considerably by the confessional absolution of over 1500 penitents, the reception of 1600 Communion and the confirmation of 300 persons. Quarrels and arrogance diminished, and numerous workers were weaned away from socialistic influences then current in Detroit's ethnic communities. Fr. Alphonse jubilantly noted that there should be more such missions.

Fr. Alphonse's fourth and longest point about the lack of unity among Polish priests in America touched indirectly on St. Albertus Parish, insofar as it mentioned Fr. Gieryk. By founding the Union of Polish Catholics, Fr. Gieryk, according to Fr. Alphonse, provided the first reason for further division among the already dissentient Polish priests, since the organization was not open to all Poles. The fragmentation was continued by the 1875 Milwaukee convention at which Rev. Vincent Barzynski CR dislodged Fr. Gieryk from the presidency of the Union. Subsequently (wrote Fr. Alphonse) two Unions arose — one in Milwaukee and another in Chicago — both contending for members among priests and laymen. The divisiveness was further compounded by the involvement of Polish priests in the 1874 political campaign in Chicago, which split Polish votes among Democratic and Republican candidates and produced no benefits to the Poles other than further dissention and bitterness.

Fr. Alphonse disavowed any association with either priestly group on the grounds that neither of the two unions enjoyed episcopal approval. As long as both priestly parties were at war, he opted in favor of neutrality. Speaking almost as an outsider, he wrote: "I have good will toward the Poles, but I do not go blindly with them. I cannot proceed without questioning their aims and plans. My ministry has resulted in some unpleasantness, but I cannot act against my principles."

Fr. Alphonse closed this lengthy analysis of Polish priestly disunity by reporting a recently heard rumor that the Chicago Resurrectionists, at the instigation of Rev. Vincent Barzynski CR were attempting, with the help of their Superiors and the Propaganda, to establish a Polish vicariate in America. This agency, headed by a Polish priest, presumably Fr. Barzynski, would have jurisdiction over all Polish priests in the United States, supervising their admission to the country and controlling their missionary and pastoral appointments throughout the various states with Polish settlements.

Fr. Alphonse's comments about St. Albertus School were brief yet revealing. He found three lay teachers (one of them a woman) inadequate in their training of the school's 250 pupils. The instructions were chiefly in Polish and English, but some German was also taught. Discipline was lax, teaching methods poor, teaching aids lacking, school objectives unclear. Salaries were low and inequitable. Both teachers and students missed classes. Student attendance was not only brief in duration but also irregular in daily presence, owing to lack of parental cooperation.

Fr. Alphonse's immediate aim was to act prudently and to improve conditions as best he could by eliminating the grossest abuses. Temporarily at least he intended to retain the teachers although he had been advised to dismiss two of them, since they were willing to follow his recommendations. He believed he could make better progress with their cooperation than with strangers of unknown background.

Under Fr. Alphonse's supervision the parochial school soon showed evidences of growth. Enrollment climbed from 218 in 1875 to 320 in 1878 but tapered off to 218 in 1879; but whereas in 1875 the boys outnumbered the girls two to one, in 1879 there were 100 girls to 108 boys. Tuition revenues rose steadily from \$653.96 in 1875 to \$1,172 in 1879. The total annual salary of the three teachers in 1876 amounted to \$895.

Fr. Alphonse held catechism instructions for children not attending the parochial school. After the first full-scale parish mission, he organized the Living Rosary Society in 1876. Sunday Services included a Mass at eight o'clock and another at ten; in the afternoon vespers were sung at three o'clock. During his pastorate there were about 100 baptisms, 200 marriage ceremonies and over 300 children prepared for First Holy Communion. Bishop Borgess held three confirmation services (in November 1875, October 1876, and December 1877), conferring the sacrament successively on 341 persons (the largest group in the diocese that year), 154 recipients, and 123 individuals, both children and adults. The exceptional size of the first group resulted from the fact that there had been no confirmation ceremony in the parish since the first one in 1872. Finally, during Fr. Alphonse's pastorate there were over 400 funerals.

In coping with these pastoral services (and regrettably no copies or accounts of his sermons survive to indicate how he went about teaching the fundamentals of the faith to his parishioners), Fr. Alphonse obtained the help of Rev. John Wollowski who was appointed the first resident assistant priest to St. Albertus Parish November 14, 1877. No longer a Resurrectionist, he was received into the Detroit Diocese as "a guest" and sent to the parish "according to the written agreement between him and Rev. Alph. Dombrowski, pastor of said St. Albert's in Detroit." The details of this agreement were not recorded in the chancery nor subsequently revealed by the parties involved.

Other important helpmates of Fr. Alphonse in resolving parish problems, particularly financial ones, were members of the parish committees: M. Detlaff, W. Cyganek, J. Gaza, J. Hildebrandt, J. Swiatko, F. Elwart, M. Janus, M. Slupecki, and A. Ostrowski. Church revenue averaged a little over \$6,000 annually, chiefly from pew rent and Sunday collections; the rent brought from four to two dollars yearly from each pewholder. There were 162 pews in the church, but not all (about forty) were rented.

The ordinary church expenditures tended to run close to the revenue averages each year. When Fr. Alphonse became pastor in 1875, he discovered that in addition to the \$1100 debt accumulated and reported by his immediate predecessor, Fr. Gieryk, there were "some old debts" (of which Fr. Gieryk was unaware or did not include in his report for that part of 1875). One of these, amounting to \$1,000 was remitted upon his request to Rev. Simon Wieczorek in October, 1878 "in full payment of all claims and demands held by me against said church." Because he had to repair the foundations of the church in November, 1878, Fr. Alphonse did not succeed in achieving parochial solvency, leaving St. Albertus Parish with a debt of \$2,820 at his dismissal in September, 1879.

Though on the surface a successful operation, Fr. Alphonse's administration in time began to encounter signs of restiveness in the St. Albertus congregation. Whether the parishioners began to sense or discern Teutonic sentiments and attitudes in his conduct no existing evidence even suggests. Rather minor grievances appeared in 1876 about the denial of church burial (supported by the bishop) to a man who had died in an alcoholic seizure, or about the referral of parishioners to the bishop in matters that might have been resolved in the rectory or by the pastor's presence in the chancery.

More serious complaints surfaced in 1879. Some poor parishioners, unable to pay their parish dues, complained to Bishop Borgess that Fr. Alphonse had refused them Easter confession cards and publicly denied them the Eucharist at the communion rail in church. The bishop reprehended these practices as "contrary to the regulations and spirit of the Church."

Still more importantly, in May, 1879, Fr. Alphonse was reported to the bishop as attending a saloon to drink beer and play cards on Sunday evenings at Bobo Junction by "a Catholic scandalized by the criticism of a Protestant." The denunciator was not a member of St. Albertus Parish. On this occasion, Bishop Borgess reminded Fr. Alphonse of the pertinent provisions of the Diocesan Synod and the Second Plenary Baltimore Council, cautioning the pastor to abide by its provisions.

But the final blow to Fr. Alphonse's pastorate at St. Albertus Church came Tuesday, September 9, 1879, when the bishop sent him a formal Latin letter revoking all his formerly granted priestly faculties and forbidding him the exercise of the sacred ministry in the Diocese of Detroit. In short, this was an order of dismissal from the parish and the diocese.

Bishop Borgess, as was his practice in such tragic cases, did not stipulate the specific reason for the dismissal beyond saying "on account of reasons made known to us September 6, 1879, and communicated to you the same day by the accusing party in the presence of our consultors and confirmed by witnesses." Fr. Alphonse made no denial, nor could he, since the matter had come to the attention of the public press.

Fr. Alphonse's pastorate thus came to an unexpected and disastrous end after fifty-two months. Not knowing what to do, the flawed friar continued to occupy the rectory for fifteen days, until Bishop Borgess issued an explicit order for his departure, and this brought about the desired result. After leaving Detroit, Fr. Alphonse disappeared altogether from the Polish community in the United States. Later rumors sent him to Canada or to Jerusalem, possible though unlikely destinations for a man of his background.

Fr. Alphonse played a double and tragically self-defeating role in the annals of St. Albertus Parish. He seemed to appear almost providentially, contributing to the congregation's spiritual growth and thereby helped to make the parish's existence more secure. As far as can be known, he did this without the help of the Franciscan Order nor, apparently, with any hope of bringing the parish under Franciscan control. Yet he might have succeeded in doing this eventually and changed the course of history of the parish and the Polish community in Detroit. Instead, the human frailties of this friar's ministry and flawed heritage not only clouded the spiritual climate he established but also drove him back into the historical obscurity out of which he first emerged in Detroit.

3. THE ONE-ARMED PRIEST

Rev. John Wollowski, the successor of Fr. Alphonse, has a double claim to celebrity. For one thing, he is the only one-armed pastor in the hundred-year history of St. Albertus Parish and in the annals of the Detroit Diocese. For another, he is a one-time Resurrectionist who pastored St. Albertus Church as a diocesan priest and made a significant contribution to life of the parish and the growth of the Felician Sisterhood.

Though various details of Fr. Wollowski's life prior to his coming to St. Albertus have been captured on research file-cards, certain key dates still elude the historian: one is the year of his birth, the other is the time of his ordination to the priesthood. Born in Zmudz, a region in western Lithuania once a part of the Polish Commonwealth and after the partitions directly incorporated into czarist Russia's domain, he participated as a chaplain in the Polish January Rising of 1863 against Russian domination.

During the tragic freedom movement, Fr. Wollowski lost his right arm as a result of the accidental firing of a rifle he handled. The mishap made him a marked man to the Russian authorities and forced him to seek asylum abroad. In time, he met the Resurrectionists, was attracted to their idealogy of renewal, and became a member of the Congregation August 1, 1868.

Shortly after, within a month or two, Fr. Wollowski accompanied Rev. Simon Wieczorek CR and Brother Horace Cajon CR to the newly acquired Resurrectionist mission in Parisville, the order's first apostolate in the United States. This first, Resurrectionist, phase of Fr. Wollowski's career lasted about five years. After working in Parisville for almost a year, he left October 27, 1869, to minister briefly to the Poles in Chicago. From there he moved to Kitchener, Ontario, in Canada, where he labored from 1870 to 1871. Next, he served at the Resurrectionist St. Mary's College in Kentucky from 1871 to early 1873. Finally, after another brief stint in Chicago (May to September 1873), he left America and returned to the Roman headquarters of the Resurrectionists.

Fr. Wollowski's religious superiors sent him next in 1874 to the

Resurrectionist mission in Adrianople, Bulgaria, where he ministered till early 1875. Finally, March 23, 1875, he made his official egress or withdrawal from the Resurrectionist Congregation, and became a diocesan priest.

As such, Fr. Wollowski journeyed to America for the second time. By 1876, he was pastor of St. Michael Church in a country parish at Radom, Illinois, where he succeeded Rev. Theodore Gieryk, formerly of Detroit. During his stay at Radom, Fr. Wollowski began the construction of a two-story frame building which he hoped to develop into a boy's high school, and eventually into a Polish Seminary. Opened in 1876 as a grade school, the institution failed to advance beyond that level owing to lack of support and to Fr. Wollowski's departure from Radom in 1876, when Bishop Peter J. Baltes placed the parish in the care of the Franciscan Fathers.

In November 1877, Fr. Wollowski found himself in Detroit, serving as assistant to Rev. Alphonse Dombrowski, pastor of St. Albertus. This assistantship lasted twenty-two months, until September 20, 1879, when Bishop Caspar Borgess gave Fr. Wollowski "the charge of St. Albert's Church . . . authorizing you to take possession and control of the Church, the Pastoral Residence and the parochial school, and whatever furniture and effects belong to and are the property of St. Albert's congregation." Actually this commission was not fully carried out until early October, when Fr. Alphonse finally capitulated to the bishop's order to leave the diocese.

Fr. Wollowski was at least (and more likely over) forty years old when he became pastor of St. Albertus Parish. His tenure lasted about thirty months — two and one half years — until March 30, 1882, when Rev. Dominic Kolasinski was appointed to succeed him as pastor.

Undoubtedly the greatest achievement of Fr. Wollowski's pastorate was bringing the Felician Sisters to St. Albertus School as teachers and to Detroit as the new headquarters of their American apostolate. His experience at St. Mary's College in Kentucky and with the aborted school project in Illinois convinced him of the importance of a qualified and relatively permanent teaching staff in the functioning of a school. St. Albertus Parochial School, though functioning formally since 1874 (or early 1875) with a staff of three (and sometimes two) teachers, needed a more secure faculty foundation.

To bring this about, Fr. Wollowski turned to the Felician Sisters in Polonia, Wisconsin. Brought to the United States from Austrian-Poland in 1874 by Rev. Joseph Dabrowski's persistent pleas, the Sisters soon found their services in demand beyond Wisconsin. In 1877, they began teaching in LaSalle, Ill. and two years later, in January 1879, they came to Bay City, Michigan.

St. Albertus Parish provided the Felicians with their fourth parochial school apostolate. After preliminary discussions between Fr. Wollowski and Mother M. Monica, the Felician superior had cleared the way, Bishop Borgess approved the following arrangements November 10, 1879, in a letter to Mother M. Monica:

"Rev. John Walowski [sic] informed us . . . that you have agreed to send five Sisters, four of them competent to teach the ordinary branches of the parochial school both in the Polish and English languages, the house, furniture, fuel, and light being furnished by the St. Albert's congregation, for the salary of seven hundred and twenty (\$720.00) dollars per annum to be paid by the said St. Albert's congregation of Detroit. Upon the above conditions we cheerfully give the requisite permission."

Like a Christmas present, Wednesday, December 17, 1879, the five Felicians arrived at St. Albertus School. The group included Sisters M. Cajetan, the principal, M. Josephine, M. Teresa, M. Louise, and an unknown postulant. They found 118 boys and 100 girls curiously waiting for their services, with the parents either lukewarm or reserved in their attitude toward the new teachers. Thus began an association that was to last over eighty-five years.

With the Sister's arrival, the enrollment increased annually during Fr. Wollowski's pastorate — 320 for 1880, 412 for 1881, and 474 for 1882. The Sisters brought with them not only proficiency, efficiency and stability but also their own textbooks and a bilingual curriculum with a Catholic emphasis. The details of this grade school bilingual program are not fully known, since after its initial formulation by Rev. Joseph Dabrowski and Mother M. Cajetan it remained in manuscript form, with periodic revisions, for two decades. The first printed version of the curriculum, revised by a special committee, did not appear till 1895.

But some of the Polish textbooks compiled and brought by the Felicians to St. Albertus School have survived the ravages of time. Among them are a Polish reader (*Książka do Czytania dla Szkol Polskich w Ameryce*, 1877), a geography (*Geografia dla Szkol Polskich w Ameryce*, 1879), and an arithmetic book (*Nauka Rachunkow dla Uzytku Polakow w Ameryce Przeznaczona*, 1881). To these was also added a catechism originally authored by Bishop Francis Z. Krautbauer of Green Bay, Wis. and translated by Rev. Leopold Moczygeba [sic] into Polish under the title *Katechizm dla Początkujących Dzieci*. It was published in 1880 in Chicago. The titles of other textbooks used by the Sisters during this period at St. Albertus School still wait for the persistent researcher's discovery.

Since the parish did not have a ready convent to house the Sisters, they most likely lived on the second floor of the school building itself. In 1881 the number of Sisters increased to six. The initial hesitation and lukewarmness with which the parishioners had greeted the Sisters changed by now to pleased approval and support.

Early in 1880, Fr. Wollowski made another proposal which had far reaching consequences not only for the parish but also for the Felician Sisters. He suggested to Mother Monica that she undertake the transfer of the Sisters' Motherhouse from rural Polonia in Wisconsin to the more rapidly expanding urban environment of Detroit. After obtaining the necessary approval of Bishop Francis X. Krautbauer of Green Bay and Bishop Caspar Borgess of Detroit, the Felicians undertook the transfer, one of the most important decisions in the American history of the sisterhood.

That same year, again possibly at the suggestion of Fr. Wollowski and certainly with the help of Fr. Dabrowski, the Felicians bought a parcel of land on the eastern side of St. Aubin Avenue directly across the street from St. Albertus Church. Construction of the new motherhouse started under Fr. Dabrowski's supervision in 1881 was completed in September of the following year. By then, however, Fr. Wollowski was no longer pastor of St. Albertus Parish.



FELICIAN SISTERS MOTHERHOUSE — 1882—1936
 FELICIAN ACADEMY — 1882—1967
 GUARDIAN ANGEL HOME — 1882—1964

During his nearly thirty-months pastorate, Fr. Wollowski also showed himself an able as well as a farsighted administrator. When he took over St. Albertus, the parish was reportedly \$2,800 in debt — almost double the revenue brought by the collections in 1879. An able economiser, who curtailed superfluous expenses, he raised the parish in three years from insolvency to surplus, leaving \$627.81 in the treasury at his departure.

Making no additions to the parish buildings or real estate, Fr. Wollowski marshalled the parish revenues from the church and school with careful economy. His annual school income from tuition fluctuated between \$929 and \$1172. Families sending children to school paid forty-five cents per month for the first child, and half the sum for any other children. The annual church income from collections and pew rent averaged about \$3,800. In 1880, for example, the collections amounted to \$1,694.79, while the pew rent (running from four to two dollars depending on the pew's nearness to the sanctuary) brought \$2,119.29.

In assuring a favorable parochial economic climate, Fr. Wollowski enlisted the services of the ablest practical men among the 750 families of the parish to serve as trustees. He had one member of the committee, John Bialk, appointed by Bishop Borgess as parish treasurer for 1880. Other committee members (as the bishop called them while they referred to themselves as trustees) included K. Mrochowski, A. Czapp, A. Cyganek, J. Klebba, J. Zielke, J. Troyke, J. Dukat, A. Mulkerwicz, and P. Glowczewski. With their help, in 1881, he founded a chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the parish, but the bishop disallowed its existence on the grounds that the organization failed to meet the requisite diocesan statutes.

The spiritual aspects of Fr. Wollowski's pastorate also indicated development as well as priestly concern on his part. Though physically handicapped, he did his best to fulfill his sacerdotal duties and, whenever possible, to obtain the services of an assistant priest. In 1880, an unknown Polish

priest visiting Detroit assisted him for a time, but his most frequent helper was Rev. Wenceslaus Tilek, a Czech priest, who lived not far from the church.

The traditionally repeated story (which seems to have originated with Rev. Wacław Kruszcza) that Fr. Wollowski was unable to celebrate Mass because he had lost his right hand is canonically doubtful, to say the least. Fr. Wollowski could have (and most likely did) obtain dispensation to offer Mass. The lack of one arm would not have rendered him totally incapable of celebrating the Eucharist or even of distributing Holy Communion from a ciborium placed upon the communion rail or a table.

Baptisms, marriages, funerals, first communions, confirmations, and special catechism classes held on Sunday were noted, if not fully in the parish register, then in the annual reports to the bishop. Yearly baptismal figures fluctuated between 213 and 315 for an overall total of 700. At least two of the persons baptised were adults, apparently converts. The number of marriages approximated 180, with seventy-nine the highest annual sum occurring in 1881. The funerals exceeded 300, with 151 taking place in 1881. First Holy Communion groups averaged over eighty per year, while about 170 students received Sunday school instruction.

Bishop Borgess held two confirmation services at St. Albertus Church during Fr. Wollowski's pastorate. At the first, on April 18, 1880, 190 persons received the sacrament. At the second, on April 24, 1881, 234 persons (142 of them adults) were confirmed for that year's highest parish total in the diocese.

Along with this program of spiritual ministrations, Fr. Wollowski assisted the Felicians in nurturing St. Albertus Parish's first two vocations to the sisterhood. One published list (that in the Diamond Jubilee Bulletin) and another still in manuscript prepared in 1966 at Rev. Aloysius Guzicki's request by the Sisters, agree on naming Agnes Kowalska as the parish's first native Felician. According to the Felician documentary history, Agnes received her probationary habit September 2, 1881, and became Sister Mary Kunegunda. But a necrological entry in that same history reports the death of Sister Mary Filomena from Detroit on October 20, 1905, at the age of forty-four, after twenty-four years in the religious life. She, too, must have joined the sisterhood in 1881; unfortunately her family name is not given.

In any event, these two girls from St. Albertus Parish started a procession of vocations to the Felician Sisterhood that in the course of a century reached a total of about ninety nuns from that single parish. And this figure does not include several young ladies who entered two or three other sisterhoods.

Along with all this, Fr. Wollowski encouraged the observance of Polish religious traditions and ceremonies. The Christmas Eve Midnight Mass, the *Pasterka* (Shepherds' Mass) with its characteristic *Kolendy* (Carols) was observed with special jubilation and devotion. A later chronicler of Detroit's ethnic groups, Charles D. Cameron, wrote in 1926: "The first carols ever sung on the streets of Detroit were sung by Polish voices. In the early eighties, when the Polish community was new but scattered, they would gather from all parts at St. Albertus Church, and on the way home through the long dark streets, would be heard singing carols . . . The Midnight Mass itself was celebrated amid carols . . ."

The Polish Midnight Mass, Cameron noted further, brought also something else to Detroit: "Christmas as we now celebrate it in Detroit is composed of

many elements to which many nations have contributed . . . One observance in religion which is extending through one denomination and another is that of holding a communion service at midnight and extending into the first hours of Christmas morning. This was brought to the city with the great Polish immigration. Polish and German Catholics were first to adopt it generally, then other Catholic Churches, then a number of Protestant Episcopal churches, and now a number of other churches are holding midnight services . . ."

Fr. Wollowski, of course did not foresee, much less intend, this. He was thinking about his Polish parishioners and their specific religious needs and sentiments. He did his best for them but not all responded favorably to his priestly ministrations. Because of his physical disability, he did not enjoy the full support of his congregation or of the bishop. A parishioner, belonging to the group that desired an able-bodied pastor, wrote to a friend in Austrian-Poland for a likely sacerdotal candidate. When such was found and came to Detroit, Fr. Wollowski's days were numbered.

March 30, 1882, Bishop Borgess wrote to Fr. Wollowski: "This morning Rev. Dominic Kolasinski arrived here from Europe and has been adopted. This enables us to relieve you of the pastoral charge of St. Albert's . . . which we hereby recall . . . If you would wish it and it will be agreeable to you, you remain at St. Albert's for the present as the Rev. assistant . . ."

Disappointed and disheartened, Fr. Wollowski chose to leave Detroit. Awarded a good conduct letter, by Bishop Borgess, he retired to a farm near Taharoa, Ill., not far from his former rural pastorate in Radom. He lived less than three years in retirement, dying January 17, 1884, and was buried in DuQuoin, Illinois.

Dead almost ninety years, Fr. John Wollowski is little known and less remembered. Even his most memorable contribution to St. Albertus Parish has succumbed to the erosion of time and implacable urban change. The Felician Sisters whom he brought as teachers to the parochial school are no longer there; neither is that particular frame school building. Even the Felician Motherhouse which was erected at his suggestion does not stand across the street from the church, having been dismantled as part of an urban renewal project.

Yet Fr. Wollowski did not labor in vain. The Felicians continue their apostolate in other areas, justifying the foresight of the one-armed priest who first brought them to Detroit and opened new horizons of endeavor before them as well as before St. Albertus Parish. The church, much grander than the frame building in which he preached and held religious services, still stands to serve those who come through its portals for consolation, for encouragement, and for inspiration.

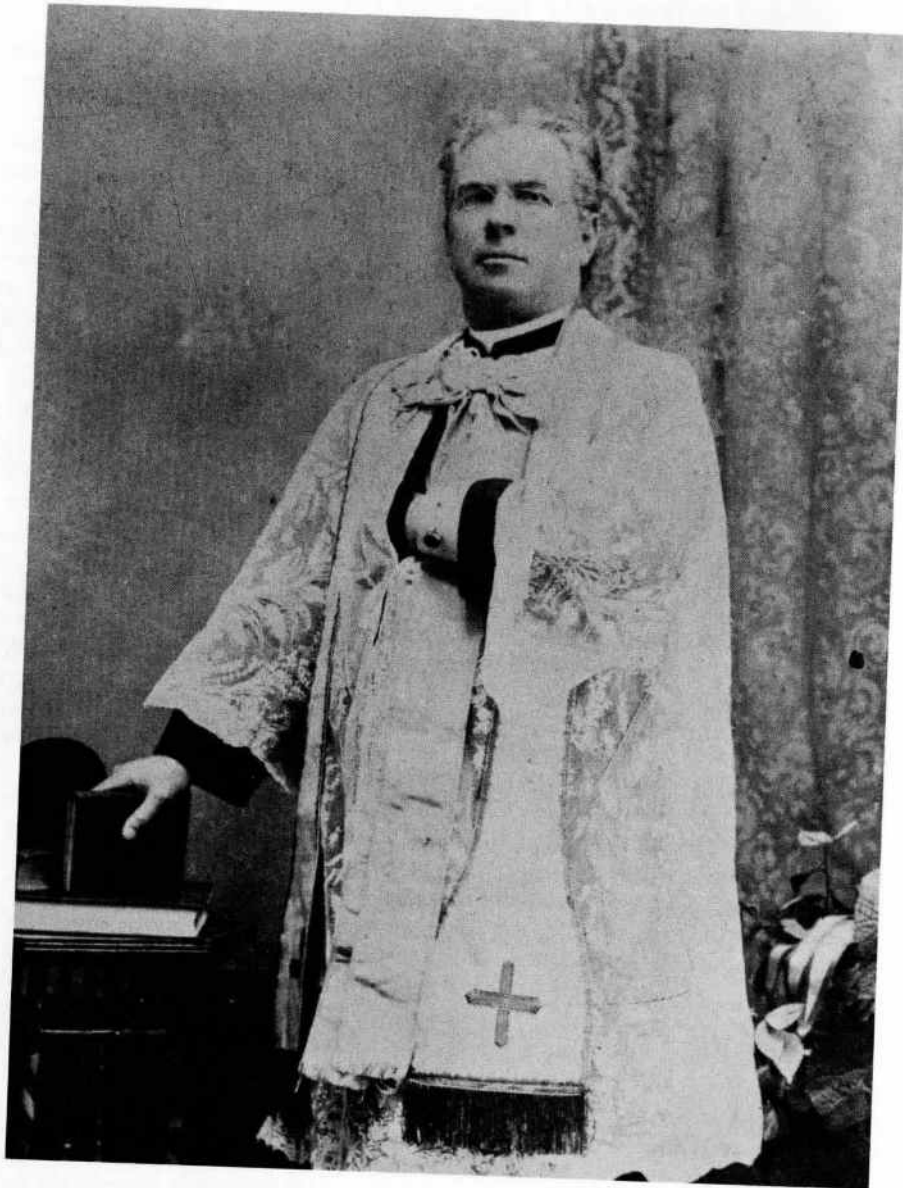
CHAPTER 3

PASTORS IN CONTRAST

The two pastors of St. Albertus Parish singled out by history for maximum visibility and exposure were men who ministered to the congregation briefly during five turbulent years from March 1882 to March 1887. They were as unlike as two priests could be, yet each exerted a pronounced and lasting impact

not only on the parish and Detroit's Polish community but also on the diocese and on Polish American Catholicism generally. Each in his own way was a challenger of conventions and allegiances.

1. A PRIEST CONSCIOUS OF HIS CHARMS



REV. DOMINIC KOLASINSKI

Today few Detroiters and not many parishioners of St. Albertus congregation know anything about Rev. Dominic Kolasinski. But in the 1880's and 1890's, aside from Bishops Caspar Borgess and John Foley, no local Catholic priest was more familiar to readers of Detroit newspapers. In *The Evening News* alone (according to Eduard A. Skendzel's unpublished exhaustive bibliography), Fr. Kolasinski appeared in almost 400 separate notices and articles. Seated in his "splendid turnout" with its "liveried coachman and a pair of creams," he was the cynosure of all eyes as he rode along Detroit streets on business or for recreation.

The flamboyant, contentious and turbulent life of Fr. Kolasinski in Detroit had its beginnings in Austrian-Poland. He was born August 13, 1838 (if not possibly 1836), in the southwestern Galician town of Mielec. The oldest of four sons of an organist, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained August 14 (not July 25), 1864, at the age of twenty-six in Krakow by Bishop Antoni Galecki. Then for eighteen years, he moved from one parochial post to another, until he was assigned in 1875 to Czernichow, a town of about 1,000 inhabitants near Krakow.

At forty-four, when most priests were firmly settled in their pastoral appointments, Fr. Kolasinski left the Diocese of Krakow. He came to Detroit partly at the instance of Joseph Przybylowski, a St. Albertus parishioner, who wrote him about the parish, but chiefly at Bishop Caspar Borgess' prior invitation of August 11, 1881, assuring him of a pastoral ministry in the diocese. The bishop acted on the basis of documents submitted both by Fr. Kolasinski and the Krakow chancery, testifying to the good character and conduct of the priest. Upon his arrival March 30, 1882, he was formally adopted into the priestly group of the Detroit Diocese and appointed pastor of St. Albertus Parish in place of the one-armed Rev. John Wollowski.

Fr. Kolasinski was then in the prime of life and gave eye-catching evidence of it. A reporter of *The Evening News* described him as "the polished gentleman. His full ruddy features are well rounded. His hair of light auburn tinge, rises from a forehead in curls. His light gray eyes are quick and active, and his lips seeming ever ready to part in a smile which breaks into dimples on either cheek. Brumel would stop to admire his splendid white teeth. His manner is hardy and vigorous like his appearance, and his action if full of attitude and gestures which would be applauded in an actor. He dresses with the care and elegance of a man who is conscious of his charms and intends that they should be noted and admired."

Fr. Kolasinski's pastoral tenure at St. Albertus lasted three years and seven months, from March 30, 1882 to November 28, 1885, when Bishop Borgess suspended his priestly functions in the diocese. But Fr. Kolasinski refused to vacate the parish rectory, stubbornly remaining in residence, though not engaging in priestly activities, four additional months, till April 5, 1886.

When Fr. Kolasinski became pastor of St. Albertus Church, the congregation numbered 750 families and was growing rapidly. He assisted this growth in part by writing about Detroit's Polish settlement to the Krakow-based monthly *Missye Katolickie* (Catholic Missions) which published his glowing accounts in 1883 and 1884. These reports brought to St. Albertus Parish the first larger influx of "Galicians" or "Austrian-Poles," who became his most dedicated followers and supporters.

But even before their arrival the congregation, which included all the Polish Catholics in Detroit, had developed two geographical centers: one on the city's East Side where the St. Albertus Parish plant was located, and another on the West Side along Twenty-Third Street north of Michigan Avenue. In November, 1882, Bishop Borgess acceded to the petition of the West-Side Poles for a separate parish, appointing Rev. Paul Gutowski OSF pastor of the new congregation soon to be named St. Casimir's. At the same time, the bishop informed Fr. Kolasinski that henceforth St. Albertus Parish would be limited to Polish Catholics residing east of Woodward Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare. Whether Fr. Kolasinski played any role in preparing St. Casimir Congregation for parochial status is not clear and would seem to appear doubtful from the anniversary booklet of the parish. In any case, St. Casimir's congregation became the first parochial offshoot of St. Albertus.

This initial peaceful geographical division of St. Albertus congregation removed several hundred parishioners, but it did not deter Fr. Kolasinski from embarking on his most notable project – the construction of a new St. Albertus Church. Not only he but also the trustees were convinced that the parish needed a new structure, since the original frame building was unable to accommodate the steadily growing number of parishioners estimated in February 1883 at 1500 families or 8,000 souls, though the allegation was not supported by proof.

But Fr. Kolasinski apparently intended to do more than erect just another church for St. Albertus Parish. He meant to build the largest Catholic Church in Michigan and, if possible, the finest Polish Church in America. To do this, he meant to reconstruct the existing parish premises by removing the old buildings, purchasing additional real estate, and also putting up a new school and rectory. This bold project, conceived on a grand scale provoked the first open outbreak of dissent between the Austrian-Polish Fr. Kolasinski and the Prussian-Polish parishioners who dominated the building committee. On February 6, 1883, or within ten months after Fr. Kolasinski's appointment as pastor, twenty-four of the thirty committeemen submitted a grievance petition to Bishop Borgess contesting Fr. Kolasinski's plans for the projected edifice.

While agreeing on the need for a new church, the committee disagreed with Fr. Kolasinski on two key points. The first concerned the location of the church. Fr. Kolasinski wanted to use the premises already owned by the parish on St. Aubin Avenue; the committee argued for a new site eight blocks westward on Antoine Street (subsequently named St. Antoine). The committee claimed that the new location fitted more conveniently into the residential distribution pattern of the parishioners and was preferred by the majority. The second disputed issue concerned the cost of the proposed church. The committee claimed that the pastor's architectural design was exorbitantly expensive, considerably beyond the congregation's means, all the more so since the project did not have the full support of all members of the congregation.

The signers of this petition, composed largely of established parishioners who had contributed to the development of the congregation included: Leonard Olszewski, Franciszek Kostecki, A. M. Conus, Franciszek Sikora, Anton Ostrowski, Jozef Tuska, W. Cyganek, Franciszek Lewandowski, Thomas Zoltowski, August Brzozoski, Jan Gajewski, August Stieber, Anton Wrosch, Jakub Myslowiecki, Ksawery Januszewski, Jozef Brieskel, Anton Fetha, Franz

Balicki, Franc. Polakowski, Jan Kunka, Jan Cichowlas, Adam Lange, Joseph Zielke, and Joseph Hildebrandt.

This manifestation of the European patronal right of church donors to have a voice in the property affairs of the congregation (called trusteeism in America and opposed by the bishops during the nineteenth century) did not go unchallenged. Eight days later, Fr. Kolasinski wrote Bishop Borgess a Latin rejoinder to the petition, rejecting its allegations outright as false, and impugning the right of the signers to call themselves the representatives of the congregation and much less of its majority. The bishop upheld Fr. Kolasinski's position in the controversy which simmered till December 1883 when the building plans were finally adopted.

Bishop Borgess, who on January 26, 1883, had given Fr. Kolasinski tentative permission for the building of the church on condition "that you do not contract any debts," relaxed this restriction the following year. In May 1884, he authorized Fr. Kolasinski to incur a debt of \$25,000 to be repaid in two years "for the earlier and immediate completion of St. Albert's new church."

Before construction of the new edifice began, Fr. Kolasinski (apparently thinking of another site for the new parish school he had in mind) purchased three lots of land on the northern side of Fremont (Canfield) – across from the corner on which he intended to locate the new church. The transaction was completed August 16, 1883, when Mary E. A. Moran signed the parcel over to Bishop Borgess.

Though prevented from pursuing the school project further, Fr. Kolasinski succeeded in completing his church-building program. Construction began shortly after the signing of the contracts on February 14, 1884. The agreement stipulated that the new church would cost \$61,000 and be finished by June 1, 1885 – within fifteen months. Twelve parish committeemen, besides Fr. Kolasinski, signed the contract: Laurentz Ignaszak, Martin Grenka, Franz Koss, Anton Treppa, Joseph Przybylowski, John Gruszczynski, Martin Kopydlowski, Frank Brzozowski, John Lichowlas, Adam Lange, Joseph Tuske, and Frank Kurschnia. Among the signers were several individuals who earlier had affixed their signatures to the grievance petition in February, 1883.

The new church was completed on time and dedicated July 4, 1885, in an impressive several-hour ceremony attended by "two-thirds of the Detroit's 22,000 Polanders" and presided over by two bishops – Caspar Borgess of Detroit and Camilus Maes of Covington, Kentucky (former secretary to the Bishop of Detroit).

Early Saturday morning, before nine o'clock, four parish societies – St. Albert's, St. Joseph's, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and the Children of Mary (joined by a patriotic semi-military organization formed by laymen of St. Albertus Parish in May 1877 under the name of the Kosciuszko Guard) marched to the bishop's residence on Washington Avenue. From there the procession, following a designated itinerary, picked up additional marchers of various Catholic nationalities as it escorted the two bishops to the dedication site on St. Aubin and Fremont (Canfield).



CORNER STONE - ST. ALBERTUS CHURCH

The ceremonial march was an impressive public demonstration of Catholic solidarity. Chief Marshal John Kulwicki led the procession on horseback followed by the Hamtramck Band, eight societies, several thousand marchers and some carriages accompanied by mounted guards of honor. The carriages carried the bishops and officers of the participating societies. Among the organizations were two Bohemian societies - St. George's and St. Vaclav's. Local and out-of-town clergy of various nationalities completed this colorful parade.

The procession reached St. Albertus Church about ten o'clock. Ceremonies began in the old "wooden and barnlike" church which had served the congregation for thirteen years as a place of worship. In a solemn sad ritual, the building was shorn of its ecclesiastical character and restored to secular use, as some of its founders shed a sorrowful tear over its passing and its former comforting services to Polish immigrants.

Then the dedicatory ceremonies moved to the new church which towered like a cathedral before the admiring eyes of the Polish Detroiters and their children. As the bells rang out, the bishops and the clergy walked around the exterior of the edifice, chanting and reciting the ritual prayers by which "St. Albert's Church was dedicated to the service of God forever."

The Solemn Mass that followed was celebrated inside the church by Bishop Maes, while Bishop Borgess occupied the episcopal throne in the sanctuary. Bishop Maes was assisted by Vicar-General Peter Henneart as presbyter, Rev. James Pulcher of Grand Rapids as deacon, and Rev. Frank Kolaczewski of Cleveland as subdeacon. Rev. Nicholas Kolasinski, the pastor's brother, preached in Polish on "the Savior in Zaccheus' house."

The parish choir conducted by Jaroslav de Zielinski, perhaps the foremost organist and choral director in the city if not in Michigan, sang Andre's Mass opus 43. Maestro Zielinski used outside help of some of Detroit's better singers

in the special renditions: "Miss Forsyth and Miss Cross sang the 'Laudate Dominum' at the offertory, and Miss Cross sang Rossini's 'O Salutaris' in place of the 'Benedictus.'" The ceremonies ended at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Among the clergy taking part in the dedication, besides Fr. Kolasinski and those already mentioned, were the Capuchin Fathers and Jesuits, Rev. M. Matkowski of Grand Rapids, Rev. John Barzynski CR of Chicago, Rev. Paul Gutowski of Detroit, Rev. Bernard Wermers of Detroit, Rev. Cornelius Sullivan SJ of Detroit, the three Laporte brothers (all priests) from Detroit and Montreal, Rev. A. Swenson (Svensson), Rev. F. Hendrickx of Detroit, Rev. M. Dempsey secretary of Bishop Borgess, four Jesuit scholastics who assisted Fr. Dempsey in his function of master of ceremonies, and other clergy not recorded by the usually observant and personality-conscious reporters.

The press did greet the newly dedicated Church of St. Albertus as "marking the beginning of a new era among the exiled sons of catholic [sic] Poland" - a statement almost prophetic in its import and the events which soon were to rend apart rather than knit more closely together Detroit's Polish community. For the moment, however, the awesome spectacle of the new edifice elicited a somewhat purplish prose of astonishment that so grand a structure could have come from the "denizens" of "The Polack Quarter" or from "Polackville" with its "Polack Church."

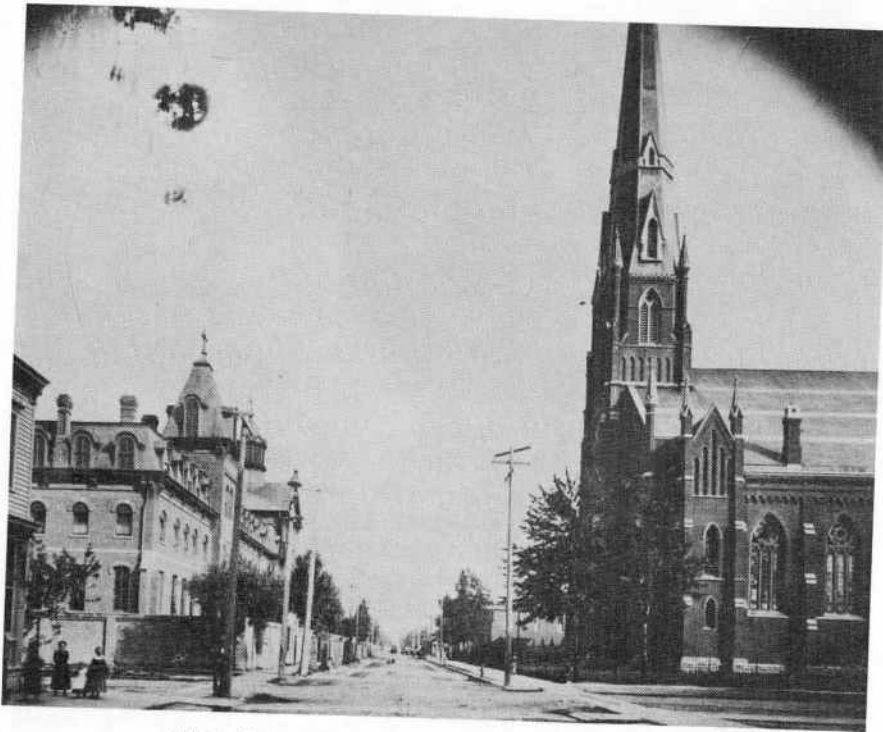
2. PASTOR OF THE FINEST POLISH CHURCH IN AMERICA

Called "the largest church in Michigan" and "the finest Polish Church in America," the new brick St. Albertus Church was described erroneously as "early English Gothic in style." It was Gothic, indeed, but rather in the German-Polish style reminiscent of centuried churches with which the "Prussian Poles" were familiar in Poznan, Bydgoszcz, Kwidzyn, Torun, Grudziadz, and elsewhere; it also awakened memories of similar Gothic brick churches in Tarnow and in some respects particularly Krakow's famous Panna Maria (St. Mary's Church) among "Austrian-Poles" like Fr. Kolasinski and his Galician countrymen. The church architect was Herbert Engelbert, while the builders were the Spitzley Brothers and Patrick Dee.

The new St. Albertus Church rose 200 feet from the ground to the top of the cross on the spire. Its floor stretched 208 feet in length and seventy-five feet in width. The ceiling hovered forty feet above the floor, while the transept climbed to 107 feet. The church had a seating capacity of 2,500, steam heat, and incandescent electric lights "for the first time in a Detroit church." The main altar, rising fifty feet, contained five statues, each six feet high except the central one that of the church's patron, St. Albertus, which was eight feet tall. Four splendid bells installed in 1884 for \$2000 tolled the griefs and pealed the joys of the people.

The Evening News could not restrain its amazement in the presence of this Polish achievement costing over \$80,000 and (according to one journalistic estimate) representing "100,000 days of labor on the part of the individual members of the congregation." Where in November 1883, the same paper had featured a human-interest article on "The Polack Quarter," describing "how its denizens exist and how they multiply" and commenting on "their liberality in maintaining religious institutions," now it spoke less superciliously and

condescendingly of "The New St. Albert's": "The magnitude of the task which the Polish Catholics have accomplished in the erection of the new church becomes evident when the comparative poverty of the members of the congregation is considered. The members are, for the most part, of the poorer class, with low wages and large families."



THE NEW ST. ALBERTUS CHURCH

Among the contributors to the erection and equipment of the new St. Albertus Church was Bishop Borgess, who donated two stained-glass windows located in the stairwell leading from the vestibule to the choirloft. The other panels were donated by parochial societies and wealthier members of the congregation in memory of their families or in fond recollection of their former parish churches and Marian shrines in partitioned Poland.

The red brick Gothic church stands to this day as Fr. Kolasinski's chief positive contribution to St. Albertus Parish. But there were other things he did during his forty-three months as pastor which also deserve notice and testify to his growing influence and leadership not only in the Polish community in Michigan but also in the diocese and in Detroit's burgeoning cultural life. In December, 1882, acting as the official representative of Bishop Borgess, Fr. Kolasinski blessed the new church of St. Mary in Parisville. Wednesday, September 12, 1883, Fr. Kolasinski with a committee of nine other representatives led the Polish Community of Detroit in the 250 anniversary observance of the Battle of Vienna in which the forces of Poland under King

John Sobieski played a decisive role in turning back the Moslem Ottoman threat to central Europe.

The *Detroit News* for several days in advance wrote up the coming event as "the first celebration of the kind that has ever been held in Detroit by the Poles. The parade promises to be the largest and most interesting in a historical sense, ever seen in Detroit, in which a single race has participated." The parade included three bands, parochial and secular organizations, carriages, floats, horsemen, and several thousand marchers from various sections of the city. Fr. Kolasinski celebrated the crowning religious service, a Solemn High Mass, assisted by Fathers Paul Gutowski and Joseph Sieffert, with other priests also in attendance. Most of the estimated 15,000 participants took part in the religious worship by standing or kneeling outside the old frame church in which the Eucharist was celebrated.

Still another aspect of Fr. Kolasinski's outgoing personality and his continuing effort to raise the cultural prestige of the Polish group (as well as his own perhaps) consisted of the ties he established with the Jesuit Detroit College (the forerunner of the University of Detroit). In June 1885, Fr. Kolasinski donated to the college a medal which was presented during the commencement exercises to Charles L. Palms for excellence in elocution. Apparently Fr. Kolasinski intended this to be an annual award, but his subsequent difficulties at St. Albertus Parish nullified the plan. It may also have been his way of encouraging boys from St. Albertus Grade School to pursue higher studies and to attend the Jesuit College, which in the 1880's began enrolling boys of Polish ancestry in its student body.

Within the parish itself, Fr. Kolasinski founded two additional organizations: St. Wojciech Society and St. Joseph Society. The first was started in 1882, while the second was launched three years later. In addition, he obtained special approval from Bishop Borgess for the Rosary Guild in 1882. To what extent Fr. Kolasinski fostered the growth of lay organizations not directly associated with St. Albertus Parish it is not possible to say with any degree of assurance. But it would appear that he did not oppose the formation of local chapters of the Polish National Alliance founded in August 1880 to organize all Poles in the United States without any regard for their political or religious persuasions or lack of them. In effect, the founders of the Alliance (both lay and clerical) revived Rev. Theodore Gieryk's proposal of 1875 (rejected at the Union's Milwaukee convention) and turned it into a viable organization that in time outnumbered the Polish Roman Catholic Union both in membership and in assets.

The first chapter of the Polish National Alliance was formed in Detroit October 13, 1885, shortly before the termination of Fr. Kolasinski's pastorate by the bishop. The group was the twenty-eighth chapter organized since the birth of the Alliance, and it called itself "Sons of Poland." The founders were parishioners of St. Albertus Congregation: F. Melin, S. Jozefiak, P. Leszczynski, and J. Dembinski. The "Sons of Poland" were the first of over twenty Alliance chapters founded in the next two decades in Detroit, which became an Alliance stronghold but never achieved the status of the organization's headquarters. The "Sons of Poland" held their meetings in a building located at the corner of Hastings and Willis Avenues.

Two sources (mistakenly it seems) mention an earlier Alliance Chapter Number 155 as having been established in Detroit October 9, 1883, under the name *Tow. Dramatyczne Hr. Fredry* (The Count Fredro Dramatic Society). The date would also place it within the pastorate of Fr. Kolasinski, while the names of A. Konus, J. Deja, M. Nowicki, A. Brzozowski, J. Piotrowski and L. Olszewski among the fifteen specified founders indicate a marked St. Albertus influence (if not origin) in the formation of this unit. The doubt which attaches to the founding year of this chapter (1883) derives from the chapter's number (155). As new chapters of the Alliance were organized, each was given its sequential number and subsequently listed in a chronological order in the first history of the Alliance. The Fredro Dramatic Society is listed in the numeral group that came into existence in 1890.

The sacramental record of Fr. Kolasinski's pastorate presents some impressive statistics. His incomplete annual reports would indicate about 900 baptisms, over 200 marriages, and nearly 1,000 funerals. Another source, not yet fully identified but seemingly drawing upon the parochial registers would credit his administration with over 2,000 baptisms and more than 450 marriages from 1882 through 1885. The highest yearly total of baptisms was 662 (for 1885), while the largest number of marriages — 123 — was solemnized in 1882. In April of that same year Bishop Borgess confirmed 328 individuals (of whom 231 were adults) — the largest confirmation sum for any parish in the diocese during that year.

The number of families reported in the parish did not rise significantly till 1885 when it exceeded 1000; before then, the highest total was 850 in 1883. School enrollment kept rising steadily though not spectacularly from 474 in 1882 to 570 in 1884 and an estimated 600 the next year. The number of teaching sisters increased from five to eight. At least four young ladies of the parish entered the Felician Sisterhood.

Fr. Kolasinski's annual parish revenues from pew rent and collections, in spite of his ambitious building program, were modest. They reflected no unusual increases, running between \$4,758.28 in 1882 to \$6,040.86 in 1884; no figures are available for 1885. Fr. Kolasinski paid off all parish debts by 1884, but in 1885 he left the parish with an indebtedness of \$67,000 (the highest in its history to that time), resulting from his failure to stay within the \$25,000 debt limit laid down by Bishop Borgess for the construction of the new church.

Whether it was this parochial unsolvency (which seemed astronomical to the economy minded trustees and certain members of the parish) or whether it was Fr. Kolasinski's personal peccability (which appeared morally monstrous to certain parishioners, the Sisters, and some priests) that set off a smoldering fuse of resentment against him toward the end of 1885, it is difficult to say even at this late date. Perhaps both factors exerted an influence on the eruption. Contemporaries found it difficult, if not impossible, to appraise Fr. Kolasinski with sobriety of judgment, leaving his future biographers a historical pottage of allegations, facts, and conflicting estimates.

The first evidences of restiveness with Fr. Kolasinski in St. Albertus Parish appeared before the church-building grievance petition filed against him with Bishop Borgess in February 1883. About mid-1882 rumors started circulating in the parish about the pastor's alleged carnal adventurism. The matter came to the

attention of Bishop Borgess who, at first inclined to dismiss the hearsay charges as vindictive slander, decided, after consultation with priests whose judgment he valued, upon a thorough investigation into Fr. Kolasinski's Galician background as well as his Detroit activities. After a two-year accumulation of records, statements, and affidavits, the bishop found himself with a file of data that presented an unflattering moral profile of Fr. Kolasinski — a record of moral turpitude which began in Galicia and continued in Detroit.

At the same time, complaints against Fr. Kolasinski's management of parochial affairs grew in volume and variety. Excessive fees for funerals and marriages (thirty to one hundred dollars), exorbitant demands for tithes (one day's income out of every thirty working days), careless supervision and control of collections resulting in petty thievery, irregular and slipshod-bookkeeping, highhanded procedures in dealing with parishioners as well as arbitrary decisions about the management of church income and the maintenance of parish premises, particularly his involvement of the congregation in a \$60,000 instead of a \$25,000 debt and his determination to entangle the parish in still greater debt by contemplating the construction of a new brick school and parsonage — these were some of the grievances voiced against Fr. Kolasinski's pastoral management by parishioners who insisted that their views be heard and heeded in parochial decision-making.

3. KOLASINSKI THE CRISIS-MAKER

These complaints laid the groundwork for the Kolasinski Crisis which precipitated the saddest time of trouble in the hundred-year history of St. Albertus Parish. After simmering for several months, the accumulation of grievances reached the boiling point in November 1885, when Bishop Borgess asked Fr. Kolasinski to submit the parish's financial books to examination and audit by the chancery. Upon Fr. Kolasinski's three-fold refusal to comply with the request, the bishop suspended his pastoral and priestly functions Saturday November 28, 1885, and requested his departure from the diocese. Two days later, Rev. Joseph Dabrowski was appointed temporary pastor of the parish.

Fr. Kolasinski's suspension, followed by Fr. Dabrowski's appointment to the pastoral post of St. Albertus Church, precipitated the initial, and perhaps the most explosive, of the four phases that comprise the Kolasinski Crisis. This disaster, continued to seethe with unpredictable, irregular, occasionally volcanic eruptions for over eight years before it simmered down during its last four years. Fr. Kolasinski's sacerdotal independentism (which some preferred to call disobedience), lay trustee claims to decision-making in matter of parochial property and personnel, Polish partitional and regional differences and enmities encouraged by the Prussian, Austrian and Russian governments, the example of contemporary or recent ecclesiastical and sacerdotal troubles in other Catholic parishes of the diocese, and the sensationalistic yellow journalism of Detroit's newspapers — all combined to produce the most serious Polish disorders in the history of Detroit, replete with church disturbances and cathedral sit-ins, riots and street fights, an accidental homicide and injury, arrests of men and women, payment of fines and imprisonment, destruction of convent property, private and public personal vituperation, calling in of city police and state militia, civil

court cases for eviction and slander, the closing of the St. Albertus Church and School, the formation of bitter parochial factions of Kolasinskiites and Dabrowskiites, the imposition of episcopal censures of interdict and excommunication upon the violators of church and convent premises and priestly persons, the forcible retention of church and rectory premises from duly appointed pastors, and finally the construction of two successive Polish Churches independent of the jurisdiction of the bishop.

In its closing years, however, the Kolasinski Crisis did conclude with a happy ending. Fr. Kolasinski took the initiative in making his peace with the new bishop of the diocese, John S. Foley, publicly admitted the error of his ways, and returned with his congregation to the jurisdiction of Bishop of the Detroit Diocese.

The Kolasinski Crisis followed a pattern of four phases before its final reconciliatory resolution. Each aspect affected St. Albertus Parish to a different degree, and will be discussed in connection with the pastoral administration of the priest (or priests) most affected by it. Here, at least the major outlines of the crisis might be sketched for future orientation and as a supplemental rounding out of Fr. Kolasinski's profile at this canonically terminal point of his pastorate at St. Albertus Parish.

The first, explosive, stage of the Kolasinski Crisis lasted from November 28, 1885, when Fr. Kolasinski was suspended and dismissed from the pastorate, until April 5, 1886, when he finally left the diocese in obedience to a civil court decision ordering him to vacate the rectory. The second, absentee but also violent, phase extended from April 6, 1886, to December 7, 1888, when Fr. Kolasinski pastored a rural Polish parish in the Dakota Territory (present North Dakota) while some of his militant supporters in Detroit sought to hold or regain St. Albertus Parish for him. The third, disjunctive (or as some prefer to designate it, schismatic) period stretched from December 8, 1888, to February 17, 1894, when Fr. Kolasinski returned to Detroit without the bishop's authorization and, on his own authority, erected two successive Polish churches not subject to local episcopal control and formed one of the largest Polish congregations in Detroit if not in Michigan. The last, reconciliatory, aspect covered the period from February 18, 1894, when Fr. Kolasinski recanted his misconduct and returned with his congregation to the jurisdiction of the Detroit Bishop, and remained in union with the Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Detroit till his death April 11, 1898.

Probably no pastor of St. Albertus Parish has tantalized friend and foe, in life and death, as much as Rev. Dominic Kolasinski has done. Few, if any, persons were able to speak of him with calmness and moderation of judgement. The events of his spectacular career, the authenticity of the statements attributed to him by the English-language press (to whose representatives, at least in the first phase of the crisis, he always spoke through interpreters, as his knowledge of modern languages then was limited to Polish and German) and, most of all, the inner motive that spurred him on to deeds of daring and dissention — all these remain, as they have been for decades, matters of controversy.

Fr. Kolasinski seems to have used two faces (or at least left such an impression) in his dealings with people: one to attract and charm his friends and

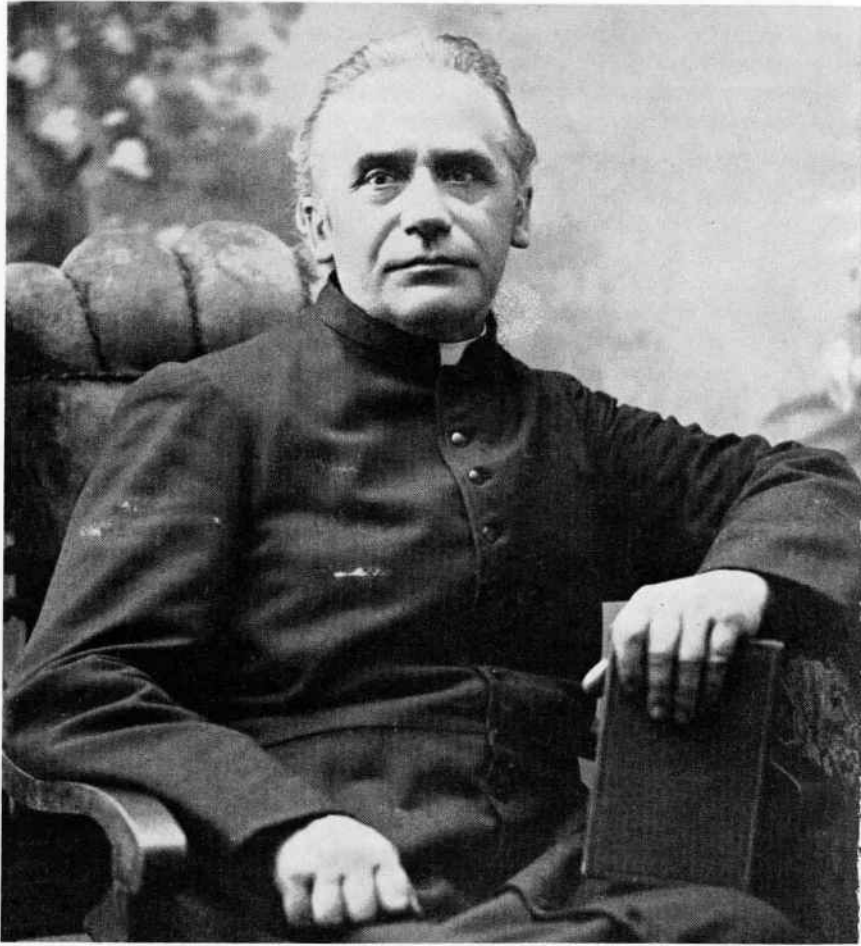
followers, another to repel and affront enemies and opponents. To some sincere, knowledgeable and saintly priests and nuns Fr. Kolasinski was an unconscionable priestly knave, using his holy vocation for his own appetites and aggrandizement. They, as well as some lay Catholics, regarded him as an impure and sacrilegious man, a contumacious priest, a public heretic and schismatic, a thief and a liar — in short, an ecclesiastical villain who flagrantly disregarded the laws of the church and incited others to do the same.

To his many devoted and loyal followers, most of them recent immigrants from partitioned Poland (and Austrian Galicia in particular), Fr. Kolasinski was a shining sacerdotal knight, a lover of Polish religious tradition and political freedom, a man of vision with plans to make the Poles of America a meaningful segment of the city's and the country's population, a beaming and prestigious friend of helpless and exploited Polish immigrants in whom he awakened a sense of personal dignity and worth and whom he encouraged to fight for their rights rather than to plead for servile favors. They believed unquestioningly his every denial of the charges raised against him and concluded, either on the basis of his explanations or perhaps at his own suggestion, that he was the unhappy victim of German episcopal despotism, especially when he claimed to have been condemned without due process. He was called December 17, 1885, for a preliminary examination, at which he declared himself not guilty. Two days later, he refused to submit a written request for an investigation of the charges against him, unless he were first reinstated for three months. In the light of the serious nature of the complaints, the bishop found the condition unacceptable. As a matter of fact, Fr. Kolasinski's presentation of his due process complaint both to the press and to the congregation was less than candid or comprehensive.

In closing, however, this much may be said about Fr. Kolasinski without favor or rancor, and without renewing the fray over his character. He split the congregation in two, creating a bitter factionalism that lasted for decades, even among friends and relatives, slowing the course of Polish progress in Detroit. He also left his name in American Catholic history as an early forerunner of Polish American trusteeism and religious independentism that in time resulted in the rise of the Polish National Catholic Church in the United States. Yet in Detroit itself, strangely enough, he did not contribute to the rise of a permanently schismatic church nor even to any movement of disenchanting Polish Catholics to join an existing American or form a new Polish Protestant congregation of their own, in spite of some Protestant proselytizing among the Poles during the first phase of the Kolasinski Crisis.

But perhaps the most significant thing to be said about Fr. Kolasinski, and the one action of his life for which he would choose to be most remembered, is this: he made his peace with the bishop at an age when he was still able to devote several years of priestly service to the church of his fathers before he died. May his soul rest in peace — the peace he denied himself (or failed to find) during his adventuresome priesthood.

4. A PRIEST WITH NO CLAIM TO PERSONAL ATTRACTIVEIONS



REV. JOSEPH DABROWSKI

Rev. Joseph Dabrowski (also sometimes spelled Dombrowski), the sixth pastor of St. Albertus Parish, differed from Fr. Kolasinski in several respects. The first was younger in age and ordination seniority (which may partly explain Fr. Kolasinski's attitude of superiority toward him). Fr. Dabrowski came from Russian-Poland and was ordained in Rome, while Fr. Kolasinski was born in Austrian-Poland and priested in Krakow. Fr. Dabrowski arrived in America twelve years before Fr. Kolasinski, coming first to Wisconsin while the latter settled in Michigan. Fr. Dabrowski, however, followed Fr. Kolasinski as pastor of St. Albertus congregation and stayed there sixteen months to Fr. Kolasinski's forty-three.

More significant were the attitudinal differences between the two priests. Where Fr. Kolasinski was outgoing, showy and individualistic, Fr. Dabrowski was retiring, plain, and group-minded. Fr. Kolasinski welcomed newspaper reporters and talked volubly (even though he used an interpreter), presenting his case with wit and charm that won him sympathy and journalistic exposure. Fr. Dabrowski spoke with journalists reluctantly and hesitantly without the use of an interpreter, but only after he had made sure of his facts and in order to correct some erroneous report that was harmful not so much to himself as to the institution or community with which he was associated. Fr. Kolasinski was always careful about his grooming and anxious to appear the polished gentleman, while Fr. Dabrowski preferred simplicity and plainness in dress as well as in speech.

To one reporter of *The Evening News* in December 1885, Fr. Dabrowski appeared as a man who "lays no claim to personal attractions. He is an older man than the late pastor [This is an error on the reporter's part; Fr. Dabrowski may have looked older but he was in fact younger than Fr. Kolasinski.], dresses ordinarily in black clothes, and on the street wears a black fur cap pulled down on the left side of his head. His Roman collar is the only mark to distinguish that he is a priest. He has a full dark-complexioned face and expressionless black eyes."

Joseph Dabrowski was born January 27, 1842, in a village about forty miles from the city of Lublin in Russian-Poland, the first of five children of Joseph and Caroline (Borucka) Dabrowski. From the Lublin high school he went to the University of Warsaw, where he interrupted his studies to fight in the January Rising of 1863. Then, like other refugee partisans, he went abroad. When the Pontifical Polish College was opened in Rome in 1866, he was among the first six students admitted to the new seminary. Upon completion of his philosophical and theological studies at the Gregorian University, he was ordained in Rome August 8, 1869, as a diocesan priest for missionary work in America.

Fr. Dabrowski came to the United States in December 1869 to minister to Polish Catholics in Wisconsin's Green Bay Diocese. During eleven years as a parish priest, he built two churches, a mission chapel, a parochial school, a convent with an orphanage, and a rectory; most importantly, however, his insistence brought the first Felician Sisters from Austrian-Poland to the United States in 1874 to staff the parochial school in Polonia, Wis. From the moment of their arrival, he became the Sisters' spiritual advisor and chief guide in their expansion to various states in which Poles were settled.

In 1882 Fr. Dabrowski, agreeing with Rev. John Wollowski's proposal, helped relocate the Felician headquarters in Detroit. In August of the same year, Bishop Borgess received him as a permanent member of the priestly group in the Diocese of Detroit, where Fr. Dabrowski spent the remaining two decades of his life, working with the Felicians, founding the Polish Seminary for priests, and temporarily serving as pastor of St. Albertus Parish.

Fr. Dabrowski began his priestly labors in Detroit as chaplain and director of the Felician Motherhouse located across the street from St. Albertus Church, and comprising a novitiate, an orphanage, an academy for girls, and a teacher-training institute. The last two were incorporated in 1882 as the

"Seminary of the Felician Sisters," with the academy being the first Polish high school established in Detroit.

To this "first American school for daughters of the Polish immigrants," Fr. Dabrowski, at the insistence and with the assistance of Rev. Leopold Moczygemba, a Conventual Franciscan, added the first American secondary school for sons of Polish immigrants, built with the approval of Bishop Borgess between March 1884 and December 1886. The school, popularly known as the Polish Seminary, was located on St. Aubin Avenue one block north of the Felician Motherhouse and St. Albertus Church. During the cornerstone blessing of the new seminary on Wednesday July 22, 1885 – eighteen days after the impressive dedication of Fr. Kolasinski's magnificent new St. Albertus Church – Fr. Dabrowski said in an interview to a reporter: ". . . Heretofore, we have been obliged to procure Polish priests from Europe, but they cannot speak English and cannot do what a native American might . . ." And he concluded his remarks with these pointed words: "I deem the erection of this seminary more necessary than the building of expensive churches."

Without realizing it at the time, Fr. Dabrowski was referring to a church which would unexpectedly be committed to his pastoral charge four months later. On November 30, 1885, Bishop Borgess, after having earlier suspended Fr. Kolasinski, appointed Fr. Dabrowski temporary pastor of St. Albertus Church, partly because the nagging depression of 1884 had slowed down the construction of the new seminary and partly because the chancery's confrontation with Fr. Kolasinski had reached an impasse. Fr. Dabrowski was also given a temporary assistant in Rev. Anthony Jaworski CSSP, and told to assume his post the same day (Monday).

Fr. Dabrowski's temporary pastoral tenure at St. Albertus Parish lasted nearly sixteen months – perhaps the most troubled in the congregation's history – ending March 19, 1887, when Rev. Vincent Bronikowski succeeded him. During this time, Fr. Dabrowski personally encountered two riotous disturbances in the church which incurred the interdiction or closing of the church for all but the first five days of his pastorate, so that Fr. Dabrowski as pastor was able to offer Mass only once in the new St. Albertus Church. And for nearly the last eight months of his pastorate, an unspecified number of members of the St. Albertus congregation was "excommunicated from the pale of the Holy Roman Catholic Church." In addition, from early May to early September 1886, Fr. Dabrowski was absent from the troubled and torn parish on a trip to Europe in search of Polish priests for the Diocese and for the Seminary.

The first four months of Fr. Dabrowski's pastorate, which coincided with the first, explosive, phase of the Kolasinski Crisis, were the most difficult for the forty-four year old priest. His suspended predecessor challenged the authority of Bishop Borgess and refused to vacate the parsonage. Claiming that the charges against him were false and slanderous as well as a vindictive tissue of lies concocted by his enemies, and protesting that he had been tried summarily without due process and dismissed uncanonically, Fr. Kolasinski hired lawyer John B. Corliss, first to plead his case before the bishop and then to defend him in a civil suit started by the parish trustees to secure his eviction from the premises of St. Albertus rectory.

In the meantime, on Tuesday December 1, 1885, when Frs. Dabrowski and

Jaworski attempted to celebrate the six and seven o'clock morning Masses in St. Albertus Church, they were prevented from performing the ceremonies by a group of men and women who hooted and hustled them out of the church and then locked its doors. About three hours later, a twenty-minute hand-fight broke out when the police charged forward to disperse the crowd of men and women standing in front of the church. There was no bloodshed, but five persons were arrested for disturbing the peace. This was the first "Polish Riot" reported by the Detroit newspapers.

Next day, Wednesday December 2, Frs. Dabrowski and Jaworski, assisted by six patrolmen, again tried to celebrate morning Mass in St. Albertus Church. In spite of initial attempts by some men and women to prevent the priests' entrance and subsequent occasional interruptions during the Masses, both priests succeeded in offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Fr. Jaworski was the first celebrant at six-thirty.

At seven-thirty, Fr. Dabrowski began the second Mass. He was greeted "with a terrific yell" from people who filled the front part of the church and "gave full vent to their feelings. Several rushes were made by the excited crowd to get up to the altar, but this was prevented by policemen who had been stationed at the ends of the aisles. A number then jumped over the seats, and soon an excited crowd was leaning over the communion rail, yelling and brandishing fists."

At eight o'clock the Mass was over (the only Mass celebrated by Fr. Dabrowski in St. Albertus Church as pastor). The two priests were escorted through the church and across St. Aubin Avenue by a cordon of about thirty policemen. During the procession, the marchers (including the priests) were pelted with mud. Outside the church, after the priests had reached the safety of the Felician Motherhouse, another confrontation occurred between the police and the assembled men and women, as the blue-coats enforced the order to disperse the crowd in front of the church. Again there was no bloodshed, but five women and three men were arrested for disturbing the peace. This was the second "Polish Riot" featured by the local press.

After this, Fr. Dabrowski made no more attempts to celebrate Mass in St. Albertus Church. On Friday December 4, 1885, Bishop Borgess issued an official decree of interdiction read in all the Catholic Churches of the city, closing St. Albertus Church to all religious functions on account of the scandalous conduct of the congregation in disturbing religious services in the church and nearly precipitating bloodshed in front of the edifice. Though not stipulating any specific interval, the interdict was actually to remain in effect for about nineteen months – for the remainder of Fr. Dabrowski's pastorate and even beyond it, not so much because the bishop would not revoke the interdict but because the Kolasinskiites refused to open the church for use by duly appointed successors of Fr. Kolasinski.

The interdict cut like a sword through St. Albertus congregation, separating the supporters of the suspended Fr. Kolasinski from the rest of the parishioners, particularly the followers of Fr. Dabrowski. Conflicting reports as to the number of people in the respective factions were circulated. Fr. Kolasinski claimed that the majority of the parishioners adhered to him. Fr. Dabrowski could offer no estimate, since he had not had any opportunity to present his case to the congregation; he simply had to rely on the good will of the people to accept him

as their pastor and to come to him for religious ministrations.

But whatever were the numbers of the embattled factions, the episcopal interdict imposed a severe ecclesiastical penalty and hardship (as well as public dishonor) upon the entire St. Albertus Congregation — the rebellious and the peaceful, the disobedient and the docile — by indiscriminately closing the magnificent new church to all, because of the desecration that had occurred within its walls. More importantly, however, the interdict left unresolved a question that has intrigued historians of Polish American Catholicism, and of St. Albertus Parish in particular: Why was a priest of Fr. Dabrowski's character and accomplishments so bitterly resented and rejected by so many members of St. Albertus congregation at the outset of his pastorate?

The earlier discussion of the Kolasinski Crisis suggested several summary answers. But the present query calls for a closer scrutiny, especially since Polish Catholics then (as now) were known for their devotion to and respect for the clergy. Priests and bishops, friars and monks, had advanced not only the religious and social but also the cultural, scholarly and even political development of the nation. There was hardly an area of Polish achievement which did not include a priestly name. Fr. Dabrowski was becoming such a priestly religio-culture builder in Detroit, destined in time to be the only priest whose biography appears both in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and its Polish equivalent *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. And yet, he, not Fr. Kolasinski, who represented a different type of Polish priest, fell prey to the tragic events that rent and (but for Fr. Dabrowski) almost wrecked St. Albertus Parish.

5. THE REASONS WHY

Sifted and weighted judiciously, contemporary comments, often conflicting and tantalizingly incomplete or inconclusive, would point to several factors behind the antipathy encountered by Fr. Dabrowski at St. Albertus Parish. Malicious rumormongering was certainly one negative influence. Gossip misidentified Fr. Joseph Dabrowski with the earlier Fr. Alphone Dombrowski OSF of unhappy and unsavory memory. Hearsay charged Fr. Dabrowski with the usurpation of St. Albertus Parish "the largest Polish Church in America," for the financial benefit of the Polish Seminary and the Felician Convent. Other imputations placed the responsibility for the interdict upon Fr. Dabrowski who was represented as a willing tool of a German anti-Polish bishop.

In a personal visit to *The Detroit Free Press* in December 1885, Fr. Dabrowski emphatically denied all allegations. He said: "I have never approached the Bishop or any member of the congregation relative to taking possession of St. Albert's Parish . . . Catholics do not like ex-monks . . . I never was one . . . I am the Director of the Sisters, who have their trustees as the church has its trustees . . . I could not place the debts of the Sisters upon the congregation . . . My position is critical in restoring peace, because I have never had the opportunity to address the people. I have never ascended the pulpit of St. Albert's, and the people only know what they have been told by Fr. Kolasinski." And about 6,000 communicants (in Fr. Kolasinski's own estimation) accepted his every word as gospel truth and helped carry it through the parish community.

Yellow journalism with its search for the sensational also contributed to the initial sentiment against Fr. Dabrowski in certain Polish quarters. Though on occasion his rejoinders and views were duly reported, this was not enough to offset the more frequent publication of rumors and gossip reflecting on his integrity and personality. In fact for the past half decade or so, the Detroit secular newspapers seemed to delight in reporting troubles and rumors of troubles about difficulties in Catholic parishes or involving Catholic priests of various nationalities. Some of these prior Catholic embroglios featured the trouble at Holy Trinity in September 1883 over a disputed \$24,000. In August 1885, Rev. Patrick Duhig made news when he was exonerated of charges of immorality and intemperance by a special ecclesiastical commission appointed by Bishop Borgess. In October 1885, Rev. M. Dangelzer CSSp, the Belgian pastor of the French-Canadian St. Joachim Church, was assaulted by four men and subsequently reported in the press as seeking refuge at "St. Albert Polish Church."

Perhaps more reprehensible in this yellow journalism was the reporters' attitude toward the Polish situation and the Polish community as a whole. Apparently with only one exception (and even this contains a doubtful aspect), none of the reporters understood Polish but had to depend upon the testimony of doubtfully reliable interpreters. More frequently, the press chose the sensational headline and inflammatory rhetoric in describing "The Polish War," "The Polish Riots" and "Polish Troubles," with references to "Polack-town violence," "Poletown uproars," "Polackville" and "A Howling Mob." They further tantalized and whetted the interest of readers with anticipatory headlines — "Rioters Not Yet Done," "The Riot Still On," "Riots All Day," "Blood May Be Shed," and "Massing the Police."

With the exception of *The Michigan Catholic*, the Detroit newspapers did not hesitate to sensationalize the affair, even to the extent of expressing headline regrets — "No More Polish Riot Today." *The Detroit Free Press* chided Bishop Borgess, instead of its own negligent reporters, when they submitted unverified speculation as fact for publication. The same daily even boasted that the "publication exclusively in THE DETROIT FREE PRESS of the displacement of Rev. Father Kolasinski added to the excitement" at St. Albertus. The daily further titillated its readers with the expectation "Blood May Be Shed" continuing (it seems) to make a gory spectacle out of the tragedy. As a result, Bishop Borgess subsequently cancelled his subscription to the paper, and in April 1887 wrote the editor of *The Evening News* a note of complaint "against an item in the FREE PRESS" . . . headed St. Albert's Again" which is well calculated to provoke another Polish riot . . ."

On the other hand, the press kept receiving occasional unsolicited assistance in the form of headline news from some Polish Detroiters themselves — news which did not enhance Fr. Dabrowski's popularity. This was the Friday December 25, 1885, Massless Christmas (as the Poles preferred to remember it) or the Bloody Polish Christmas Riot (as the combined newspaper reports described it).

About eight o'clock in the morning, after learning that they would be unable to attend Christmas Mass either at the Felician Convent or at St. Joseph's German Church, about 1,000 well-dressed Polish Catholics marched in an orderly manner to Bishop Borgess' residence on Washington Avenue for special

permission to have Mass celebrated for them in St. Albertus Church. The men and women "shivering in the streets with their church closed and with the frown of their bishop upon them," arrived at the episcopal residence before nine o'clock and sent a seven-man delegation inside to confer with the bishop. Anxious not to be late for the Pontifical Mass he was scheduled soon to celebrate at St. Joseph's Church and also (as he subsequently admitted) fearful of a possibly unpleasant confrontation with the Poles, the bishop left his residence by a back door without seeing the Polish delegation and drove away in his carriage down the alley.

The delegation lingered for about an hour in the cold air, and then, about ten o'clock left the episcopal residence and marched back to the neighborhood of the closed St. Albertus Church. Along the way, they came to St. Joseph Church where the Bishop was celebrating Mass and some of the marchers "made a movement to enter the church. At this the St. Joseph Society interposed and told the unfortunate Poles to go to their own church."

As the crowd of disappointed and aggrieved Poles marched down St. Aubin Avenue, it passed by the brick hardware store of John Lemke, at Number 823, a few doors south of the St. Albertus Church. When someone started a fusillade of small missiles against the store, a state of siege ensued. As the day wore on toward evening, all the windows in the building were broken. Suddenly, after a warning, a fatal shot came from the premises, killing John Lewicki, a twenty-four year member of St. Albertus Parish. When the police arrived and dispersed the crowd, they arrested nine occupants of the store on the charge of homicide. This was the third and bloodiest "Polish Riot" of Fr. Dabrowski's pastorate.

But it was not the last. The killing of Lewicki whose death widowed a recently married wife who had just lost her first child, inflamed "the excited Polacks." Next day (Saturday), an estimated crowd of 2000 "gathered around St. Albert's Church" and made another foray toward the Lemke store. While not inflicting any additional damage on the building, the crowd pelted with stones not only John Wagner, chairman of the church committee who had started the civil court suit for Fr. Kolasinski's eviction, but also Col. Sylvester Larned who had come as a defense lawyer hired to represent Basil Lemke. Instead, the crowd marched to the corner of Hastings and Ontario Streets where it stoned the grocery and saloon of Thomas Zoltowski. Six men were arrested by the police for disturbance of peace. This was the fourth "Polish Riot" during Fr. Dabrowski's short pastorate, and like its predecessor not directly connected with St. Albertus Church.

Yet both these disturbances heightened rather than diminished Fr. Dabrowski's unpopularity among the majority that still adhered to Fr. Kolasinski. Both the Lemke and Zoltowski families were known as supporters of the Felician Sisters, the Polish Seminary then under construction and, of course, of Fr. Dabrowski. Zoltowski and Wagner were also reputed to be determined opponents of Fr. Kolasinski, with Zoltowski being regarded as the priest's chief accuser. But perhaps the two grievances held against Fr. Dabrowski at this time (both publicized in the press) were his denial of a burial certificate to John Lewicki (whose funeral was conducted by the German Capuchin Fathers) and his cancellation of the last two Christmas Day Masses at the Felician Convent, to

avoid repetition of earlier unpleasantness experienced at the Shepherds' Midnight Mass and the first Mass on Christmas Day. And last, the opposition neither forgot nor forgave Fr. Dabrowski's failure to intercede with Bishop Borgess for permission to celebrate the Christmas Day Mass in St. Albertus Church.

A third factor contributing to the initial antipathy against Fr. Dabrowski at St. Albertus Parish was the pronounced undercurrent of trusteeism in the parish. This American version of European patronage rights existed in the parish almost from the beginning, but it manifested itself in varying degrees of intensity. Some pastors encouraged it; others tolerated it; still others used and manipulated it to suit their aims. From his dealings with the bishop in Felician and Seminary affairs, Fr. Dabrowski came to be known as a "Bishop's man" rather than a "People's Man." If the bishop opposed trusteeism, Fr. Dabrowski would support the bishop rather than the trustees, all the more so since his appointment was a temporary one — so popular sentiment held.

Trusteeism proposed two parochial goals for lay control (or at least participation in decision-making): property and personnel. There was a group in St. Albertus Parish that believed it should not merely be informed but rather consulted in the dismissal and appointment of pastors. Fr. Kolasinski claimed triumphantly that "over 4,500 members of my congregation" signed a protest to the bishop against his displacement by Fr. Dabrowski.

These protestors presumably objected to Fr. Dabrowski's appointment because they had not been consulted about it nor even asked to approve it either of which they seemed to consider a requisite condition. But perhaps their greatest reservation about Fr. Dabrowski was that he would, as a matter of principle, do the bidding not of the congregation but of the bishop in any eventual controversy between the parish and the chancery.

The fourth and perhaps the most intangible yet most subtly influential force behind the enmity which at first greeted Fr. Dabrowski at St. Albertus Parish was partitional prejudice. Imported to Detroit from the three Polands — Prussian, Austrian, and Russian — it comprised a combination of attitudes and prejudices generated by the partitioning governments to keep the Poles disunited in sentiment as well as in area and allegiance. These conflicting partitional attitudes surfaced strongly in the opening phase of the Kolasinski Crisis, although some evidence of it appeared earlier.

The Prussian-Poles who founded St. Albertus Parish and regarded themselves as its trustees looked upon the later Austrian-Poles as novices who would have to prove their fitness for participation in parish management. On the other hand, the Austrian or Galician Poles considered themselves more authentically Polish and democratic in spirit, regarding the Prussian-Poles as more or less Teutonized Slavs dominated more by authoritarian than libertarian views. The more established well-to-do and progressively Americanized Prussian-Poles, on their part, viewed the Galician-Poles as backward, poverty-stricken peasants still practicing customs of an outworn peonage like kissing the pastor's hand or his cassock — a practice the Prussian-Poles not only regarded as slavish but also considered "a sign of the most abject subjection" in parishioners who performed it and "repulsive" in pastors who accepted such servility.

Fr. Kolasinski enjoyed the full support of the Austrian-Poles but was unable to win qualified backing from the Prussian-Poles who were the first to oppose his grandiose schemes. As a Russian-Pole, Fr. Dabrowski did not fit into either of these two factions. In a sense, he was caught between the two groups. The Prussian-Poles who had reservations about Fr. Kolasinski tended to gravitate toward Fr. Dabrowski, although they viewed his position about trusteeship with concern while at the same time entertaining no fears about his possible mismanagement or dissipation of parochial property. The Galician Poles, on the other hand, who were more disposed to give the pastor a free hand in financial matters, trusting in his superior knowledge and judgment, naturally sided with their countryman, Fr. Kolasinski, rather than with Fr. Dabrowski whom they regarded with disdain as a temporary pliable tool of the bishop against their beloved pastor. How many members of the St. Albertus congregation came from Russian-Poland at the time, it is not possible to say. At best, they were few in number and exerted little if any influence in the parish.

The last, though persistent and by no means least source of antipathy encountered by Fr. Dabrowski at St. Albertus Parish, was Fr. Kolasinski himself. In his December 4, 1885, statement to the *Free Press*, Fr. Dabrowski attributed all his initial difficulties and trials at St. Albertus to Fr. Kolasinski: "... if it had not been for Fr. Kolasinski's harangue before the large meeting Sunday afternoon, the trouble would not have come. All this trouble rests on the shoulders of Fr. Kolasinski . . . It is also true that Fr. Kolasinski has always been the enemy of the Sisters." To them, as well as to Fr. Dabrowski, Fr. Kolasinski was an evil spirit roaming through St. Albertus Parish to stir up recurrent trouble and dissention.

Fr. Kolasinski, in turn, blamed his troubles on the Sisters and Fr. Dabrowski. In his December 2, 1885, *Free Press* statement, Fr. Kolasinski said, "... the Franciscan Sisters . . . have bought a square of land near here and they have paid but little on the large investment. Fr. Dombrowski, an ex-Franciscan, is located at the convent, and he is ambitious. He realizes that I am pastor of the largest Polish congregation in America and he imagines that if he can get possession of the parish, he will thus find an easy way to not only lift the entire debt from the shoulders of the Franciscan Sisters, but throw the entire support of the cloister upon the parish. That's all there is to it."

But Fr. Kolasinski's deeper feelings about Fr. Dabrowski and the Felicians sprang from other sources than personal rivalry or dislike. By his acceptance of the bishop's appointment to the pastorate of St. Albertus, Fr. Dabrowski stirred up in Fr. Kolasinski's memory bitter thoughts of a former humiliating encounter with the episcopal tribunal of Krakow for turpitude. Had Fr. Dabrowski not obeyed the bishop, perhaps the present confrontation might not have occurred; the bishop might have backed down or negotiated. But Fr. Dabrowski had chosen to obey episcopal authority, and thereby associated himself with Fr. Kolasinski's old enemy. As such, he must be prevented at all cost from occupying the beautiful church Fr. Kolasinski had built in part to prove church authority wrong in its judgement about him.

Yet this enmity, fed by such varied springs of venom, failed to break Fr. Dabrowski's spirit. After St. Albertus Church had been closed to public worship December 4, 1885, two days later, on Sunday, Fr. Dabrowski said his first Mass for his loyal fragment of parishioners — "a small number of people" — in the chapel of the Felician Convent across the street from the interdicted new church. Henceforth, the chapel would serve as the temporary St. Albertus Church all through Fr. Dabrowski's pastorate. Since its seating capacity was limited to ninety-two pews and about 550 persons, "many" parishioners who did not adhere to the rebellious Fr. Kolasinski were reported as attending Mass "in the neighboring German churches in some of which prayers were offered for the speedy restoration of peace in St. Albert's."

In the ensuing months Fr. Dabrowski gradually won more followers to his side, particularly as he took steps to accommodate them and their children in the Felician Convent quarters even though this necessitated the enlargement of the motherhouse in the spring. Fr. Dabrowski now conducted not only a temporary church but also a temporary school for St. Albertus Parish.

Another serious concern to which Fr. Dabrowski turned his attention was Protestant proselytizing among the Polish Catholics of the divided St. Albertus Parish. An editorial in *The Michigan Catholic* for January 2, 1886, called attention to the problem: "... since the commencement of the trouble at St. Albert Church the managers of a conventicle which has been set up in the midst of the Polish population, have been making strenuous efforts to pervert Polish children. Under the cloak of charity the women connected with this conventicle enter the homes of the poor people, give them little gifts of clothing and food, or procure rough work for the women and invite them to the preaching house . . . Some of the Polish women have attended the religious meetings at this conventicle and have sent their children to it . . . This work is the outcome of a plan developed some months ago to protestantize the Poles in Detroit. It is similar to the method adopted by the 'soupers' in Ireland . . . The souper system cannot succeed with the Poles."

And it did not, particularly as Fr. Dabrowski's efforts to foster peace and promote unity among the dissentient factions began to produce greater results after Fr. Kolasinski's departure from Detroit April 5, 1886, following the earlier decision of the civil court against him. Fr. Kolasinski finally capitulated to Bishop Borgess' order of dismissal issued originally November 28, 1885. But before leaving, with the promise of not returning to Detroit, Fr. Kolasinski extracted a final concession from the bishop. On April 9, 1886, Bishop Borgess in compliance with suggestions made by Archbishop William Elder of Cincinnati, presented Fr. Kolasinski with a clear exeat or recommendation: the priest agreed to leave the diocese permanently and in exchange was cleared of all ecclesiastical censures and suspension in particular. This enabled him to obtain a Polish pastoral assignment in Minto, North Dakota. With his departure, some of his strongest supporters among the officers of St. Joseph Society (which had been his mainstay) joined Fr. Dabrowski's group.

At this time, Fr. Dabrowski also turned his attention to the stalled Polish Seminary project. He not only resumed work on its construction but also toward

the end of May absented himself from St. Albertus Parish for nearly four months. He sailed to Rome and to Krakow to recruit Polish priests not only for the seminary faculty but also for the Polish parishes in the diocese.

While Fr. Dabrowski was in Europe, Bishop Borgess at the suggestion of some priests decided to terminate the interdiction of St. Albertus Church. Early in August 1886, he let it be announced that he would reopen the church and send it priests, if the congregation would confess its guilt and promise amendment and obedience to ecclesiastical authority. Unfortunately, the timing of the announcement was inauspiciously chosen. It followed closely the conclusion of the Lewicki homicide case in which the jury's verdict, after less than five minutes deliberation, acquitted Alexander Lemke of guilt. This verdict in perhaps the most famous Detroit Polish murder trial of the decade was received with angry displeasure by the Kolasinskiites and boded ill for the bishop's clemency gesture.

Shortly after the bishop's announcement, according to a Felician chronicler, several hundred rebellious supporters of the absent Fr. Kolasinski gathered before St. Albertus Church and marched from there to the Felician Motherhouse across the street. Then they began pelting the convent with stones, breaking the windows of the orphanage and frightening both the children and the sisters. The disturbance lasted into the evening, until about thirty policemen arrived to disperse the unruly crowd of men and women. Again several arrests were made though no blood was shed. This was the fifth "Polish Riot" of Fr. Dabrowski's pastorate, though it occurred during his absence.

At first, Bishop Borgess' reaction to this new outbreak of violence and strident rejection of his clemency proposal was swift and decisive. On Sunday, August 13, 1886, he drafted the following letter to the parishioners of St. Albert's: "Since many of the parishioners of St. Albert's congregation of this city have allowed themselves to be deceived by designing and wicked persons, and have been in open rebellion against our Episcopal Authority since the 1st day of December A.D. 1885, causing the St. Albert's Church to be interdicted by their violent attacks upon the priests in the same, and these unfortunate and divided people continuing on their rebellion to our Episcopal Authority to the present, we hereby publish and make known, that each and every one of the parishioners of St. Alberts who directly or indirectly took part in the riotous demonstrations of the 25th of December 1885, and still continues in rebellion to our Episcopal Authority, is excommunicated from the pale of the H. R. C. Church, until each and every one of the rebels shall have made public reparation, and shall have been absolved by us, or by our special authorization." But for some reason, the letter was not sent and presumably the censure did not go into effect.

Upon his arrival with two priests from Poland in mid-September Fr. Dabrowski, undismayed by the recent developments, resumed his pastoral duty to the faithful remnant of St. Albertus Parish. The remaining six months of his tenure brought no new untoward moves by the rebel Kolasinskiite faction. The only exceptional incident of this closing period was non-parochial — the opening of the Polish Seminary Thursday, December 16, 1886, with a crowd of 3,000 in attendance.

Fr. Dabrowski's services to the parish are revealed by statistics. Though

incomplete, the figures indicate advances in several areas. For example, the number of families under Fr. Dabrowski's care in 1886 reached "1246 subscribed families — whole number unknown," — the highest officially reported figure in the congregation's history up to that point. Baptisms also reached the fourteen-year pinnacle with 513 in the chancery report and 722 in the unofficial parochial manuscript count; so also did the marriages with eighty-one in the chancery summary (but sixty-seven in the parochial list), and funerals with 332 (in the chancery report only).

Parish revenues, however, dropped sharply from \$5,040.86 in 1884 (the last available figure) to \$1,544.16 in 1886. Collections of five cents from adults brought \$742.22, while pew rent amounted to \$336.19; the rest derived from school and miscellaneous sources. The expenditures for the year ran to \$1,212.16.

St. Albertus School continued to function, despite the closing of the frame building by Fr. Kolasinski's adherents early in December 1885. The children of the congregation's loyal remnant were reassembled and taught by the Sisters in the Felician Convent. When the Polish Seminary opened its doors in December 1886, some of the children used part of the institution's third floor until the interdict on the church was lifted in June 1887. The children of the Kolasinskiite faction attended a private school located at 907 Riopelle Street and conducted by Anton Dlugi with the help of J. Karaszewski.

Fr. Dabrowski reported the existence of six parish societies: St. Albert (156 members), St. Stanislaw (140), Third Order of St. Francis (230), Carmelitan Rosary (356), Living Rosary [no membership total], and "St. Joseph (disorder)." The last was most rent by factional dissention, while the Third Order Unit was a new organization founded in the parish by Fr. Dabrowski, most likely at the inspiration of the Felician Sisters.

The report also contained the names of two trustees who assisted Fr. Dabrowski during his trying and strife-torn yet peace-oriented pastorate: Antoni Swietek and Joseph Lipke. The latter sometimes served as Fr. Dabrowski's armed bodyguard, accompanying the pastor on sick calls during the more turbulent and strained weeks. Other committee members were Jan Wagner, Jozef Skupinski, Anton Ostrowski, Jan Bialk, and Karol Brecki. Parishioners who served on the school board included Bartl. Kowalkowski, Piotr Glowczewski, and Jakob Mindak.

Fr. Dabrowski also had the help of several assistant-priests. The first was Rev. Anthony Jaworski, a Holy Ghost Father, who divided his services between the parish and the Polish Seminary from November 28, 1885, to July 8, 1886. Rev. Vincent Bronikowski and Rev. Hipolit Baranski served in a similar double capacity from September 1886 when they arrived with Fr. Dabrowski from Austrian-Poland until the end of his pastorate. During his four-month European trip, Fr. Dabrowski's substitute at St. Albertus was Rev. C. Domagalski, temporarily on leave from Parisville, Mich.

What these names and statistics may not show but perhaps suggest is the increasing reconciliatory effectiveness of Fr. Dabrowski's pastoral influence since his arrival from Europe in September 1886. During this concluding six-month phase of his pastorate, Fr. Dabrowski intensified his peace-making efforts to bring the dissenters back to the parish. He was not wholly successful but he laid

the groundwork for increasing cooperation among the people and the pastor which subsequently led to the reopening of St. Albertus Church.

On Saturday March 19, 1887, Bishop Borgess relieved Fr. Dabrowski of his pastoral obligations in St. Albertus Church. The same day, these duties were placed on the willing shoulders of Rev. Vincent Bronikowski.

7. PROVIDER OF SERVICES, INSTITUTIONS, PERSONNEL

Fr. Dabrowski spent the remaining fifteen years of his life in Detroit, outliving his pastoral rival by fifty-eight months. He served the Detroit Diocese with distinction in several capacities. He was the first president of the diocesan school board. He provided the diocese with a distinctive bilingual institutional complex, still in existence, which trained over 100 priests for the Polish and territorial parishes of the diocese, numerous curial officials and teachers, and three auxiliary-bishops two of whom became ordinaries in Michigan. He also helped establish and direct a complex of Felician educational and charitable institutions which trained several hundred bilingual teachers for diocesan elementary and high schools, took care of orphans, and spent themselves unstintingly (often in the face of uncomprehending and unjustified criticism) in the service of the poor and the helpless. In time, their selfless sacrifices and his enduring idealism supplied the Archdiocese of Detroit with an accredited liberal arts college and a hospital renowned for its surgical staff.

As pastor of St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Dabrowski rendered the diocese as well as the congregation, a notable service. Despite his brief pastorate, he managed to forestall a permanent schism in the diocesan parochial structure. Instead, with unassuming patience and inexhaustible sacrifice, he gradually put the splintered pieces of St. Albertus Parish together. Taking a remnant congregation, struggling desperately for survival, he not only kept it alive but infused it with a new will to live and to grow.

For the Polish Catholics of the United States and for American Catholicism in general, Fr. Dabrowski also left a heritage of hope and pride. The former he provided, out of their own ranks, with several thousand nuns and priests who made possible the flowering of Polish American Catholicism during the past eight decades, unrivalled by any Polish emigre group in the world and not challengeable in some respects even by the war-scarred Catholicism of reborn Poland. The latter he left two meaningful reminders – one of the largest Catholic Sisterhoods in the States and one of America's distinctive experimental seminaries. These testify that Polish Catholic immigrants and their children, while an occasional bane, have on the whole been a more lasting boon to American Catholicism – a truth some church historians of the mainstream persuasion have failed to discern with balanced fairness of insight, preferring to lay upon the immigrants' shoulders the added burden of the cultural lag of American Catholicism.

CHAPTER 4 PASTORS IN THE SHADOW

The seventh, eighth, and ninth pastors of St. Albertus Parish who presided over the congregation for over seven years from March 1887 to July 1894 – all labored under a common disability, the continuing influence of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski in Detroit's East Side Polish neighborhood. Even during his absence, his shadow hovered over the pastorate of Rev. Vincent Bronikowski during whose tenure Fr. Kolasinski returned to Detroit in December 1888. After that, until his reconciliation with Bishop John S. Foley in February 1894 (four years after his return), Fr. Kolasinski kept affecting directly or indirectly, by his activities, the successive pastorates of Rev. Casimir Rohowski CPPS and Rev. Florian Chodniewicz.

Yet despite this overhanging shadow the three pastors – men of differing backgrounds and ages, each with a short interrupted tenure – left their marks on the parish. Each made a contribution that assisted the growth of St. Albertus Parish and made it a more viable congregation.

1. THE INTERDICTION GOES – FR. KOLASINSKI COMES



FR. VINCENT BRONIKOWSKI

The figure of Fr. Vincent Bronikowski has emerged indistinctly and incompletely from the meagre documentation he left behind. He seems to have been almost relentlessly pursued by misfortune which, first, prevented him for some years from becoming a priest and, then, put him into a pastoral office torn by strife as if to test his mettle once again. This was all the more regrettable, for he stands as the most learned of the fifteen pastors of St. Albertus Parish with his broad and varied educational background and his command of twelve major languages.

Born in 1853 in Ostrow, a town in the Poznan Regency of Prussian-Poland, Vincent was the son of a teacher of Greek. His father, Anthony, reputedly translated more Greek literature into Polish than any other hellenist before him or since. Vincent's mother was Albertyna Swiecicka.

After completing high school in Ostrow, Vincent put in his required military service in the Prussian Army, coming out with the rank of a junior officer. Then he entered the diocesan seminary in Poznan but finished his theology in Gniezno. His ordination, however, was prevented partly by the outbreak of Bismarck's anti-Catholic Kulturkampf and partly by his father's earlier dismissal from a teaching post in Poznan for refusal to collaborate in a police investigation of Polish student patriotic activities.

Vincent then went to Vienna where he studied philology and philosophy at the university, and also taught in one of the city's schools. Next, he spent some years teaching in Bucharest, Romania. From there he moved to Krakow in Austrian-Poland and, after two years of study at the Jagiellonian University, he was ordained a priest in his early thirties and appointed chaplain to the Ursuline Nuns.

In this capacity he met Rev. Joseph Dabrowski in 1886, as the latter was searching for professors for his incipient seminary in Detroit. Fr. Bronikowski accepted the teaching post and, along with Rev. Hipolite Baranski, accompanied Fr. Dabrowski to the United States. Upon arrival at Detroit, he received Bishop Caspar Borgess' appointment not only to teach in the new Polish Seminary but also to assist Fr. Dabrowski in ministering to the strife-torn St. Albertus congregation.

When Fr. Dabrowski was relieved of his pastorate in order to devote himself exclusively to the rectorship of the seminary and the directorship of the Felician Sisterhood, Fr. Bronikowski succeeded him as pastor of St. Albertus Church. Writing March 19, 1887, Bishop Borgess stipulated that the appointment was revocable and in a postscript asked the thirty-four year old Fr. Bronikowski to continue his professorial duty (of teaching dogma) in the Polish Seminary (although he was released from the latter duty April 10, 1887).

Fr. Bronikowski's tenure as pastor of St. Albertus lasted almost twenty-four months — from March 19, 1887 to March 5, 1889. His first three months (like Fr. Dabrowski's) were the most difficult and would have broken a lesser man, though they did leave their mark upon him. On Sunday, March 20, after he had publicly announced his appointment in the convent chapel to the small group of worshipers gathered there, a crowd of Kolasinskiites gathered before the interdicted parish church to prevent Fr. Bronikowski from entering it, something he apparently had no intention of doing since the bishop had not revoked the closing of the edifice.

The police appeared to disperse the crowd and, in the ensuing confrontation, shots were fired, windows in the Felician Convent were smashed, and twenty-two persons were arrested and arraigned for disturbing the peace. This was Fr. Bronikowski's first experience of a "Polish Riot."

Bishop Borgess, apparently his patience broken by the persistent militancy of the Kolasinskiites, responded to the outburst with a new edict of excommunication, broader than the earlier (unpublished) one and made it public. This time, however, he gave the matter over a month's consideration before issuing the decree Saturday, April 23, 1887, with the request that Fr. Bronikowski read the contents Sunday, April 24 at the Masses in the Felician Sisters Convent. It stated that after repeated fruitless warnings and attempts at reconciliation, coupled with concern for the faith and loyalty of the pious members of St. Albertus Congregation and the devout Catholics of the diocese, he was compelled to "excommunicate herewith" seven specific recalcitrant and rebellious groups once associated with St. Albertus Parish. All were declared formally and publicly excommunicated and excluded from the Church of God and bound to remain so until absolved by himself.

The seven categories of excommunicated persons included: first, all men and women who by advice, word or deed took part in disturbing the celebration of the Mass and forcibly ejecting Fathers Joseph Dabrowski and Anthony Jaworski from St. Albertus Church December 1 and 2, 1885; second, all men and women who caused the public bloody riot or took part in it by advice, word or deed December 25, 1885; third, all members of the Committee chosen by the rebel (pro-Kolasinski) faction or claiming to have been chosen to that Committee along with the committees which represented the rebel group at meetings or in press interviews; fourth, all officers and members of the Kosciuszko Guard who seized possession of the rectory of St. Albertus Parish and held it against the orders of the bishop; fifth, all those Committee members who disseminated false reports and information allegedly obtained by them from Rome and Cincinnati; sixth, all men and women, who by advice, word, or deed took part in the bloody riot of March 20, 1887, in Detroit; and seventh, all persons who claimed to be in communication with Rev. Dominic Kolasinski and periodically circulated the rumor that he entreated the rebels (his followers) to stand firm in their opposition to the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop until he (Kolasinski) returned and personally reopened St. Albertus Church.

Seven days later (Saturday April 30, 1887), Bishop Borgess sent Fr. Bronikowski a letter in which he laid down the conditions which the excommunicated persons would be obliged to fulfill in order to obtain absolution and be reunited with the Church. The first of the three requirements called for submission to ecclesiastical authority by entering his or her name in the official parish register of St. Albertus congregation. The second demand stipulated that each man and woman beg for public forgiveness for the scandal he or she had given in the past and that this petition be made on three successive Sundays before High Mass in the Felician Chapel that served as the temporary St. Albertus Church. The third condition required from each penitent an eight day strict fast and abstinence, limiting the individual to one full meal a day.

How effective these procedures proved in converting the Kolasinskiites is not known. The available records do not speak of any public penances or

submissions to episcopal authority. Perhaps the news announced two days later, Monday, May 2, 1887, of Bishop Borgess' first public acknowledgement that his resignation as Bishop of the Detroit Diocese had been accepted by Rome over two weeks earlier (on April 16) may have had something to do with the lack of response. In any event, Bishop Borgess remained at his post till May 10, when he nominated Rev. Edward Joos as administrator of the diocese and retired to Grosse Pointe where he spent the last three years of his life, dying May 3, 1890, in a hospital in Kalamazoo, Mich. The resignation (Bishop Borgess' second one — his first, submitted in January 1879 following Rome's support of Rev. Desiderius' Callaert's request for reinstatement after an alleged arbitrary removal from the pastorate by the bishop, was withdrawn two months later at the request of the clergy of the diocese) left the Detroit Diocese without a bishop for nineteen months.

By creating an episcopal vacuum, Bishop Borgess' resignation may have indirectly occasioned the second bitter experience of Fr. Bronikowski's difficult beginning at St. Albertus Parish. It is not known how soon after Fr. Kolasinski's departure from Detroit in April 1886, the rectory was occupied by the next pastor nor who that occupant was. Fr. Dabrowski had his own chaplain's house at the Felician Convent and, after the opening of the Seminary in December 1886, his rector's quarters there as well. Perhaps he was the first to reside in the vacated rectory, even though the church was still closed owing partly to the episcopal interdict and partly to the Kolasinskiites refusal to permit any priest, other than Fr. Kolasinski, to hold services therein.

It seems more likely, then, that the first occupant of the vacated rectory was Fr. Bronikowski. For one thing, he found living in the convent chaplaincy not to his liking; for another, after his appointment to the pastorate he wanted to establish an administrative headquarters and staff on the parish premises, in the hope that this might lead to a swifter resolution of the deadlock over the control of the church, which the Kolasinskiites were determined to keep closed till the dismissed pastor's return despite episcopal excommunication as well as interdict.

In any event on Ascension Thursday, May 19, 1887, the "Rioting Polacks" were reported by *The Evening News* as having "another shindig at the church." Next day's *Detroit Tribune* headlines were more explicit: "Once More the Poles — Another Kolasinski and Dombrowski Riot — A Howling Mob Assails the Parochial Residence — The Usual Bullet."

The coloured journalistic accounts described with relish how the "population of Polacktown observed Ascension Day," by concluding the observance with a crowd that by evening "swelled to upwards of 1,000 men, women, and children" who surrounded the parochial residence inhabited at the moment by Fr. Bronikowski's two temporary visiting assistants — Frs. J. Hofstetter and J. Barzynski CR — while the pastor, reputedly indisposed, stayed at the Capuchin Monastery. It seems that early that morning a Kolasinskiite had spread the report of Fr. Kolasinski's imminent return to Detroit with the request that his former parsonage be made ready for him. As Kolasinskiites gathered to gain possession of the rectory and to carry out the alleged request, Dombrowskiites surrounded the manse to defend it against the expected impending onslaught.

The police intervened, wild shots were fired one of which creased the scalp of nineteen-year old Herman Watske. Finally with additional help, the police quelled the disturbance, dispersed the crowd, arrested two persons (one of them as a victim-witness), and left a small group of Dombrowskiites on watch around the rectory. For Fr. Bronikowski, in spite of his absence from the scene, this was the second "Polish Riot" of his pastorate.

The incident proved too much for him. Without permission of the chancery, he left Detroit secretly and went to Chicago, leaving his temporary Swiss assistant, Fr. J. Hofstetter, in charge of the loyal portion of St. Albertus congregation. Upon his return, Wednesday June 1, Fr. Bronikowski was determined either to secure the lifting of the interdict and opening of the church or resigning from the parish. He managed to win Fr. Edward Joos, the administrator, to the first alternative with the added caution that the opening depended also on the cooperation of the Kolasinskiites faction. So Fr. Bronikowski decided to prepare the congregation for the reopening of the parish church by holding a parish mission in the Felician Chapel under the direction of Rev. Wladyslaw Sebastyanski SJ.

Fr. Sebastyanski, one of the leading Polish preachers of the time, began the mission Sunday June 19. During the week, as the mission progressed with signs of success, Fr. Bronikowski held further discussions with Fr. Joos and laid specific plans for the removal of the ban in such a way as to avoid any new outbreaks of opposition from the irreconcilable segment of the Kolasinskiites. On Friday, without prior fanfare, mission sermons were preached in the formerly interdicted church. When no "Polish Riot" materialized, Fr. Joos issued a brief Latin statement Saturday, June 25, 1887, formally lifting the interdict which had been in effect since December 4, 1885. The Sunday High Mass celebrated in an atmosphere of tearful devotion and gratitude emotionally and impressively marked the end of the painfulest and saddest incident in the history of St. Albertus Parish.

Another major difficulty confronting Fr. Bronikowski and his congregation was the indebtedness of \$57,000 which threatened the parish with the loss of its reopened church if the mortgage payments were not made in time. Before the year ran out, with the help of the parish committee and the authorization of Fr. Joos, Fr. Bronikowski refinanced the mortgage with new, more favorable loans. He not only saved the splendid church for the congregation but also reduced the debt by over \$10,000.

But the original frame church still remained to be disposed of by the parish. In October 1888, Fr. Bronikowski received permission "to raffle the old St. Albert's Church" for the benefit of the parish. Who the lucky winner was is not known; but he had to remove the building from the church site "as soon as convenient."

In October 1888, Fr. Bronikowski made an addition to the landed property of St. Albertus Parish by purchasing through Fr. Edward Joos two lots on St. Aubin north of Fremont (Canfield). The price of \$1200 for this third parcel of congregational real estate was paid to Dwight C. Rexford and Caroline M. Rexford his wife. The second St. Albertus School was subsequently built on this land by Rev. Florian Chodniewicz, who apparently carried out Fr. Bronikowski's original intent. The property deed was later (June 12, 1889) transferred by Fr. Joos to the name of Bishop John S. Foley.

Heartened by the progressive spiritual and financial reconstruction of the parish, Fr. Bronikowski next executed his most daring, if not most spectacular, pastoral project in June 1888. In spite of the fact that Fr. Kolasinski made an unexpected and unauthorized appearance in Detroit to the tumultuously jubilant greetings of his adherents from Thursday through Sunday June 7-10, Fr. Bronikowski held a previously scheduled confirmation service on Sunday in St. Albertus Church.

The exciting and surprising feature of the service was its performance by the retired Bishop Caspar Borgess. He conferred the sacrament on 345 children without any untoward incident nor even the presence of a special guard suggested by some cautious parishioners. The happening served as a dramatic rejoinder to an earlier newspaper comment that "Rese went down before the French, Lefevere barely sustained himself against the German and Irish, and Borgess succumbed before the onset of the Poles." Though the Kolasinski Crisis was undoubtedly a trying (though not the only) ordeal for Bishop Borgess, he resigned not because of Kolasinskiite opposition but because of a heart ailment and the approach of his sixty-first birthday. For the loyal parishioners and priests of St. Albertus Parish he retained a priestly paternal sentiment till his death in May 1890.

The effectiveness and success of Fr. Bronikowski's reconstruction of St. Albertus Parish appeared most tellingly in the statistical summary of his pastorate. The number of families officially reported to the chancery reached the highest total in the parish's nineteenth century history - 2,500 in 1888. The year before, when he became pastor, 2,000 families were reported, while the year in which he left (1889), the total declined to 1,500.

Baptisms climbed to well over 1,000; marriages rose in excess of 200; funerals exceeded 550. School enrollment climbed from 462 in 1887 to 650 in 1889, while the number of teaching sisters increased from seven to nine. Parish revenues from collections and pew rent exceeded \$10,000 in 1888 for the first time in parish history, while the 1888 school income of \$3,974.50 was the highest in two decades.

Fr. Bronikowski was clearly gaining the support and good will of the people who flocked to the parish in increasing numbers, perhaps not so much from the ranks of the Kolasinskiites as from new immigrant arrivals. Three new parish societies arose by his initiative or with his aid. The Children of Mary were organized in May 1887 with the help of Misses P. Klinkosz, S. Strzynska, A. Lipke and K. Sobkowiak. St. Valentine Society was organized in 1888 with the help of S. Sobkowiak, M. Wisniowski, and J. Detlaf. St. Vincent Society was founded in 1889 with the help of M. Turlop, M. Blazkowski, M. Broniszewski, F. Kulwicki, M. Grabowski, and S. Skrzycki.

The trustees who collaborated with Fr. Bronikowski in reconstructing St. Albertus Parish during his pastorate included Jan Wagner, Jan Bialk, Anton Ostrowski, John Lemke, and Jacob Mindak.

Fr. Bronikowski also had several assistant priests to help him. The first was Hopolite Baranski who began in March and left in April 1887. The second was a German priest T. Frauenhoff who also stayed briefly, leaving after the first "riot." The third was a Swiss priest, J. Hofstetter, who departed in September 1887, after serving about three months. A Chicago priest, probably Rev. J.

Barzynski CR, also served briefly during the second "riot." In 1888, Rev. Henry Cichocki, a former Resurrectionist, helped from April to August. After him came Fr. Anthony Lex who continued to the end of the pastorate and beyond.

The closing months of Fr. Bronikowski's tenure were clouded by the unauthorized return of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski to Detroit December 8, 1888, apparently in the hope of regaining the pastorate of St. Albertus Church. The new bishop who took over the reigns of the diocese in November 1888, won the hearts of the members of St. Albertus congregation by visiting not only their church but also their homes in person. The bishop, however, also rejected Fr. Kolasinski's overtures at regaining the St. Albertus pastorate. Thereupon, in February 1889, Fr. Kolasinski began planning the construction of a new church and school complex to accommodate his adherents, whom he organized into a separate congregation independent of episcopal jurisdiction yet at the same time affirming submission to the authority of the pope.

At this point, after nearly two years, Fr. Bronikowski's pastorate at St. Albertus was canonically ended March 5, 1889, with the appointment of his successor, Rev. Casimir Rohowski CPPS. But for some days at least he stayed on at the parish, because he was present at the ordination of Fr. John Lemke at St. Albertus on Sunday March 10 and assisted at the ceremony and reception of the clergy and guests. The same day, a committee of parishioners pleaded unsuccessfully with Bishop Foley not to move Fr. Bronikowski from the parish.

The transfer took him from Detroit to Hilliards, where Fr. Bronikowski became the first resident pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish. His unauthorized summer trips to Europe in 1887 and 1888 as well as his reportedly indecisive reaction to the two "riots" seem to account for his removal from St. Albertus.

Fr. Bronikowski stayed in the diocese only till December 1889. At his request, he was released to minister in the Diocese of Brooklyn. Here he pastored at St. Casimir's Parish where he built a new church, rectory, and two schools. Also active outside his parish, he led a group of priests in 1890 to organize the St. Joseph Emigrant Home in Brooklyn to provide counsel and temporary care for Polish arrivals to America. As a result, in 1892, through the influence of Cardinal Mieceslaus Ledochowski, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Fr. Bronikowski became the first Polish Monsignor in the United States.

Fr. Bronikowski's contribution to St. Albertus Parish was that of a reconstructionist. He brought about the reopening of the church to give the congregation back its heart and its pride. He saved the reopened church for the parish by refinancing its heavy indebtedness on more favorable terms and avoiding impending foreclosure. He purchased additional real estate on which a new school would soon be built. He did all this and helped the troubled parish grow in spite of the ever-present Kolasinskian cloud hovering overhead.

2. NO SERVANT OF BISMARCK

The eighth pastor of St. Albertus Parish, Rev. Casimir Rohowski CPPS, elicits initial interest on at least two counts. For one thing, despite his surname, he may not have been of Polish descent. For another, as the initials after his name indicate, he was a religious order priest (like Rev. Simon Wiczorek CR

and Rev. Alphonse Dombrowski OSF) – the third and last such to administer the parish.

But Fr. Casimir was also a pastor who contributed significantly to St. Albertus Parish, even though his stay was relatively short and clouded by the dissident activities of the returned Rev. Dominic Kolasinski.

Fr. Casimir was a native of the small village of Vodeca, located in the northeastern, Silesian, segment of the Archdiocese of Olmutz within the Austro-Hungarian Empire (presently the Metropolitan See of Olomouc in Moravia, Czechoslovakia). The region in which he was born November 11, 1843, was a linguistically mixed area inhabited by Moravian Czechs, Silesian Poles and Germans who intermarried among each other.

In 1868, at the age of twenty-five, his classical and theological studies completed, Casimir left his native land and went to Papal Rome. Here, he enlisted for a year in the Papal Zouaves, a corps of Catholic volunteer soldiers formed in 1860 for the protection and defense of the States of the Church, menaced by the new, rising kingdom of Italy. While training as a Zouave, he also managed to attend theological lectures at the Gregorian University.

On September 8, 1869, Casimir entered the novitiate of the Society of the Most Precious Blood, a religious community of missionary priests founded fifty-four years previously in Umbria. After completing his novitiate at Albano, he was also ordained there to the priesthood February 24, 1871, at the age of twenty-eight.

Since he was fluent in German and French, Fr. Casimir received his first assignment at Tres-Epis in Alsatia, where the Precious Blood Fathers had charge of a popular shrine. He labored here for three years, until the government's suppression and expulsion of all religious orders from the country.

In 1874, at the age of thirty-one, Fr. Casimir came with several other Precious Blood Fathers to the Diocese of Detroit upon the invitation of Bishop Borgess. At first, he assisted pastors in Detroit, North Dorr, and Bay City. In March 1876, he was appointed pastor of the German St. Joseph Parish in Adrian, where he labored fruitfully for thirteen years. He built a new church, a school, and a rectory. In addition, he erected a home for old people on the outskirts of Adrian, calling it St. Joseph's Hospital and placing it under the care of Dominican Sisters.

With this record of priestly service, the forty-five year old Fr. Casimir received his most challenging appointment March 5, 1889, when Bishop John S. Foley (who took personal charge of the diocese in November 1888) transferred him to the pastorate of St. Albertus congregation in Detroit to succeed Fr. Bronikowski. Fr. Casimir's tenure lasted thirty-one months – over two and one-half years – till it was cut short by his resignation in early October 1891.

Fr. Casimir began his St. Albertus pastorate with several urgent problems. Under the pressure of both a steady immigration from all regions of partitioned Poland and the maturation of native-born Polish Detroiters, the parish was finding it increasingly difficult to service its expanding 2,500 families residing east of Woodward Avenue. More priests and more facilities were needed, but the congregation was already in debt up to its full anticipated capacity.

Fr. Kolasinski's unauthorized presence in the vicinity of St. Albertus Church (and within the territorial limits of the parish prescribed by the chancery) posed

another difficulty. Disappointed in his efforts to regain the St. Albertus pastorate, Fr. Kolasinski decided to win as many adherents as possible from his former parish and to organize them with his present followers, into a separate congregation. With this in mind, a month before Fr. Casimir's arrival at St. Albertus, Fr. Kolasinski started planning the construction of a new Polish church only three blocks west of St. Albertus but independent of episcopal jurisdiction.

Along with these developments, there appeared a growing sentiment among the loyal parishioners of St. Albertus that the congregation was ripe for another parish offshoot. The neighborhood within a ten-block radius west of the church had been building up densely in the past six years. Its residents were anxious to have a school and church nearer to their homes, somewhere along Hastings Street.

When the group made known its wishes to Fr. Casimir, shortly after his arrival at St. Albertus, he obtained authorization from Bishop Foley to act on the petition. Next, Fr. Casimir called a meeting of the people interested in forming a new offshoot-parish between St. Aubin and Woodward Avenues. The meeting elected a building committee composed of Thomas Zoltowski, chairman, S. Kabacinski, secretary, J. Kosecki, T. Glowny, and J. Nowakowski.

On May 18, 1889, the bishop authorized Fr. Casimir "to buy a site for the new Polish church on or near Hastings and Fremont Streets and as soon as possible to begin erection of a school and chapel thereon." Fortunately, Zoltowski owned sixteen lots off Fremont near Hastings and (according to the parish jubilee booklet) donated twelve of them to the new parish.

Fr. Casimir next supervised the planning of the buildings for the new congregation which, at his suggestion, took the name of St. Josaphat, Uniate Archbishop of Plock martyred in 1623 and canonized in 1867. The cornerstone of the new combination structure (church, school, convent, and meeting hall) was laid October 6, 1889 and the building itself completed February 2, 1890 – about seven months after Fr. Kolasinski had erected his first Sweetest Heart of Mary Church. The new St. Josaphat Church was located five blocks west of St. Albertus Church and only two blocks west of Sweetest Heart of Mary Church.

Fr. Casimir's services to St. Josaphat's congregation did not end here. He relinquished his assistant, Rev. Anthony Leks (though he needed him badly at St. Albertus) to become first pastor of the new parish in March 1890. Next year, when Fr. Casimir built a new brick rectory at St. Albertus, he donated the old frame priesthouse to St. Josaphat's for the use of Fr. Leks.

Fr. Casimir approached the problem posed by Fr. Kolasinski in a less direct manner. Instead of initiating an energetic frontal attack upon the priest and his congregation, Fr. Casimir placed St. Josaphat's strategically nearby not only to relieve the population pressure on St. Albertus by some 1,000 families but also to attract the less enthusiastic or committed followers of the independently functioning priest to a parish under the rightful jurisdiction of the local bishop and in full undisputed communion with Rome.

At the same time, Fr. Casimir avoided any open or direct confrontation with Fr. Kolasinski. Fr. Casimir chose instead to allow his priestly services to the people of the parish to speak for him, allowing Fr. Kolasinski full freedom to romp journalistically in the headlines of Detroit newspapers with releases about spectacular schemes of cathedral building, with his occasional civil suit antics,

with his circulation of forged letters and secret circulars and, finally in September 1891, with his first public tentative suggestion of possible submission to episcopal authority.

By contrast, Fr. Casimir sought to make St. Albertus Church, rather than himself, the central attraction of the parish. During his pastorate, the first priestly ordinations were held in St. Albertus Church. On March 10, 1889, Rev. John Lemke, the son of John Lemke one of the founders and pillars of the congregation, was ordained in the parish church by Bishop John S. Foley. Fr. Lemke has been called "the first native-born Polish Detroiter to become a Catholic priest in the diocese." This may be true, but requires further study. But it is a fact that Fr. John Lemke was the first native son of St. Albertus Parish to be ordained to the priesthood.

Bishop Foley ordained three other Polish priests at St. Albertus Church during Fr. Casimir's pastorate: John Gulcz and Casimir Walajtys (both on March 9, 1890) and Francis Mueller (October 4, 1891). Both Fr. Walajtys and Fr. Mueller, though not native Detroiters, had been members of the parish and deserve to be listed among the priestly vocations of St. Albertus Congregation. Subsequently Fr. Walajtys was to serve as assistant at his home parish, while Fr. Mueller would return as its tenth pastor.

While these three Pontifical Masses greatly enhanced the prestige of St. Albertus Church in the eyes of the people, the regular daily and Sunday services best showed Fr. Casimir's fidelity to his priestly duties. His annual reports for 1889 and 1890 indicate 897 baptisms, 184 marriages, and 303 funerals. The parochial manuscript totals for the same period differ somewhat: 908 baptisms, 186 marriages, and 370 funerals. The additional nine months of 1891 (less the first two months of 1889) would still raise these totals to over 1,000 baptisms, 200 marriages and 400 funerals.

To expedite religious services, Fr. Casimir had at his disposal only one assistant priest at any given time during his pastorate. His first assistant, Rev. Anthony Lex, served only several months before going in March 1890 as pastor of St. Josaphat's. The next assistant was freshly ordained Rev. Casimir Walajtys (March 11, 1890 - June 22, 1891). His place was taken by Rev. Florian Chodniewicz who, in October, succeeded Fr. Casimir as pastor of St. Albertus.

The reports also indicated progress in the parochial school. In 1889, the enrollment rose to 650 pupils, the highest up that point. The following year brought a slight decline to 550, but in 1891 the total climbed to 651 students. The number of teaching sisters varied between eight and nine.

The annual revenues from collections, pew rent and other sources also reached new heights. In 1889, the 1500 families of the parish contributed \$13,374.77; next year, 1500 families gave \$17,470.59; and during the last year, 1396 families donated \$15,623.06. School income, listed separately, brought \$5,654.37 for the pastoral period.

Yet the \$44,000 parish debt with which Fr. Casimir began his pastorate did not decrease but rather increased to \$46,500 by the end of his administration. The increase was due not only to rising maintenance expenses but also to the construction of the new rectory which cost \$18,000.

The continued and even increasing indebtedness of the parish became a sore point between Fr. Casimir and certain members of the parish committee, or the

trustees, as they preferred to call themselves. In June 1891, the dissatisfaction captured the attention of *The Evening News* which announced ominously that "another church row" was brewing at St. Albertus and that a faction wanted Fr. Rohowski removed.

The dispute was played up in the press for fourteen successive days. Several parish meetings were called, various charges raised, other members of the parsonage household implicated (notably the assistant and the housekeeper), dark hints of dissention bruited between the pastor and the assistant; Bishop Foley was approached by a special complaints committee, a boycott of pew rent collection was threatened, and protest petitions against the pastor were circulated.

Bishop Foley stood staunchly behind Fr. Casimir, even though he was handed a bluntly worded (but unsigned) demand for the pastor's removal on several stipulated grounds. These included financial incompetence, mismanagement of funds, personal abuse and villification of parishioners and, above all, national incompatibility.

The anonymous petitioners, who presented the dismissal request as a committee, charged Fr. Casimir with being "a Pole by name only but by nationality a German who at each and every opportunity is glad to show himself an enemy of our nationality . . . he cannot speak Polish so that the majority of the people may understand him well . . .; he calls us 'Fools' and uneducated people and 'Rebels.' We cannot and will not stand such abuse from a 'Dutch Renegade'..."

Even though two of the five trustees supported Fr. Casimir, and one of them, John Wagner, worked successfully to bring "the Kaszubs into line for Rohowski," the experience was too much for the pastor to stomach. On August 11, 1891, he submitted his resignation, pleading ill health and asking for a quieter parish. He refused to bow to Bishop Foley's continued entreaties to stick at his post with the bishop's fullest support. Finally, on October 9, Bishop Foley yielded and appointed Rev. Florian Chodniewicz as the new pastor of St. Albertus.

After leaving St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Casimir lived another nineteen years. Eight of these he spent as pastor successively at St. Cyril Church in Hastings, at St. Joseph's Church in Port Huron, and at St. Mary's Church in Bronson. In January 1893 he suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. In the fall of 1893, he returned to Rome where he died at the Precious Blood Fathers Monastery April 4, 1908, in his sixty-fifth year. He was buried in Campo Verano.

Fr. Casimir's figure lingers in the history of St. Albertus Parish like a bitter-sweet memory. He served the parish well and selflessly in its time of need, enriching not himself but the congregation. He helped bring a daughter-parish of St. Albertus into existence. He won the church new prestige through the ordination ceremonies that were celebrated within its portals. He saw to fruition several priestly vocations from the parish. Yet while he successively refrained from embroiling the parish in further strife with the Kolasinskiites, he himself fell victim to distressful personal factionalism within his own congregation. After spending most of his priesthood in non-Polish ministries, he retained little of the

Polish dialect he might have learned in his native village (if he learned any of it at all to start with, because he might have been a Bohemian rather than a Pole). After the fashion of most pastors of his generation, he might have been stern and authoritarian but he most decidedly was not "a servant of Bismark" [sic].

Perhaps one day, soon, somebody from St. Albertus Parish will place a wreath of red and white poppies on his grave in Campo Verano.

3. A NEW SCHOOL AND NO MORE SHADOW

REV. FLORIAN CHODNIEWICZ

Throughout his thirty-three month pastorate of St. Albertus Rev. Florian Michael Chodniewicz, the ninth pastor, was a singularly interesting person. Perhaps the youngest priest — with the possible exception of Rev. Francis Mueller — ever appointed to the administrative post of the congregation, he faced several challenges with youthful vigor and enthusiasm. In coping with them he, too, had to walk in the long shadow cast over the parish by Rev. Dominic Kolasinski, the fifth pastor of St. Albertus.

As Fr. Chodniewicz assumed his pastoral duties, Fr. Kolasinski was directing the construction of his third and finest church in Detroit — a new imposing edifice of cathedral proportions — for his expanding independent congregation located between St. Albertus and St. Josaphat Churches. Two and one-half years later, when Fr. Chodniewicz left the pastorate, Fr. Kolasinski was enjoying the benefits of his recent submission and return to episcopal authority along with his entire congregation.

Florian Chodniewicz appears in the records of the Diocese of Detroit as a full grown student of theology during the episcopate of Bishop John Foley. In August, 1889, Florian received both major orders and the priesthood in quick

succession. Tuesday, August 6, he was ordained subdeacon in the chapel of Sandwich College in Canada; Saturday, August 17, he became a deacon; and Sunday, August 18, he was ordained a priest in Detroit's St. Vincent Church. All the ceremonies were performed by Bishop Foley.

Immediately after ordination, Fr. Chodniewicz began his priestly labors in the Diocese of Detroit. His first appointment, August 19 (or the 28th — the record is unclear), 1899, sent him as an assistant to St. Michael's Church in Port Austin. Six months later, February 13, 1890, he was appointed "to the charge of the English and Polish churches of Royal Oak." Before the half year was up, on July 19, 1890, he was appointed "assistant to Rev. A. Lex at St. Josaphat's to which Royal is attached as a mission." After eleven months, on June 27, 1891, he became assistant at St. Albertus and three months later, upon Fr. Rohowski's resignation, took over the pastorate.

Fr. Chodniewicz pastored at St. Albertus from October 9, 1891, to July 5, 1894 — a pastoral tenure of thirty-three months, exceeded among his predecessors only by Rev. Alphonse Dombrowski's fifty-three months and Rev. Dominic Kolasinski's forty-four months. Fr. Chodniewicz came, apparently in his twenties, with a priestly experience of not quite two full years though varied in service to four different parishes — older ones and more recently established, German, English, and Polish.

When Fr. Chodniewicz took over the administration of St. Albertus Parish, he found himself (as the report of 1891 showed) with 1,396 families in the congregation, 651 children crowding a frame school, a new brick rectory, an imposing Gothic church seating about 2,500 worshippers, and an even more impressive debt of \$46,500. To reduce this indebtedness as well as to meet current maintenance expenses, he could anticipate an annual operating revenue from all sources of about \$15,000 with ordinary expenditures running to about \$13,000.

Sacramentally the statistics indicated a more encouraging prospect. Though both marriages and baptisms fell below earlier totals, with the former numbering sixty and the latter 491. Even funerals declined to 217. Here the officially recorded figures differ only very slightly from the parochial manuscript compilation. But overall, Fr. Chodniewicz's pastorate solemnized over 200 marriages, 1,500 baptisms, and 450 funerals.

At the same time, Fr. Chodniewicz had to take into account the pervasive and real influence of Fr. Kolasinski emanating from his independent church-school complex only three blocks away from St. Albertus Church. To accommodate his increasing adherents, Fr. Kolasinski was building another church called "the finest edifice in Detroit" by *The Evening News*. Upon its completion in December, 1893, he held an impressive dedication of the new church with the assistance of an Old Catholic Archbishop Rene Vilatte of questionable antecedents.

Concurrently, perhaps to attract still more attention as well as adherents (for the news reached the press in September, 1891), Fr. Kolasinski began making overtures to higher ecclesiastical authorities in the Catholic Church about the terms of his possible reconciliation with the Bishop of the Detroit Diocese.

Undismayed and undeterred by these prospects, Fr. Chodniewicz set to

work with youthful zest and hope. When he departed from his post two years and nine months later, he left an interesting record for his successor — a record which clearly indicated his successes and failures without, however, specifying or explaining the reasons behind them.

Available records do not give the status of the parish for July, 1894, when Fr. Chodniewicz left for another appointment. But his figures for the preceding full year, balanced with those submitted by his successor at the end of 1894 give fairly good clues to the situation. The number of families increased from 1,396 to 1,500. School attendance rose from 651 to 896 children taught by twelve nuns (three more).

Marriages (according to the annual reports) totalled sixty, seventy-six, seventy-three and sixty-five annually; the parochial statistical table for the same period (1891 to 1894) presents only slightly different annual sums: fifty-nine, eighty-five, eighty-two, and fifty-six. Baptisms (according to the chancery entries) totalled annually: 489, 565, 568, and 565; the parochial statistical sheet again offers only slightly variant figures for the matching years 1891-1894: 486, 579, 570, and 564. The yearly number of reported funerals ran to 217, 220, 209, and 208; there is one matching parochial total here — 182 funerals for 1891.

Incomplete first communion figures showed forty-eight for 1893 and 215 for 1894. Confirmations numbered 150 in 1893 and 358 the next year.

In his report for 1893, Fr. Chodniewicz also testified that "over 4,500 attend church regularly and receive Sacraments." He further reported that the parish had twelve societies, "with 100 to 360 members in each." Unfortunately, he does not list these organizations some of which were established during his pastorate. One such was the Holy Trinity Society founded in October, 1892 by Fr. Chodniewicz, M. Kulwicki, M. Domzalski, M. Ostrowski, J. Kokowicz, J. Kaliszewski, J. Neubauer, J. Bialk, L. Swieczkowski, J. Lisk, J. Pieganski, and A. Nowe.

Fr. Chodniewicz also contributed to the founding of an interparochial Polish organization known as the Polish Roman Catholic Organization under the Patronage of the Holy Trinity. The organizational meeting of the Association was held at St. Albertus Parish March 15, 1894 — about three weeks before his departure. Consequently his contribution to the establishment of the Association calls for further investigation. The meeting, in any case, elected the Association's first officers among whom were M. Ostrowski, president, M. Domzalski, secretary, and Joseph Bilski, treasurer. The purpose of the Association was to coordinate the activities of the various parish societies for the greater benefit of the members and their parishes.

The particular item in Fr. Chodniewicz's annual reports which caught and held the attention of most parishioners was the parish debt. Fr. Chodniewicz began with \$46,500, then raised it to \$52,801.37 in 1892, increased it to \$73,000 the next year, and left it at that level when he departed in 1894. Fr. Chodniewicz's report for 1893 explained the \$73,000 indebtedness as consisting of \$43,000 on the church and \$30,000 on the schoolhouse.

Discussions over the need of a new school went back to Fr. Kolasinski's pastorate. His plans to erect a new school were aborted by the rise of factions over the location of the new church. There was also some opposition to the idea

of further burdening the parish, already weighted down with an expensive church-building project, by addition of a school-construction debt. Nevertheless, before the project was shelved, Fr. Kolasinski had managed in 1883 to buy three lots on the northern side of Fremont (Canfield), across the street from the church he had already started building. When Fr. Bronikowski became pastor, the idea of building a new school was revived. So he purchased two additional lots in 1888, next to the three the parish already had, but the school project did not go beyond this point.

Four years later, June 13, 1892, Fr. Chodniewicz and members of the School Building Committee signed a contract with builder Frank P. Lorkowski "for a brick building designed for a school." To cost \$38,000, it was to be erected on the northwestern corner of St. Aubin and Canfield Avenues (across Canfield from the church where the parking lot presently stands). Construction of the school, designed by John Schuman and Co. was to be completed "on or before 1 November, 1892."

Members of the Committee, aside from Fr. Chodniewicz, included Michal Lesinski, Jozef Neubauer, Jan Kulwicki, Jan Rzeppa, Jozef Tuska, Jan Welsand, Antoni Strzelpinski, and Tomasz Holowski.

Though it nearly doubled the parish debt, the new brick school built under Fr. Chodniewicz's supervision in 1892 was his most important contribution to St. Albertus Parish. A steadily, though slowly, climbing enrollment had filled the original two-story frame school built in 1874. Its restricted physical capacity put a limit on the number of potential pupils to be admitted, even though the Sisters vacated their living quarters on the second floor to provide maximum classroom space. In 1882, the Sisters went to live in the Felician Motherhouse which, from then on, was their home, saving the parish the added expense of erecting a separate convent for its teaching nuns.

Finished on time, the new school was a three-story brick structure. It had large classrooms on the first and second floors. The third floor consisted of a large assembly hall for meetings and programs, and for eventual division into classroom use if necessary. Steam heating equipment was installed in the basement.

The first principal of the new school was Sister M. Angela who remained in that post till 1895. Under her supervision, the classrooms were supplied with the latest teaching aids, and "dainty white curtains" decorated the windows to lend attraction to the teaching scene. Pupil enrollment, which had dropped to 560 in 1892, climbed to 957 in 1893. The new school served the parish for twenty-five years, until it was replaced by a new larger building in 1917.

The school followed a bilingual six-year program. In most subjects — religion, arithmetic, geography as well as Polish language and history — the instructional language was Polish. English reading, grammar and spelling were taught directly in that language. The bilingual curriculum made demands upon students and teachers, but both parties received assistance and support from the parents who believed that the values of their ancestral heritage — and of language as the key to those traditional ideals — justified the effort and expense necessary to transmit them to their children.

In expediting the various activities of the parish, Fr. Chodniewicz had the help not only of the Sisters, committees and societies, but also of assistant

priests. Newly ordained Rev. Francis Mueller, a former member of the parish, served from October, 1891 to January, 1892. He was followed by two priests who were temporary visitors in the diocese: Rev. Apolonius Tyszka (probably 1892 to 1893) and Rev. Felix Orzechowski (probably 1893 to 1894). In addition, two Detroit priests — Rev. W. Tilek and Rev. L. Van Den Driesche — assisted with Sunday Masses as occasion required.

During the last five months of Fr. Chodniewicz's pastorate, the long and at times sinister shadow of Fr. Kolasinski that had hovered over St. Albertus Parish for over eight years, finally lifted. After nearly two and one-half years of protracted negotiations with various ecclesiastical authorities, Fr. Kolasinski at long last made a solemn public disavowal of his misdeeds and was readmitted with his congregation and its imposing Sweetest Heart of Mary Church under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary of Detroit, Bishop John Foley. The ceremony of recantation, made in church in the presence of the parish congregation and the assembled clergy led by Archbishop F. Satolli, Rome's Apostolic Delegate to the Catholic Church in the United States, took place Sunday, February 18, 1894.

But one important ecclesiastic was not physically present at that gladsome occasion which brought a sacerdotal prodigal son and his many followers back to the church of their fathers and forefathers. That ecclesiastic was Bishop Caspar Borgess who had died nearly four years earlier. But his priestly and episcopal spirit certainly rejoiced at the happy consummation of the prolonged Kolasinski Crisis — a crisis of which he was more the victim than the instigator.

Polish chroniclers, reading Rev. W. Kruszka with ethnic credulity instead of scholarly criticism, have been less than fair to Bishop Borgess. They have written at length of his dismissal of the early pastors of St. Albertus, of his suspension of Fr. Kolasinski, of his allegedly severe handling of the Kolasinski Crisis, of his interdiction of St. Albertus Church and excommunication of many of its members, of his alleged opposition to Polish Catholics — their priests, churches, schools, societies, traditions, and feelings. All this adds up to an image of an ecclesiastical Prussian Junker bent on peonizing or denationalizing Polish Detroiters after the fashion of the Teutonic Knights.

Bishop Borgess did not deserve such treatment in the past nor should he be villified today. He took over the administration of the diocese at a difficult time in its history and he struggled for nearly seventeen years to solve problems inherited from his two predecessors or created by circumstances over which he had little if any actual control. He became head of a vast sixty-eight county, polyglot diocese inhabited in 1870 by about 150,000 Catholics organized in seventy churches served by eighty-eight priests. The population was mixed, chiefly immigrant Irish and German with a sprinkling of Poles, Bohemians, Belgians, and Hollanders, with pockets of French-Canadians and some Catholic Indians. All but six of the eighty-eight priests were immigrants, just as he was.

Bishop Borgess' diocesan program called not for the elimination but the expansion of ethnic parishes, because such parishes and such priests were needed in the diocese. Of the fifteen new parishes founded during his episcopate eight were ethnic congregations. Polish Catholic Detroiters, in particular, might remember their debt to Bishop Borgess. He authorized the establishment of Detroit's first two Polish parishes. He approved the founding of the first Polish parochial schools in the city. He welcomed the first Polish Sisterhood into the

diocese with its motherhouse and associated institutions — academy, orphanage, and novitiate. He approved the establishment of the Polish Seminary in Detroit, the first institution of higher learning for Polish Catholics in America. He sought after and welcomed Polish priests into the diocese, supplying Polish parishes with pastors and Polish institutions with chaplains and teachers. He was more fortunate with some of his admissions than with others, but his incardination and support of Rev. Joseph Dabrowski more than makes up for errors in other cases due not to lack of judgement on his part but to misleading or incomplete information about priests of questionable character from their home chanceries.

Bishop Borgess also conferred the first confirmations on Polish Catholics in Detroit. He was the first Detroit bishop to send Polish students to study for the priesthood and to confer some of the orders upon them. It is likely, too, that he ordained the first priests of Polish ancestry for the diocese. He was also the first bishop to appoint a Polish priest to a diocesan office. In fact, a good deal of Detroit's Polish Catholic heritage owes its origin and development to Bishop Borgess, who laid a foundation upon which succeeding bishops continued to build.

Even St. Albertus Parish owes more to Bishop Borgess than most of its parishioners may realize. Aside from the fact that he authorized the formation of the parish, blessed the church, and supplied it with its first seven pastors — not all of whom proved worthy of his trust — he more than anyone insisted on a solid financial as well as spiritual foundation of the parish for the good of the congregation. He personally contributed some money for the building of the first frame church. Later, he donated two stained glass windows to the new brick church.

Even his handling of the Kolasinski Crisis indicates a corrective rather than a punitive motive on his part. He might have destroyed Fr. Kolasinski as a priest completely and irretrievably had he made use of the public media (as Fr. Kolasinski did) and released the evidence he had carefully and patiently accumulated. Instead, the bishop opted for giving Fr. Kolasinski another chance in another diocese. Bishop Borgess might have ended and, in fact, he intended to end the interdict sooner but the opposition to the opening of the church then came from the Kolasinskiites who refused any priest but Fr. Kolasinski the right to celebrate worship services in St. Albertus Church. Finally, Bishop Borgess might have refrained from excommunicating the Kolasinskiite faction of St. Albertus congregation. In fact, he withheld his first excommunication decree out of regard for the loyal remnant of the parish: But when he saw his clemency spurned and interpreted as a sign of weakness or fear and becoming a source of scandal for the good Catholics of Detroit, then at last he acted with decision and firmness.

The extant correspondence and published releases and statements of Bishop Borgess contain no anti-Polish comments or prejudice. On at least one occasion he defended the Polish Catholics of St. Albertus congregation against certain scurrilous practices of yellow journalism. And he certainly harbored no grudge against the congregation of St. Albertus, for he willingly accepted the invitation to preside at a confirmation ceremony, after he had resigned from the Detroit episcopate. To him Polish Catholics were like other Catholics — Irish, German, French-Canadian, Belgian — not of one mould and that a faulty one but of

various types, most good, some indifferent, some bad. Each group, each parish was to be judged in the light of its specific circumstances.

The circumstances under which Fr. Chodniewicz left St. Albertus Parish remain unclear. He was not dismissed but apparently left at his own request. The source of his irritation and dissatisfaction is unknown. There is indication of a possible disagreement between him and the bishop's secretary over the denial of Christian burial to a member of the parish. Fr. Chodniewicz had refused the burial but was told to withdraw his objections since the petitioner was in the right.

Following his withdrawal from St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Chodniewicz shortly afterwards left the Diocese of Detroit. He next ministered in the Archdiocese of Chicago, first as pastor of St. Mary's Church in Downer's Grove, then, as founding pastor of St. Florian's Church in Hegewisch.

Fr. Chodniewicz deserves to be remembered at St. Albertus not only for his youthful priestly energy which he brought at a critical time but also for his supervision of the building of the second parochial school. And while he appears to have had nothing to do with the return of Fr. Kolasinski to the fold, perhaps his fresh priestly zeal may have awakened some latent memory in Fr. Kolasinski's heart — a memory of a time when the recently ordained Fr. Kolasinski set out to win followers for Christ not for himself. Or perhaps, it was the prayers of the deceased Bishop Borgess that finally effected the conversion.

The reconciliation of Fr. Kolasinski with the Bishop of Detroit brought to an end this somewhat clouded phase in the history of St. Albertus Parish. It finally lifted the shadow hovering over Fr. Kolasinski's successors. He would live almost four years more, and win more headlines in the newspapers over the financial insolvency of Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish.

But unlike the three pastors reviewed in this chapter, future administrators of St. Albertus Parish would be free from his ghostly haunting of the congregation.

CHAPTER 5

THE LIFE-LONG PASTOR

Rev. Francis A. Mueller, the tenth pastor of St. Albertus Parish, was the first and (so far) the only pastor who died at his post after nearly nineteen years of service to the congregation. He also may have been (with the possible exception of Rev. Florian Chodniewicz) the youngest pastor appointed to minister to the parish; he was then still almost five months short of his twenty-sixth birthday. His pastorate was the second longest in the parish's history, exceeded only by the twenty-one year tenure of Rev. Bernard Ciesielski.

Despite the German patronymic inherited from his father, which frequently caused people to classify him as a German, Fr. Mueller regarded himself as belonging to the Polish nationality. Those who knew him intimately believed that "there never has been in this city a more intense, sincere, patriotic Pole than . . . the pastor of St. Albertus Church." This strong identification with Polishness was attributed to the influence of his widowed mother who "was of pure Polish birth, a woman in whose veins flowed the blood of the martyrs of

her unhappy country, and who instilled in her son from his earliest boyhood a glowing love for Poland."

This, along with his partly Germanic origin and education coupled with his American training and experience, blended to produce a personality that, further enhanced by personal qualities of eloquence, efficiency and humaneness, won and held the hearts of his Prussian-Polish parishioners (and their children) who regarded him as one of their own.

1. A SILESIA SOLIDARIZER



FR. FRANCIS MUELLER

Yet, strictly speaking, though Fr. Mueller came from Prussian-Poland, he was neither a Kashub nor a Poznanian but a Silesian. The two extant disparate accounts of Fr. Mueller's origin, despite differences in the date and city of his birth, agree on the province, Silesia, (or more precisely Upper Silesia), the largest and southernmost province of Prussia.

The native Silesians, (as distinguished from subsequently imported German colonists and their descendants), were members of a Slavic tribe linguistically related to the Poles and united with them during the formative period of the Polish state. In time, like the Kashubs to the north, the Silesians came under German rule partly by conquest and partly by dynastic intermarriage and lineal extinction. As a result, the Silesians were subjected to stronger and more intensive Teutonization than were the Kashubs or the Poznanians. But even

more stubbornly and persistently than the others, the Silesians retained, for the most part, the sense of their Slavic identity and the memory of their former union with Poland.

Fr. Mueller was such a Silesian. He was born, according to the *Detroit Journal's* biographical sketch published before his funeral, "in Breslau, Oct. 14, 1869 . . . the capital city of the Prussian province of Silesia." But more likely, according to the diocesan necrological notice issued after his death, he was "born in Beuthen, Ober Silesia, Prussia, November 14, 1868."

Beuthen (Bytom in Polish) was a county seat in the Regency of Oppeln (Opole), the easternmost and most Polish of the three regencies comprising Prussian Silesia. Located 187 kilometers southeast of Breslau (Wroclaw), the city had 19,384 inhabitants in 1875, when Francis Mueller was seven years old. Though the Bytomian residents were in the majority German, the population in the outlying rural districts was predominantly Silesian Polish.

Since mid-nineteenth century, Bytom itself developed into a center of Silesian-Polish cultural identity with two outspoken Polish newspapers and a group of Polish-minded Silesian writers and organizers. Some of their influence may have affected not only Mrs. Mueller but also her son during the first seventeen impressionable years that he spent in his native Silesia.

Francis Mueller received his early education (most likely bilingual – Polish and German) in Bytom. At the age of ten, he lost his father. For the next seven years, his widowed mother's labors provided for his high school studies at Wroclaw where he apparently intended to devote himself to the priestly vocation.

But in 1885, Francis and his mother joined the increasing migration of Silesian Poles to America and settled in Detroit. With the help of Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, Francis obtained part-time employment as a gardener at the Felician Motherhouse and at the same time continued his studies by attending classes at the Jesuit Detroit College, (the forerunner of the University of Detroit) located on Jefferson Avenue just above St. Antoine Street.

When the Polish Seminary opened its doors in December, 1886, Francis Mueller (who had come to America with the hope of becoming a priest), was one of the six young men who formed the nucleus of the student body. Prior to the seminary's opening, he "had helped lay the floors" in the halls. During the opening ceremonies, he delivered an address in Latin before Bishop Caspar Borgess and the assembled clergy. After his studies at the Polish Seminary, Francis completed his theological courses at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. He was ordained by Bishop John Foley October 4, 1891, in his home parish of St. Albertus in Detroit.

Three days later, October 7, 1891, Fr. Mueller received his first assignment as assistant at St. Albertus Church. At first, for two days, he was coassistant with Rev. Florian Chodniewicz during the interval when Rev. Casimir Rohowski's resignation had not yet been formally accepted by the bishop. When this occurred, Fr. Mueller became assistant to Fr. Chodniewicz.

After not quite six months, Fr. Mueller was transferred in January, 1892 as assistant to the German church of the Sacred Heart in Detroit at Prospect and Grove Streets, attended by some Prussian-Polish families. He remained here for over two years, until his appointment as pastor of St. Albertus Parish to succeed

Fr. Chodniewicz July 5, 1894. This was his first and only appointment as pastor.

Fr. Mueller's pastoral tenure at St. Albertus lasted nearly nineteen years or, to be precise, eighteen years and 283 days. Second in length to Rev. Bernard Ciesielski's twenty-one year administration, it exceeded Rev. Joseph Herr's pastorate by only twenty days. At the time of his appointment, Fr. Mueller was not quite twenty-six years old (according to the later necrological chronology); when he died at his post April 19, 1913, he had eight months to go to his forty-fifth birthday.

Fr. Mueller brought to his lengthy pastorate a relatively short priestly experience of slightly more than two and one-half years. More importantly, however, he brought with him a willingness to work with people and the ability to inspire members of the congregation and involve them in various parochial activities.

This appeared in the overall statistical record of the parish between 1894 and 1913. When Fr. Mueller began his pastorate in 1894, St. Albertus parish had 1,500 families, new brick church, school, and rectory buildings, two connected (but originally four separately purchased) parcels of real estate separated by Canfield Avenue (as Fremont Street came to be known officially since August, 1882, although contemporary records took a little time to take cognizance of the name change), and a debt of \$73,000 on the church and school buildings plus a mortgage on one of the lots. When he died in April, 1913, the number of families in the congregation had climbed to 2,000, the mortgage on the land was cleared, the debts on the buildings were paid off, and the parish premises were enlarged by three more parcels of land.

The additions of real estate resulted from transactions involving one quit-claim and two warranty deeds. While the name of Fr. Mueller does not appear in the records, as pastor he undoubtedly played a role in their instigation or support. On December 7, 1898, F. A. Schulte and Bertha V. Schulte, his wife, quit-claimed to Bishop John Foley for one dollar, not only their trust mortgage to a piece of land along "the southern line of Fremont Street," but also a piece of land along "the Westerly line of St. Aubin Avenue" and also "Lots 1, 2, 3 of M. Moran's Subdivision." On November 10, 1902, Mark F. Hope and Emma Hope, his wife, executed a warranty deed to Bishop John Foley involving "Lot 10 and South ½ of Lot 11, Block 43, of the St. Aubin Farm of Moran Subdivision." Finally, on June 30, 1910, Victor Jurkiewicz and Martha Jurkiewicz, his wife, assigned a warranty deed to Bishop John Foley for "Lot 6 of Moran's Subdivision."

Fr. Mueller achieved this expansion in spite of the fact that his annual revenues (less the small annual balance) fluctuated between \$15,260.08 (in 1897) and \$28,852, in 1911. His annual expenditures ran from \$15,068.74 in his first full year as pastor to \$24,592.16 in his last complete year. What is more important, he managed to operate and expand the parish plant in spite of two consecutive divisions of St. Albertus congregation during his pastorate – a fact which exerted an influence on the parish income yet one with which he coped successfully.

The first of the new offshoot parishes (and fourth chronologically) was St. Stanislaus congregation, named after an eleventh-century Polish martyred bishop of Krakow. It was founded in July, 1898, when Rev. Francis Gzella, an alumnus

of St. Albertus School ordained July 2, 1893, by Bishop John Foley, was appointed the first pastor of the new parish. It began with "about 500 to 700 families" drawn from St. Albertus, St. Josaphat, and Sweetest Heart of Mary congregations.

Fr. Mueller assisted the fledgling pastor by providing him with temporary residence at St. Albertus rectory. The St. Albertus Society of the parish made the first contribution to the incipient parish, inspiring other societies at St. Albertus and the neighboring parishes to make similar donations. Fr. Mueller also hosted the clergy who attended the new parish's dedication ceremony by inviting them to his parish rectory for a special reception. The St. Stanislaus Church was located at Medbury and Dubois Streets about thirteen blocks north of St. Albertus Church.

When next consulted by the bishop in February, 1907 about the possibility of another Polish parish nearby, Fr. Mueller offered no opposition to the proposal. In fact, he endorsed it readily, saying that "there was plenty of room and good prospects for two new Polish parishes" — one east of McDougall Avenue and another in Hamtramck, north of Grand Boulevard. His suggestions, though not fully accepted, received careful consideration at the chancery.

Shortly after, in 1907, the second (but historically the fifth) parochial offshoot of St. Albertus congregation sprang into existence. Named after a thirteenth-century Polish Dominican, St. Hyacinth (Jacek), the new church was located at McDougall and Farnsworth Streets, about six blocks northeast of St. Albertus Church. The new congregation took another several hundred families away from St. Albertus Parish as Bishop Foley, after consultation with the pastors involved, decreed that Mitchell Avenue, running from Grand Boulevard in the north to Gratiot in the south, was to be the boundary line henceforth separating the two parishes. The pastor of the new congregation was Poznan-born Rev. Sylvester Kolkiewicz, ordained July 22, 1893, by Bishop Foley.

In 1908, St. Florian's Parish was established in Hamtramck, at least partly owing to Fr. Mueller's proposal. While some few members of this congregation may have worshipped at one time or another at St. Albertus, most were subsequently associated with St. Stanislaus Church of which St. Florian became an offshoot.

Despite repeated division of the mother congregation to form new daughter-churches, St. Albertus Parish continued to thrive. Its ranks were being replenished by native-born Polish Detroiters and by a continuous, increasing flow of immigrants from "the three Polands," but now chiefly from the Russian and Austrian sectors, with the Galicians tending to settle on the city's West Side. The addition of these newcomers to the Prussian-Polish majority of St. Albertus (along with donations like those of the F. A. Schulte family) made possible the solvency of the parish debt.

Details of the solvency of the debts on the church and school buildings are incomplete and unclear. But the extant records indicate that the indebtedness kept dropping gradually but steadily, declining to \$33,000 in eight years. After that, it disappeared from the ledger entries. There remain, however, indications of refinancing through more favorable loans, like the one made in November 1898 to the amount of \$42,000.

Fr. Mueller did not raise the parish from indebtedness to the first real prosperity enjoyed by the congregation without considerable help from his parishioners, societies, trustees, sisters, and assistant priests. He was especially fortunate in the last group of auxiliaries, who not only served St. Albertus Parish with exemplary dedication but also caused the pastor no personal regrets or difficulties by their activities. In return, they received valuable training and Fr. Mueller's warm recommendation for pastoral appointments as these became open.



FR. MUELLER AND ASSISTANTS

(TOP ROW LEFT TO RIGHT — FR. CONSTANTINE DZIUK, FR. MUELLER, FR. FELIX KIERUJ. BOTTOM ROW — FR. WILHELM MARUSZCZYK, FR. ROMAN KLAFKOWSKI.)

The roster of these assistant priests included Father Bartholomew Zindzius (November 8, 1894-1896); Francis Doppka (April 6, 1897-1900); Felix Kieruj appointed second assistant (August 21, 1897-1900); Francis J. Sajecki (July 13, 1898-August 6, 1901); Albert Nowak (February 28, 1901-1902); Joseph Lempka (1902); Francis J. Sajecki (for the second term from 1902 to 1906); W. Maruszczyk (1906); Roman Klafkowski (1907-1918); Boleslaus F. Stefanski

(1907-1910); Constantine Dziuk (1909); Joseph Wilemski (1911-1913); Paul Sonsalla (1911-1913); and Alexander Konus (time of service unknown but after July 6, 1902).

It would seem that toward the end of his pastorate, Fr. Mueller had as many as four assistants at one time. He proudly claimed in a petition to Bishop Foley that he had "the best assistants in the diocese," praised their work highly, and interceded on their behalf to obtain a permanent stay in the diocese for those who were visitors or had been admitted on a trial basis, while they sought either temporary or permanent exlaustration from their religious orders.

Fr. Mueller was even prouder of the five sons of St. Albertus Parish who were ordained to the priesthood during his pastorate. They included Francis Doppka ordained April 4, 1897; Francis J. Sajecki ordained July 3, 1898; Constantine Dziuk ordained March 10, 1906, in Rome; Boleslaus Stefanski ordained May 13, 1906; and Stanley Skrzycki ordained June 29, 1910. All served in the Diocese of Detroit.

The trustees or members of the parish committee, who were the chief lay collaborators of Fr. Mueller in the parish, included some of the most prominent members of the congregation: Basil A. Lemke, Dr. S. J. Lachajewski, Martin Wagner, Joseph Wolff, Michael Domzalski, Leo Wesolowicz, Martin Adamaszek, and Joseph Neubauer. Michael Domzalski served as the parish committee's secretary not only under Fr. Mueller but also under his two predecessors. Basil Lemke was a member of the Detroit Board of Water Commissioners from 1908 to 1913. Dr. Lachajewski was the leading Polish physician in Detroit and personally attended Fr. Mueller in his illness.

Parish societies flourished during Fr. Mueller's pastorate as never before or since. Thirteen organizations arose at his instigation or with his support. The Society of St. Martin was founded in June, 1895, as was the Society of SS. Peter and Paul. In February, 1896, the Kashubian Knights of St. Jacek sprang into existence with the help of M. Ostrowski, J. Becker, J. Rzepa, M. Treppa, Ig. Wolf, J. Bialk, W. Biesk, A. Lipka, J. Kusecki, J. Sikora, and J. Detlaf.

Early in 1900, Fr. Mueller initiated a popular Lecture Club (Towarzystwo Oswiaty), which sponsored informative talks and discussions of interest to adults anxious to increase their fund of knowledge and to engage in dialogue. Teenagers and young adults were encouraged to attend the sessions addressed by professors of the Polish Seminary in Detroit and by visitors from partitioned Poland.

Four years later, the L.C.B.A. Society was founded by the women of the parish and soon numbered 590 members. In May, 1901, apparently as counterpart of the Kashubian Knights, the Polish Knights of St. Casimir were organized by M. Wagner, P. Kowalski, B. Owczarzak, S. Kowalski, W. Pawlak, J. Polachowski, W. Debinski, F. Bernak, J. Kaminski, J. Penczak, and A. Jozwiak. It is not clear whether the founders were Poznanians, or Russian-Poles, or a mixture of both.

The St. Francis Society was established in April 1902 for men and women. Next year, in March, the women founded St. Barbara Society, while in 1906 the Guild of Christian Mothers arose with the help of M. Browarska, K. Herr, and M. Krzywdzinska. A woman's chapter of St. Vincent de Paul Society appeared in 1907.



CHRISTIAN MOTHERS SOCIETY

The St. Wojciech Chapter of the Foresters came into existence in March 1904 under Joseph Fleming (president), August Slovey (secretary), Adam Stieber (treasurer), and Joseph Labuda (director of the sick). Like the L.C.B.A. Society, the Foresters Chapter constituted one of the early signs of the progressive Americanization of the parochial structure as well as of the parochial neighborhood.

But the most explicit manifestation of advancing Americanization appeared in June 1912 when the St. Albertus Young Men's Club was established. Destined to become the parish's most widely known organization in Detroit, the Club soon gained fame as one of the most successful amateur baseball and basketball aggregations in the city. The founders and first officers were Felix Sobkowiak (chairman), Frank Fleming (president), Edward Karpinski (vice-president), John Brzyski (secretary), Van Maciejewski (treasurer), John Gohr (sergeant-at-arms), and trustees John Fleming, Leon Koss, Leon Quart, and Vitold Tomanek.

Besides parish-centered and-oriented societies, Fr. Mueller encouraged the establishment and development of lay organizations with a non-parochial base, scope or purpose, although most, if not all of the members, belonged to the various Polish parishes in Detroit. One of the most interesting of these organizations was the inter-parochial Polish Military Battalion of Thaddeus Kosciuszko under the Patronage of St. Casimir. Founded January 1, 1897, in the St. Albertus School hall, it attracted 175 members from six semi-military units in three neighboring parishes: The Knights of St. Michael the Archangel and the Knights of St. Francis (St. Albertus Parish), the Fusiliers of St. Casimir, The Fusiliers of St. Josaphat, and the Knights of St. Ladislaus (St. Josaphat Parish), and the Knights of St. Michael the Archangel (Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish).

Their aim apparently was to promote the ideals of chivalry and prepare for the possible liberation of Poland. By 1906, the Battalion grew to 255 uniformed members and spread to three West-Side Polish parishes and five additional units of riflemen under saintly patronage, one of them, St. Hedwig. The uniformed units lent military color and patriotic flavor to marches, processions, and certain festive observances like Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, and Pentecost.

Other non-parochially oriented organizations, which members of St. Albertus Parish helped to organize, or to direct as officers, or simply to support them as dues-paying or service rendering participants included: The Polish Falcons as reorganized in February 1899 (after an earlier initial attempt ended in failure); the Polish American Club organized in November 1900 and led chiefly by young men from St. Albertus Parish; The Polish Women's Welfare Society under the Patronage of the Holy Trinity established in December 1902 and also directed largely by parishioners of St. Albertus Congregation; the Chopin Quartet and The Quo Vadis Society both founded in 1903 with the help of young men from St. Albertus congregation; a Detroit Chapter of The Associated Polish Youth of North America organized in December 1905; the first Detroit Chapter of the Polish Falconettes founded in 1905 chiefly by women from St. Albertus Parish from where the organization spread to other Polish parishes in Detroit; and The Harmonia Singing Society founded in January 1906 by a group that included several young people from St. Albertus Parish.

2. THE SILVER JUBILEE AND THE SCHOOL

Another area in which Fr. Mueller excelled was the organization and presentation of the liturgy. During his pastorate, the various services celebrated in St. Albertus Church were highly regarded for their impressive splendor and choral excellence. Aside from the five or more Sunday Masses offered with the active singing participation of crowds of worshippers, and besides the traditional Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, and Pentecost observances, Fr. Mueller was always on the lookout for special occasion celebrations to inspire his parishioners with the beauty of the liturgy wedded to traditional Polish pageantry.

Certainly the most awe-inspiring and grandiose ceremonies arranged by Fr. Mueller were those in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of St. Albertus Parish. They extended over a seven-day period, that ran from Wednesday, July 14, to Tuesday, July 20, 1897. Two bishops, scores of priests, over thirty societies and organizations from Detroit, Toledo, and Cleveland, and several thousand worshippers lent color as well as solemnity to the celebration which included Pontifical Masses of Thanksgiving, Masses for living and deceased parishioners, ordinations of clerics and priests, sermons by bishops, priests and the founding pastor, special evening devotions, a first Mass offered by a newly-ordained priest, a special musical program and a night-time display of fireworks on the parish grounds.

Msgr. Edward Joos, vicar-general of the Detroit Diocese and representative of the ailing Bishop John Foley started the commemorative observance with a low Mass at five o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, July 14. At ten o'clock, Rev. Simon Wiczorek, the founding pastor of St. Albertus, celebrated High

Mass while Rev. A. Fremuel of Cleveland preached on "The Unity of the Church," recalling some of the congregation's early trials. At evening vespers, Fr. S. Matuszewski, of Toledo preached on the silver jubilee and reviewed the progress of Polish Catholics in Detroit. The church services were followed by a display of fireworks on the church grounds and a formal musical program in the school hall.

Thursday morning, July 15, Bishop Dennis O'Connor, of London, Ontario, conferred minor orders on six students of the Polish Seminary in a crowded church and preached the occasional sermon. Evening vespers with a sermon by Fr. Mueller concluded the second day's celebration.

Friday morning, July 16, Bishop O'Connor again offered Pontifical Mass and conferred the subdiaconate on the six seminarians. Saturday the same students received the diaconate from Bishop O'Connor. On Sunday, July 18, at the Pontifical High Mass, in the presence of over 2,500 worshippers straining to catch every action and word of the ordination ritual, six deacons, graduates of the Polish Seminary, were raised to the priesthood. They included Felix Kieruj, John Godrycz, John Grudzinski, Boleslaus Radka, Michael Dyminski, and Stanislaus Jaszczynski.

Beside this exceptional ordination ceremony, the earlier rite of April 4, 1897, when Francis Doppka, a son of St. Albertus Parish was ordained, paled almost into insignificance. Yet that former ceremony, in a sense anticipatory of the later celebration, was also a notable observance of Fr. Mueller's pastorate.

Sunday afternoon, at one o'clock, after the impressive group ordination of that morning, Bishop Joseph Rademacher of Fort Wayne Diocese, confirmed 446 individuals, children and adults, in one of the parish's more memorable confirmation services.

Monday, July 19, newly ordained Rev. John Godrycz, who was destined to teach in the Polish Seminary, celebrated his First Mass in St. Albertus Church at eight o'clock with Rev. Paul Gutowski, pastor of Detroit's St. Casimir Parish, preaching the occasional sermon. Then, at ten o'clock, Bishop Rademacher offered a Pontifical Mass at which Fr. Mueller preached.

The week-long anniversary observance came to a close Thursday morning, July 20, with a Solemn Requiem Mass for the deceased of the parish who had passed away during the preceding twenty-five years.

No Detroit church had ever witnessed such a series of religious ceremonies in one week. To this date neither has any other.

Fr. Mueller observed the thirtieth anniversary of St. Albertus Parish July 13, 1902, but on a much smaller scale. The jubilee observance was combined with the First Mass celebration of Rev. Alexander Konus, an alumnus of St. Albertus School, who had been ordained July 6 by Bishop John Foley in the Cathedral along with four other graduates of the Polish Seminary: Joseph Lekston, M. J. Orzechowski, Constantine Rutowski, and Francis Pattok. Only the last of the five newly ordained priests was destined to serve in the Diocese of Detroit.

Another impressive ceremony arranged by Fr. Mueller was the funeral service for Fr. Joseph Dabrowski, the rector of the Polish Seminary and director of the Felician Sisterhood in the United States, and the sixth pastor of St. Albertus Parish. He died unexpectedly Sunday morning, February 15, 1903, as he was about to leave his room to go to the Seminary Chapel.

The funeral, held Wednesday, February 18 in St. Albertus Church, turned out to be a "sad tribute of tears" as despite the cold weather nearly 100 priests from various cities, assisted by nuns, students, seminarians, and over 2,000 parishioners filled the church to capacity. Bishop Foley sang the Solemn Pontifical High Mass, while four other bishops knelt in the sanctuary. They included Archbishop F. Katzer of Milwaukee, Bishop H. Richter of Grand Rapids, Bishop S. Messmer of Green Bay, and Bishop J. Schwelbach of LaCrosse. Fr. Mueller preached in Polish, while Bishop eulogized the deceased seminary founder in English.

The sacramental life of the parish continued to flourish during Fr. Mueller's ministry. While there are no statistics for confessions and communions, the available (though not always consistent) figures for other sacramental rites point to a steady if not spectacular development. Annual baptisms (in the yearly reports) fluctuated between 616 in 1896 and 450 (in 1901) generally exceeding 500; the figures in the parochial manuscript list give 624 as the highest baptismal year's total (1896) and 434 as the lowest annual counterpart (1912) with the overall annual average going beyond 500. Marriages (in the yearly summaries) hovered between eighty in 1895, 1896, and 1899, and forty in 1901; usually they amounted to at least fifty a year. The parochial summary list prepared recently gives 128 marriages as the highest yearly total (1911) and thirty-six as the lowest annual sum (1904); the annual average would run to more than eighty marriages.

Confirmations fluctuated between 446 in 1897 to 146 in 1895; most of the time they exceeded 300. Funerals (in the annual report ledger summary) ran from 170 in 1899 to 234 in 1896; for the most part they exceeded 200 each year. The incomplete parochial summary list runs from a low total of 143 funerals in 1911 to a high of 244 in 1906; the annual average for the period from 1898 to 1912 exceeded 190 funerals.

Not the least of Fr. Mueller's concerns was the appearance of St. Albertus Church. Aside from keeping the interior spotless and the exterior in good condition through careful and consistent maintenance, he added to the beauty of the structure. In May, 1907, he completed the installation of a new marble altar which was consecrated May 26 in a special ceremony. The altar, along with the new communion rail, pulpit, reredos and entrance stone traceries enhanced the already attractive and devotional atmosphere of the church.

Like the church, the parochial school also was a special object of Fr. Mueller's interest and concern. Its bilingual program of studies reflected not only his own youthful experience but also his deepest personal convictions. Such a school was the most effective medium for the training of the Polish immigrants' children in America; it reinforced family unity by transmitting the essentials of the parents' cherished heritage to their children and at the same time prepared the pupils for meaningful life in America.

During Fr. Mueller's pastorate, under the efficient supervision of the Felician Sisters, St. Albertus Parochial School flourished within the limitations set for it by the parish school committee. The bilingual six-year program of studies remained in effect till 1908, when it was extended to eight years. The principals who directed the program included Sisters M. Ursula (1894-1896), M. Gabriela (1896-1901), M. Catherine (1901-1906), M. Salomea (1906-1907), M.

Cecilia (1907-1908), M. Fabians (1908-1909), M. Bernarda (1909-1910), M. Anna (1910-1911), M. Colette (1911-1912), and M. Catherine (1912-1913).

The Catholic Directories of the period, however, give a different list of school principals at St. Albertus. Sr. M. Brunona is reported for the years from 1896 through 1904; then Sr. Catherine (1905-1908), followed by Sr. Fabiana (1909), Sr. Simplicia (1910), Sr. Mary Ann (1911), and Sr. Coletta (1912).

The available sources also present disparate enrollment figures for this period. The Catholic Directories (Hoffman's, Sadlier's, and Kenedy's) generally give rounded, even-numbered totals: 950 for 1895, 1,150 for 1896 through 1902, inclusive, and 1,500 for 1903 and 1904. From 1905 through 1913, the enrollment drops below 1,500 in the following sequence: 1,475, 1,420, 1,440, 1,472, 1,311, 1,270, 1,184, 1,260, 1,338. The attendance figures reported to the chancery, though incomplete, are somewhat higher, fluctuating between 1,077 in 1895 and 1,580 in 1906. From 1896 through 1899, the annual attendance was reported as being 1,200, 1,223, 1,150, and 1,150 respectively. The total for 1900 was 1,420. From 1906 through 1908, the yearly totals were listed as 1,580, 1,400, and 1,239. Finally, the annual attendance from 1910 through 1912 was reported as 1,208, 1,400, and 1,250.

The number of teaching sisters, though indicating a generally upward swing, also showed some fluctuations. The faculty included sixteen members in 1895 (an increase of four over the preceding year) and twenty-three in 1912. There was a steady addition of teachers until 1908, when the staff was reduced from twenty-three to twenty sisters. The larger number, however, reappeared three years later.

A surviving school record book for 1894-1895 lists the following teachers by name: Sisters M. Joachima, M. Stanislaw, M. Anselma, M. Zitta, M. Patricia, M. Ursula, M. Columba, M. Alphonsa, M. Marianna, and M. Anastasia.

The number of classes as well as classrooms used in the school during this period cannot be determined with full accuracy. Scraps of surviving information indicate that in 1900-1901 there were eight grades; and in 1911-1912 there were five classes in the first grade.

More interesting, however, is the fact that a school library was established May 1, 1899. At first, it was located in the fifth grade classroom. Initially, too, the books were kept in a locked cabinet behind glass doors. As the number of books in the collection exceeded 1,000, open shelves were introduced. The collection of Polish and English-language books served the needs not only of the students but also of adults who could borrow books for two weeks.

Both the pastor and the parishioners appreciated the dedicated services of the Felicians to their children and to the congregation. Without the contributed services of the Sisters, the school would be unable to function financially or otherwise. And without the parochial school, the future growth of the parish would be considerably inhibited, for the school kept training new generations of parishioners imbued with a sense of identity with and loyalty to their local community as represented by the parish neighborhood.

There was only one way in which Fr. Mueller and his parishioners could show at least a minimal measure of appreciation for the Sisters' sacrifices — working for token salaries amounting to twenty dollars a month per sister, teaching effectively in overcrowded classrooms averaging between fifty and sixty

students, and living not in their own parish convent but boarding out at the Motherhouse and obliged to follow its regimen of exercises and daily routine.

Encouraged repeatedly by Fr. Mueller, the parishioners of St. Albertus gladly responded to signs of religious vocation in their daughters, permitting them to enter the Felician Sisterhood and live lives of idealism and dedication to Christian community-building wherever they might be sent. Perhaps without realizing it, these parents were contributing to the steadily growing Catholic movement not only to ennoble womanhood but also to enable it to play a more meaningful role in the life of the Polish Catholic community in Detroit.

It has not been possible to determine how many girls from St. Albertus Parish joined the Felician Sisterhood at this time. But the procession started in 1882 by Agnes Kowalska and Matylda Pranga continued to attract new marchers through the years, who became teachers of distinction, some developed artistic talents, others showed writing skill — all working as women leaders for the betterment of their parochial communities.

3. FROM KOLASINSKI TO CZOLGOSZ

The even methodical tenor of Fr. Mueller's administration of the school and the church of St. Albertus was undisturbed except for two instances: first, the temporary return of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski to the newspaper headlines in 1896 and, second, Leon Czolgosz's assassination of President William McKinley in September 1901.

Following his reconciliation with church authorities and his submission to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Detroit in 1894, Fr. Kolasinski pastored peacefully at Sweetest Heart of Mary Church (which contemporaries preferred to call Sacred Heart of Mary Church) for over two years. Then newspapers began circulating rumors of a financial crisis in the parish for over seven months. Finally, on February 1, 1897, the \$200,000 church property was put up for sale at auction and sold March 4 for \$30,000. After several weeks of litigation in the courts over the sale, Fr. Kolasinski and the parishioners won a reversal of the sale, obtained a loan of \$65,000 from a Canadian bank, and repurchased their church for \$45,000.

This saved Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish but did not end Fr. Kolasinski's troubles. Seven months later, he encountered difficulties with some of his trustees who wished to take over full control of parish finances into their hands, and succeeded in doing so. By then, Fr. Kolasinski was in failing health and spirits. He died Monday, April 11, 1898, and after an imposing funeral, was buried at Sweetest Heart of Mary Cemetery which he helped to establish in 1890 at Davison and Mound Road. The burial, as well as the funeral ceremony, took place Saturday, April 13.

This concluding phase of Fr. Kolasinski's crisis-filled life did not affect Fr. Mueller's pastorate directly, although it did stir up some dormant, yet still unpleasant and bitter, memories among certain parishioners. But at the same time, when Sweetest Heart of Mary Church was sold, it did raise the problem of finding room for the members of its dispossessed congregation at St. Albertus and St. Josaphat Parishes. This would have entailed serious difficulties of accommodation and might have renewed old and still rankling hard feelings among families. As a result, the future development of St. Albertus congregation might have taken a different turn than the one it followed.

Czolgosz's assassination of the president of the United States also turned into a specifically local sensation, once the Detroit newspapers discovered that the Czolgosz family had lived at one time for "about a year" in the St. Albertus Parish neighborhood. Inquisitive journalists soon reported to their Detroit readers that "The Czolgosz Family Lived on Benton Street" in 1874 — about nine blocks south of the church and several blocks westward.

That eye-catching headline in Tuesday's *Detroit Journal* of September 10, 1901, brought with it a collection of interesting details. The Czolgosz family, consisting of the father and mother and two children, had occupied top-floor quarters in a three-story brick tenement house at 141 Benton Street. (The building subsequently became the J. N. Dodge Canoe and Oar Works.)

The father, it was recalled, was decent, not an anarchist, did not abuse people, and always went to church (which in 1874 meant St. Albertus). Jacob Lorkowski, who lived across the street from Czolgosz, remembered him (the father) well. More importantly, Lorkowski felt that a third child, a boy, had been born to the family in 1874, which would make him about the same age as the president's assassin.

This startling possibility brought a swarm of reporters to Fr. Mueller's rectory. At their insistence, he made an exhaustive search of the parish records "but could find no trace of the assassin" or the family. As the reporters still remained unsatisfied, Fr. Mueller next day made "another search with special reference to 1873 and 1874 but found nothing." An investigation of the records in the county clerk's office also disclosed no entry of Leon Czolgosz in the official birth ledgers and files.

Subsequent newspaper accounts reported that "Leon Czolgosz was born in Alpena in 1881 or 1882," and had grown up in a "vitiating atmosphere" on a farm near there. This put an end to the speculation about the assassin's possible connection with St. Albertus Church and relieved the embarrassed consternation of the parishioners, who, together with Bishop Foley, not only recited prayers for the president's survival but also condemned anarchism and its "miscreant" practitioner, Leon Czolgosz.

Later historical research by Robert J. Donovan reasserted that Czolgosz had been born in Detroit in 1873 and that his father's first name was Paul. According to Donovan, the family had lived in Detroit for seven years and then moved successively to Rogers City, Posen, and Alpena.

So far, it has been assumed that Czolgosz was the original surname of the family. Perhaps the surname was adopted after the family left Detroit, or after Leon associated himself with anarchistic ideology. In any case, the Baptismal and Marriage Register of St. Albertus Church contains an interesting (and tantalizing) entry in volume one, pages thirty-two and thirty-three, number eleven, under the year 1874:

"Czolkowski, Leon, son of Paul Czolkowski and Marianna Wowak, born May 28 in Detroit — legitimate — baptized May 31. Sponsors: Franc Pass and Marianna Nowak." The entry was made by Rev. Theodore Gieryk, the second pastor of St. Albertus Church.

Although (according to some contemporary newspaper reports repeated by later researchers) Leon Czolgosz was said to have attended parochial school for a while and public school for over five years, no evidence of Leon Czolkowski (or of Leon Czolgosz) has been found in the incomplete St. Albertus School records that have survived.

The Czolgosz and Kolasinski events, though significant in themselves, were at best interesting interludes in Fr. Mueller's busy pastoral career centered around the church and the school. But he did not circumscribe his activities to the confines of St. Albertus Parish. He readily lent his energy and support to various projects which put a claim on his priestly zeal and compassion.

One of these was the welfare of the Polish Seminary where he had been a student in his late teens. He urged the boys of his parochial school to continue their secondary studies in the seminary high school which was open to all boys and not limited to candidates for the priesthood. Fr. Mueller hoped that boys with vocations would continue their studies for the priesthood, while others, grounded more fully in the Polish heritage, would continue their professional studies at the university.

Since the seminary's athletic equipment as well as facilities were budgetarily limited, Fr. Mueller provided the institutional baseball team with its first uniforms and professional equipment — "white suits, red sox, red insignia P S on the shirts, and caps, bats, masks, gloves . . ." About the same time, in 1896, as chaplain of the Polish Roman Catholic Association of Detroit, he persuaded the organization to name the seminary weekly *Niedziela* (Sunday) its official organ, supplying the publication with several thousand much needed subscribers. And in 1898, he secured a donation of \$100 to the Seminary from the Association.

Most importantly, however, Fr. Mueller influenced the formation of the seminary's first alumni association. At his instigation, in August, 1899, letters were sent to nearly seventy priests, inviting them to an organizational meeting at the seminary. Forty-five priests responded, and the alumni association became a viable organization. Its purposes were not restricted to supporting the seminary but also included mutual aid in pastoral work for the welfare of Polish Catholics in the United States.

Fr. Mueller's interest in the Seminary did not end with Fr. Joseph Dabrowski's death and burial. After the rector's funeral, Fr. Mueller received a special mission from Bishop Foley February 25, 1903 "to assist in the examination of all papers, documents, and accounts of the Rev. Joseph Dombrowski at the Seminary of SS. Cyrillus and Methodius." Even when the Seminary moved to different quarters at Orchard Lake in 1909, Fr. Mueller continued to watch over the original Detroit buildings, helping in time not only to arrange for their sale but also to protect their monetary value against the demands of European claimants to Fr. Dabrowski's alleged American estate.

Fr. Mueller was also keenly interested in the advancement of the Polish community in Detroit and ready to support any move designed to consolidate its collective strength and maximize its effectiveness as a force for betterment in Detroit. To this end, he conducted a lifelong campaign to encourage and help talented students to enter the professions and then return to serve and improve their Polish communities as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and priests. He believed that not only the welfare but the progress of the community depended upon the return of its youthful professionals who would provide it with new dynamic leadership as well as much needed social services. He outspokenly and unabashedly supported Polish candidates for public office and used his personal influence with city officials to obtain municipal appointments for bright and

competent Polish Americans of promise.

To Fr. Mueller likewise belongs the credit for reorganizing the nearly defunct Polish Roman Catholic Association founded in June 1894, in the final weeks of Rev. Florian Chodniewicz's pastorate. A year later, on July 8, 1895, the first convention of the Association was held at St. Albertus Parish, and the organization was established on a firm footing. Most of the officers were members of St. Albertus congregation, while Fr. Mueller was elected chaplain and held the post for two years. Later, in July, 1899, he hosted the Association's fifth convention at St. Albertus, and worked effectively for the expansion of the Association and the consolidation of the Polish community in Detroit.

Appreciating the significance of the newspaper for the community, Fr. Mueller in 1905 helped to form a publishing corporation for the publication of a Polish daily in Detroit. On May 4, 1905, he officiated at the laying of the cornerstone for the new building erected on Canfield Avenue near Riopelle. At the same time, besides investing some of his personal funds in the venture, he also became a member of the corporation as its secretary. The other officers included John Jaglowicz (president), Joseph Bozynski (treasurer), and trustees Alexander Lemke and Joseph Goike. The newspaper was the *Dziennik Polski* (The Polish Daily) which made its appearance in 1905 and is still in existence.

This involvement in Polish journalism, enabled Fr. Mueller to intervene and save the *Dziennik* from condemnation by Bishop Foley in April 1912. Acting upon the advice of a group of Polish priests convening in Detroit February 7-8, the bishop issued a letter to be read from the pulpit on Sunday condemning thirteen Polish newspapers for vilifying priests, contemning bishops, spreading lies, and publishing immoral advertisements. Four of the newspapers were printed in Chicago, two in Milwaukee and Toledo respectively, and one in each of these cities: Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Brooklyn, Scranton and Utica.

Though Bishop Foley did not include the Detroit Polish Daily among the censured newspapers, he mentioned it by name in his letter of April 19, 1912. The *Dziennik Polski* received a warning that it, too, would fall under the ban if it "does not change its policy of spreading evil and doing harm by immoral advertising and attacking that which our people should hold as sacred and honorable, our Religion, our Church, and our Hierarchy."

Seven years later, as Polish Detroiters felt the need of a social community center not affiliated with any particular parish but making its services available to all, they decided to build a Dom Polski (Polish House or Hall). When the project was launched near Forest and Chene in 1912, Fr. Mueller spoke at the laying of the cornerstone and lent financial as well as moral support to it. The Dom Polski soon became the center of Polish cultural, social and political activity, for outstripping in influence its earlier predecessors — Fredro (later Harmonia) Hall erected in the 1880's and Polonia Hall built in the 1890's.

With all these interests and involvements, Fr. Mueller found time to place himself at the disposal of Bishop Foley and to serve the Diocese of Detroit in special capacities that took him beyond his parochial confines. In May, 1901, Fr. Mueller accepted Bishop Foley's appointment to act as "auditor and to take testimony in the affair in the parish of Hilliard's, Mich." Next year, in November, he went as the bishop's "representative in the difficulty existing . . . at Wyandotte, Mich., and to report on the same." February 25,

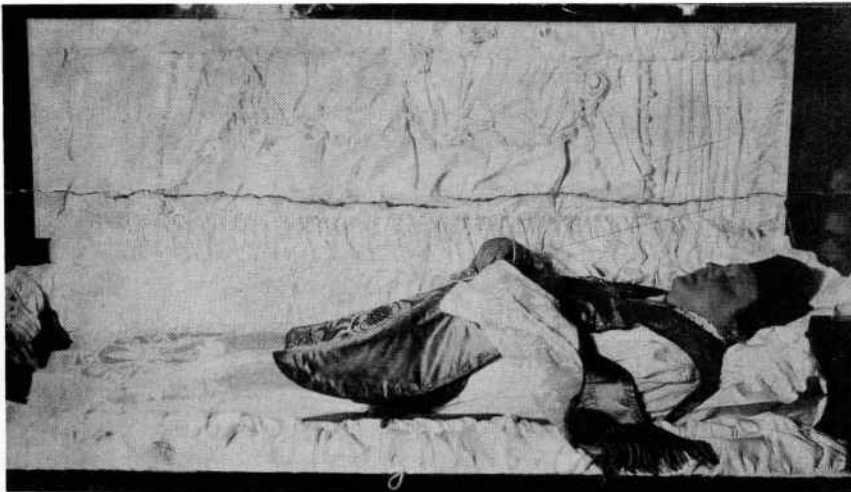
1903, when he received the bishop's commission to examine Fr. Dabrowski's posthumous papers, marked only the beginning (as was pointed out earlier) of his concern over the deceased rector's legacy.

In addition, Fr. Mueller served for sixteen years as a member of the Eastern Deanery Board of Education, from his appointment in 1897 until his death. He was the third Polish priest to hold a diocesan office, following Rev. Joseph Dabrowski (who was the first priest to serve as president of the Detroit Diocesan School Board) and Rev. Paul Gutowski, pastor of St. Casimir Parish, who had become a member of the board several years before Fr. Mueller. From 1902 until his death, Fr. Mueller also served as a diocesan examiner of the junior clergy.

Shortly before his death, in recognition of his faithful service to the Catholic Church and the Polish community in Detroit, Fr. Mueller received an unexpected gift which delighted him. It was a photograph of the saintly Pope Pius X (canonized in 1954) personally inscribed and signed by the pontiff himself. The Latin inscription said: "To our beloved son in charge of St. Albert Church in Detroit we impart from the heart a pledge of our good will and our apostolic blessing."

Though gladdened by the papal message, Fr. Mueller showed signs of apprehension about his health as the 1913 New Year brought its wintry blasts. Yet he continued his work and numerous interests, eager for spring. He gave an interview to *The Detroit Journal* in favor of woman suffrage. He preached Easter Sunday with concern about the damage done by a windstorm on Good Friday to the church steeple and chimney.

Easter Monday morning he became quite ill and died about two weeks later of pneumonia. After receiving the last rites from Rev. Roman Klafkowski, he breathed his last on Saturday, April 19, at 7:35 in the evening, at the rectory.



FR. MUELLER

Fr. Mueller's funeral, held Thursday, April 24, was among the largest and most impressive in Detroit's Polish community history. The active and honorary pallbearers included some of the best known citizens of the city. The church was filled to overflowing by over 3,000 parishioners, priests, nuns, and dignitaries. Bishop Foley and his auxiliary Edward D. Kelly both attended as did Suffragan-Bishop Paul Rhode of Chicago. Bishop Kelly celebrated the Requiem Mass, after which Bishop Foley eulogized the deceased in English while Rev. Joseph Lempka delivered the Polish funeral oration.

The body was temporarily interred at Mt. Elliott Cemetery, where Bishop Rhode performed the final obsequies. Subsequently, Fr. Mueller's remains were moved, at his own dying request, to Mt. Olivet Cemetery and laid in a mausoleum next to the tomb of his beloved mother. She had resided with him up to the time of her death three years earlier.

Fr. Francis Mueller was one of the best and most faithful stewards of St. Albertus Parish. He brought it stability and prosperity, peace and prestige. He made it possible for the parishioners to look their neighbors proudly in the face and to carry their heads high with dignity.

This good repute redounded to the Polish community at large throughout Detroit. Earlier, in the 1870's and 1880's, the city papers wrote with veiled contempt or half-concealed sarcasm, or with waspish attempts at "Polish Jokes," about "Polacktown slums" with "the shanties . . . hogs and geese in the backyards . . ."; about "Polacktown wives 'at the market shopping' with a sharp tongue . . ."; about "Polackville . . . the Polack church . . ."; and about "The Rioting Polacks having another shindig at the church" and "some broken heads . . ."

Now, due in good measure to the many-sided, persistent influence of Fr. Mueller, Detroit newspapers began, already during his lifetime, to publish articles with a different tone and content — about "Detroit's Polish Colony," about "Detroit's Polish Pioneers and Their Remarkable Progress," about "Shepherds of the Polish Flock and their Churches," about "Representative Polish Citizens" about "Detroit Poles in Music . . .," and about "Detroit's Beautiful Polish Girls."

Mayor William B. Thompson best exemplified the new attitude in a speech he delivered July 5, 1907, at the Polish Falcon convention: "Detroit is proud of its 70,000 Poles who helped its prosperity, built its most beautiful churches, maintained first class schools, paid their taxes, and obeyed the laws." Thirty or even twenty years earlier no politician, however eagerly avid for Polish support or sympathy, would have made such a statement in a public assembly and much less for publication.

CHAPTER 6

THE AMERICAN-MINDED PASTOR

Rev. Joseph F. Herr, the eleventh pastor of St. Albertus Parish, while in some respects similar to his predecessor differed from him in others. Both bore Teutonic surnames, came from Prussian-Poland (though one was a Silesian the other a Poznanian), and made their priestly studies in America. But they differed in outlook and attitude, particularly in one significant respect: Fr. Herr's primary cultural interests, preferences, and loyalties tended to be American

rather than Polish. Where Fr. Mueller sought to maintain a balanced blend of Polish and American values in his personal as well as pastoral activities, Fr. Herr, while neither rejecting nor diminishing the Polish traditions of the parish, preferred to stress and develop the features of American life he deemed desirable for himself and his congregation.

1. THE FIRST WORLD WAR TEST

Fr. Herr came to St. Albertus Parish about fourteen months before the outbreak of World War I in Europe. By then, his American views had already been definitely shaped by the preceding forty-two years of his life, most of them spent in the United States. The war merely provided him with the first real test of his convictions in a congregation not all of whose members shared his outlook.

Joseph Herr was born February 10, 1871 in the village of Mierucin, the Regency of Bydgoszcz and the Province of Poznan in Prussian-Poland. His father was John Anthony and his mother Constance Veronica Modrzynska. The family emigrated with seven children to Detroit either in 1871, the year of Joseph's birth, or (according to other accounts) one or three years after the boy was born.

His early schooling in Detroit was varied. He first attended two West-Side schools — Jefferson Public School and St. Boniface German parochial school. Then, apparently, the family moved to the city's East-Side, for he enrolled at St. Mary's German parochial school. An unsubstantiated later source claims he also attended St. Albertus parochial school, but this seems unlikely.

Joseph studied classics at the Jesuit Detroit College, the precursor of the University of Detroit. Whether he also attended Assumption College in Canada (as one later account claims) likewise appears doubtful, since no mention of the fact appears in his own autobiographical sketch submitted to the chancery shortly after 1920. After completion of his seminary courses at St. Mary's in Baltimore, he was ordained to the priesthood at the age of twenty-four on April 21, 1895. Bishop John Foley of Detroit performed the rite as SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

Fr. Herr spent the first eighteen years of his priestly life in four different charges. His first appointment, dated May 1, 1885, sent him as assistant to St. Boniface German Church on Detroit's West Side where he remained nearly twenty-three months. Then for two and one-half years, he served as pastor of Nativity Church in Sebawaing with charge of a 100 square-mile mission area, where he undermined his health. He returned to Detroit in July 1900 as assistant at St. Casimir Parish, where he remained until October 1902.

Fr. Herr's fourth appointment took him to Jackson where he ministered for nearly eleven years as pastor-founder of St. Joseph Parish. He supervised the construction of a complete parochial building complex — church, school, convent, and rectory. Under his leadership, the congregation grew from sixty-seven to over 500 families.

In addition to his parochial duties, Fr. Herr also undertook counselling of inmates in the state's Jackson Prison. He visited every Polish prisoner in particular and interceded on behalf of many for parole or pardon. He likewise

used his influence to find them new employment away from their former temptations to crime.

These varied experiences provided the basis for Fr. Herr's American-mindedness. He was not an Americanizer in the usual understanding of the term — one who advocates rapid immigrant accommodation to American (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) ways accompanied by equally quick sloughing off of his original native heritage. Then, as now, the term carried an invidious connotation in Polish circles, particularly to the older members of the community whom it reminded of Prussification and Russification.

The name "Americanizers" was used to designate priests and laymen who allegedly turned their backs on Polish traditions and language to become Americans in speech and outlook as quickly as possible not only to survive but also to advance into the mainstream of American society. Individuals of this new point were branded by their opponents as turncoats, Prussianizers, and Russifiers.

The anti-Americanizers in the Polish community in Detroit and elsewhere tended to view America's predominantly Protestant-oriented culture with suspicion and reservations. They insisted on the retention of Polish religious customs as a bulwark of Catholicism in America — a protection of the Polish immigrants' and their children's faith as well as cultural identity. The anti-Americanizers believed (as a later analyst summarized it) that the clergy's and "the Church's role in American life is not to become thoroughly integrated into it but rather to stand apart from it and to condemn those evils which it sees all around it . . ."

Fr. Herr belonged to neither group, although his sympathies lay more with the first. He saw the Polish community becoming a part of Detroit society which provided it with opportunities for advancement unequalled in any of the three partitioned sections of Poland. From personal experience of his varied schooling and early priestly missionary labors, he concluded that association and collaboration with other groups would be beneficial to Polish Americans once they came to regard the United States as their permanent home and the exclusive object of their political concern and allegiance. The appellation which perhaps best described his stance was not Polish American (which would fit Fr. Mueller) but American of Polish descent. It summed up both his life and his views.

With this mental framework, at the age of forty-two, having eighteen years of varied priestly experience behind him, Fr. Herr received his appointment as pastor of St. Albertus Parish May 12, 1913. He remained at this demanding post, for the congregation was one of the largest and most prestigious in the city, until his resignation nearly nineteen years later.

Coming after the portly and renowned Fr. Mueller, Fr. Herr did not at first make a favorable impression on the parishioners of St. Albertus, particularly as they passed from hand to hand in each pew the customary snuff-box for a pinch of snuff before the new pastor's first, introductory sermon to the congregation. Little known in Detroit from which he had been absent for a decade, he seemed like a nonentity by comparison with his predecessor. Of slight, boyish-looking appearance, he reminded the congregation of a seminarian or a newly-ordained priest who would disappear completely were Fr. Mueller's stocky figure to materialize miraculously in front of him.

Perhaps most hesitation was inspired by Fr. Herr's German surname. Whereas known and established facts explained Fr. Mueller's German patronymic, rumors soon clouded Fr. Herr's origins and surname. Gossip accused him (or his father) of changing his original Polish patronymic "Panek" to its German equivalent, and doubts were raised about the sincerity and authenticity of his Polish sentiments.

Fr. Herr did not, apparently, bother to counter these allegations and rumors. If the surname had indeed been changed (or, more precisely, translated from Polish into German), this must have taken place before the family's departure to America. The surname "Herr" appears several times in newspapers of the 1880's as belonging to one of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski's ardent supporters during the first phase of the priest's confrontation with episcopal authority. The adherent was Anton Herr, whereas Fr. Herr's male parent was John Anthony Herr (although one Polish source refers to him simply as Antoni Herr).

The first world war which broke out in Europe in 1914 provided Fr. Herr with several opportunities to state his American viewpoint. Until the formal entry of the United States into the war, he expressed and supported Polish patriotic hopes for the resurgence of an independent Poland united out of the three partitioned regions. But once this country became an active participant in the conflict in April 1917, he directed his endeavors chiefly in support of American policies and projects, subjoining Polish independence to American military and diplomatic planning.

When a group of Polish leaders in Chicago conceived the idea of organizing a Polish Legion in America to fight with the French Army for the liberation and unification of Partitioned Poland during the war, Fr. Herr openly opposed the proposal, even though most (if not all) of the other Polish pastors in Detroit and elsewhere favored the project. "Sunday after Sunday," according to one of his biographers, "he preached to his young men that while the French flag was a very respectable one, the American flag was theirs; that instead of joining up with France, they, having been registered and enumerated for selective service by their own Government, had a duty to remain where they could be found when called to the colors, and that in the meantime they should serve industriously in the supporting of domestic industries."

When the same Polish group issued an appeal for an insurance fund for the Blue Army of Gen. Joseph Haller (as the Polish legion in the French forces came to be known), Fr. Herr responded with the statement that "all the money his people could earn should be saved to be available for the support of the American army."

It is not clear whether these statements were the logical conclusion of Fr. Herr's stance as an American of Polish descent, or whether they derived from some inner conviction that the resurgence of a free and united Poland would come only from American-Allied victory during the war.

Whatever the motive behind them, Fr. Herr's views did not win full acceptance among the members of St. Albertus congregation. Those born in Partitioned-Poland generally opposed the pastor's position and supported the Polish Legion plan, some of them becoming members of Haller's Blue Army and serving in France. But Detroit-born parishioners for the most part shared the

pastor's outlook lending their services and contributing their funds to the American armed forces.

Nonetheless, St. Albertus parishioners did not close their hearts and purses to appeals for aid to Polish war victims. In 1914, they donated over \$700 to Bishop Paul Rhode's Polish War Sufferers' Fund; and in 1920 they collected over \$2,500 for needy Polish children left as victims of war.

Perhaps the most active worker on behalf of the Polish cause at St. Albertus Parish during and immediately after the war was Clara Swieczkowska. A graduate of the parochial school, member of the parish choir and the Young Ladies Sodality, and president of the Mission Society, she was a dynamic activist and leader, one of the most talented, largely self-taught, and most remarkable women to come from the parish. As a reporter for the *Rekord Codzienny* (Daily Record) founded in 1913 to counter the *Dziennik's* growing anticlericalism, she became the most influential Polish feminist and social worker in Detroit.

An active member of numerous organizations and social agencies, some of which she helped to organize, Miss Clara (as she was popularly called) did more for Polish relief in Europe and for the welfare of destitute Polish Detroiters than any other member of St. Albertus congregation during the pastorate of Fr. Herr. She served as financial secretary of the Detroit Polish Women's Relief Committee which, between 1915 and 1920, handled over \$120,000 worth of goods sent to war victims in Poland and to Polish Americans in the armed forces.

After the war, Panna Klara (Miss Clara) helped form the Polish Activities Committee of the League of Catholic Women of Detroit to provide aid to incoming immigrants and relief to needy families. Out of this organization developed in 1923 the Polish Activities League of which she was a cofounder and director for over forty years. Due largely to her leadership, the League established, in the 1920's, St. Elizabeth's Community House for Poles on the West Side and St. Mary's Summer Camp for children in Wanda Park, Utica.

Miss Clara's activities permitted Fr. Herr to concentrate on areas of special concern to the priest in wartime. Not long after the conscription of young men into the American armed forces, news of casualties began reaching St. Albertus parish. It was Fr. Herr's sad and painful duty to bring priestly compassion and religious consolation to bereaved parents and to widowed mothers or wives, upon the death of their lost loved ones in 1918 and 1919. Of the early casualties still noted in extent parish files, five lost their lives in France: Peter Lament (December 21, 1918); Francis Kapczynski (August 1, 1918); John Adamaszek (February 7, 1919); Anthony Lyczkowski (October 14, 1918); and Victor Kręft (November 7, 1918).

Four young men of the congregation perished on the Russian front, some as far north as Archangelsk: Charles Bayer (September 13, 1919); Francis Ruth (January 3, 1919); Joseph Pawlak (March 1, 1918); and John Potulski (September 15, 1918). All the nine young men served in the infantry.

The war speeded up the influence of Americanization that had already begun earlier with the rise of the Detroit-born generation of Polish descent. More and more young people were beginning to think along the lines suggested by Fr. Herr. They were becoming increasingly and even predominantly American-minded, and progressively less and less Polish-oriented. Yet in becoming Americans of Polish descent they, too, like Fr. Herr, still remained bilingual to a

considerable degree, particularly those who attended St. Albertus Parochial School.

2. THE THIRD PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

Next to the war, the parochial school provided the biggest challenge to Fr. Herr and his views on developing Americans of Polish descent. While the war was in progress (but before the United States became a formal participant), in 1916, he decided upon the construction of a new (the third) school, partly because of a steadily increasing enrollment reaching 1,300 pupils (according to Catholic Directory reports) and partly because of Fr. Herr's desire to expand and modernize the instruction and make it an effective instrument of Americanization as he came to understand and practice it.

Fr. Herr began the quarter-million dollar school project in April 1916 on the seven parcels of land behind the church on the southern side of Canfield Avenue. Between April 1 and May 1, he obtained possession of twelve pieces of land varying in size from sundry-footed segments to a full lot; the lot was part of Foxen's subdivision, while the segments lay within the old Witherell Farm which stretched from the railroad tracks to the church site (which, in turn, originally belonged to the St. Aubin Farm of early Detroit history).

In any case, each of the seven warranty deeds to the real estate was made out to Bishop John S. Foley. The persons who signed over the property, apparently all members of St. Albertus congregation, were: John Wesolowski, a widower (April 1, 1916); Franciszka Szymanski, widow of Stanislaus Szymanski (May 1, 1916); Kate Mischinski, widow of Paul Mischinski (May 1, 1916); Rosalia Kokowicz, widow of Stanislaw Kokowicz (May 1, 1916); Jozef Wardowski and Katarzyna Wardowski his wife (May 1, 1916); John Miczulski and Helena Miczulski his wife (May 1, 1916); and Frances Krajenka (May 1, 1916). The sales ran from "100 dollars and other valuable considerations" to \$6,200 per parcel, coming to a total of \$28,200.

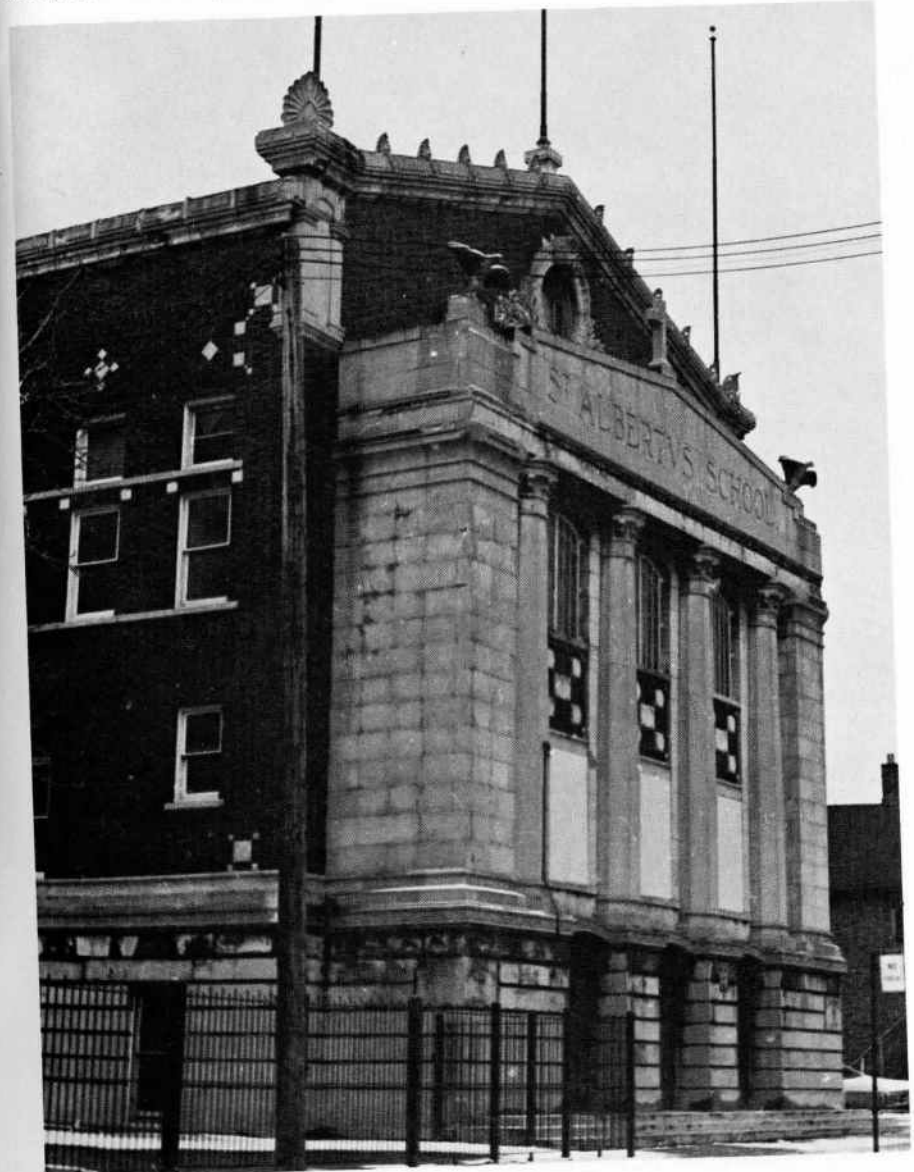
Six months later, together with the parish building committee, Fr. Herr commissioned architect Harry J. Hill and contractors Bryant and Detwiler to start construction of the building. The brick, steel and concrete structure was to cost \$250,000 and was to be completed by October 4, 1917.

This was the third and last school built by the congregation of St. Albertus for its children. The first frame school had stood near the corner of St. Aubin and Fremont (Canfield) next to the frame church located further away from the corner. The second (brick) school was also situated at the corner of St. Aubin and Fremont (Canfield) but across Fremont Street on the block next to the church. The third (brick) school returned to the original block on which the parish buildings were located, only it was built along Canfield behind the church.

When finished, the T-shaped building was one of the finest and most modern elementary grade schools in Detroit. Facing Canfield, it extended with its T-wing between the church and the rectory from east to west. The three-story school contained twenty-four classrooms with a library and an auditorium accommodating 1,000 pupils. All classes were equipped with teaching aids suitable to the subject taught.

The curricular program underwent several notable changes once the new building was put into use. The program of studies, extended in 1908 from six to

eight years duration, remained in force. Several new practical courses were introduced, including manual training and domestic arts. Most notably, however, English became the predominant language of instruction, taking the place formerly held by Polish, although the latter was still used in teaching religion, liturgy, bible history, Polish grammar and Polish history.



THIRD AND LAST SCHOOL

The bilingual and bicultural program of the school was also reflected in various extracurricular activities and school observances. English-language performances commemorated Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays and Thanksgiving Day, Polish-language programs paid tribute to Kosciuszko and Pulaski and, above all, to Christmas with special Nativity plays called *Jaselka* accompanied by the singing of Polish *kolendy* (carols).

The school's enrollment reached its highest point in the history of St. Albertus School during Fr. Herr's pastorate. The total (according to the incomplete Felician records) was 1,875 students attending the 1920-1921 academic year. The Kenedy Catholic Directories from 1913 through 1932 give the following attendance figures: 1,338 (for 1913); 1,300 (for 1914 through 1916); 1,320 (for 1917 through 1919); 1,550 (for 1920); 1,675 (for 1921 and 1922); 1,622 (for 1923 and 1924); 1,604 (for 1925); 1,562 (for 1926). 1,367 (for 1927); 1,403 (for 1928); 1,293 (for 1929); 1,211 (for 1930); 1,032 (for 1931); and 934 (for 1932). The last four totals indicate the increasing influence of the depression.

The number of Felician Sisters teaching at St. Albertus School between 1913 and 1932 also fluctuated. The Catholic Directories list twenty-three Sisters for each of the seven years from 1913 through 1919; twenty-five Sisters appear annually for the period from 1920 through 1924; twenty-four Sisters are reported for 1925 and 1926; twenty-two for 1927; twenty-one for 1928 and 1929; and twenty for the years from 1930 through 1932.

The principals of the school during Fr. Herr's pastorate were Sisters M. Albina (1913-1914); M. Crispina (1914-1917); M. Anastasia (1917-1920); M. Anna (1920-1923); M. Jerome (1923-1926); M. Clara (1926-1929); and M. Leandra (1929-1933).

During these nineteen years the salaries of the teaching sisters were minimal, roughly averaging about twenty-five dollars a month per teacher (until 1927) and rising to forty dollars monthly from then on. The contributed services of the Sisters to the school in terms of comparable salaries received by similarly qualified public school teachers during these years exceeded the original cost of the school. In other words, the Sisters in effect paid for and donated the school to the congregation of St. Albertus by accepting token rather than regular professional salaries for their services.

Sometime during this period, the Sisters also introduced the Little Angel Gift, a weekly penny donation by students for the purchase of additional classroom supplies and decorations. This constituted another contribution to the parish. In 1929-1930, the Gift amounted to \$780, but in 1931-1932 it dropped to \$422, reflecting the growing hardship caused among the parishioners by the depression.



REPAIRING THE STEEPLE DAMAGED BY WINDSTORM

3. THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

While the new school (along with his American-mindedness) might have been Fr. Herr's most lasting influence on St. Albertus Parish, he did not neglect the church edifice and its functions. He watched over the building and kept it in excellent condition. Shortly after becoming pastor, he repaired the roof and shortened the steeple which had been damaged by a windstorm just before Fr. Mueller's death. In 1914, Fr. Herr built a new sacristy for the church, and eleven years later installed a new communion rail.

Even greater was Fr. Herr's concern for the spiritual side of the church — the worship services it provided. According to Polk's City Directory for 1922-23, six Masses were celebrated each Sunday: at six-thirty, seven, eight-thirty, nine, eleven, and twelve. In the afternoon, at three o'clock, vespers were sung in Polish. The parish then had four priests including the pastor.

Deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of the parishioners, Fr. Herr arranged for periodic missions and retreats to be preached to the congregation as

a whole or to particular groups in it. The missions, usually preached by Polish Jesuits, lasted for two weeks – the first directed to women and the second to men. Retreats were held for the young men of the parish, for the Young Ladies Sodality, for husbands, and for wives. The last two were conducted by Msgr. M. Grupa and Rev. A. Klowo of the Polish Seminary in 1923.

Fr. Herr also arranged several special celebrations for the edification of the parishioners and the commemoration of the congregation's anniversary. The most important was the observance of the fiftieth jubilee of St. Albertus Parish on New Year's Day, Thursday, January 1, 1920. The ceremony was attended not only by the parishioners who filled the church to capacity but also by about thirty priests from Detroit and throughout Michigan. Bishop Michael James Gallagher, who succeeded the deceased Bishop John Foley to the Detroit episcopate July 18, 1918, presided at the Golden Anniversary Celebration.

Fr. Herr celebrated the Solemn High Mass with the assistance of Rev. Joseph Plagens, pastor of Sweetest Heart of Mary Church, as deacon, and Rev. Stanley S. Skrzycki, a former alumnus of St. Albertus School, as subdeacon. Bishop Gallagher was assisted at the episcopal throne by Rev. Eustace Bartoszewicz OFMC, pastor of St. Hedwig Church, and by Rev. James Stapleton, pastor of Annunciation Parish. Msgr. Michael Grupa, rector of the Polish Seminary at Orchard Lake, preached in Polish, while Bishop Gallagher first spoke a few words of felicitation in Polish and then addressed the congregation in English.

In his Polish sermon, Msgr. Grupa extolled the role of the Polish parish in America as the bastion of the Catholic faith and of the Polish tradition, and as the protector and caretaker of the Polish people living away from their homeland. Delivered in beautiful language by one of the most eloquent preachers of his generation, the sermon made a notable contribution to the solemnity.

In the evening, the children of the parochial school, trained by the Sisters especially for the occasion, performed a Polish dramatic program in the school auditorium. The presentation featured scenes from the life of St. Albertus, the patron of the parish.

In conjunction with the golden jubilee, the assistant priests of the parish, and particularly Rev. Joseph Czarkowski, published an eighty-four-page Polish commemorative booklet. Though regrettably unpagged, historically derivative (chiefly from Rev. W. Kruska), the brochure commands interest by some of its contents. One is a statement on page (twelve) "that St. Wojciech Parish in Detroit is the first Polish parish in the whole world which is celebrating its golden jubilee at a time when our Fatherland Poland is free and independent."

More significant are the thirteen pictures of parish buildings, priests, and parishioners, some of them unique survivals. Also notable are the lists of parish societies (with annotations) and of the members of the Honorary Committee of the Golden Jubilee of St. Albertus Parish.

The latter list of seventy-two names is of particular historical interest since it includes the names of some of the earliest founders of the parish or their immediate descendents and contains onomastic evidence of the Kashub and Poznanian Prussian-Polish origins of the congregation. Though lengthy, the list deserves to be preserved for posterity in this centennial account of the parish.

The members of the committee were: Bazyli Lemke, Aleksander Lemke,

August Stieber, Jozef Gojke, Michal Domzalski, Franciszek B. Melin, Jan Welsand, Albert Klebba, Jan Zynda, Franciszek Schmidt, August Pryba, Jozef Jagla, Jan Skrzycki, Antoni Szkotzke, Jan Hildebrandt, Edward Gajewski, Xawery B. Konkel, Idzi Maisel, Teofil Gostomski, Jan Kaminski, Franciszek Strzyzewski, Antoni Boza, Antoni Sikora, Jozef Sikora, Jan Miotke, Jozef Lorkowski, Dr. Stan. Lachajewski, Jozef Karsznia, Antoni Lepke, Antoni Kortas, Antoni Treppa, Jan Detloff, Jozef Cylke, Jan Ostrowski, Jan Klebba, Jan Steinhabel, August Steinhabel, Marcin Kulwicki, Jan Becker, Antoni Gojke, Edward Gajewski, Jan Fleming, Sen., Jan Fleming, Antoni Fleming, Jozef Fleming, Pani Gnebba, Pani Mulawa, Marcin Ostrowski, Jan Dopke, Edward Bernack, Tomasz Sobkowiak, Jan Baka, Robert Glowczewski, Josef Bialk, Antoni Herr, Konstancja Herr, Pani Herr i rodzina, Julia Koss, Marcin Grenka, Franciszek Elwart, Franciszek Trebiza, Franciszek Majk, Jakob Wolff, August Szornak, Jan Kreft, Jan Wagner, Franciszek Grenka, Marcin Cwiejkowski, Jan Brzozowski, August Kuntz, Bernard Zentarski, and Antoni Nowe.

The golden jubilee celebration also left future historians of St. Albertus Parish a question: Why did Fr. Herr celebrate the parish's fiftieth year of existence in January, 1920 instead of July, 1922? The latter date would have been consistent not only with the time of the observance of the parish's twenty-fifth anniversary (celebrated in July, 1897) but also with the original launching of the parish in July, 1872, when the first church was dedicated and opened for the use of the congregation.

It is not likely that the planners of the golden jubilee made a mistake in their choice of 1870 instead of 1872 as the foundation year of St. Albertus congregation. What most probably determined their choice of 1870 was their concept of a parish – the concept which the jubilarians of 1920 believed to have been in the minds of the original organizers of the congregation.

That concept, brought from Prussian-Poland where it prevailed particularly among the Kashubs, held that the parish was basically people not buildings. First, a group of people came together, formed a community, usually called it a society under the patronage of some favorite saint, and set to work to collect funds, erect a church, and secure the services of a priest from the local bishop or from another diocese or country, if necessary. The buildings and the priest came after the people as the supplementary and completing elements of the parish community.

This concept, with its implication of trusteeism, seems an unlikely reflection of the 1920 St. Albertus parochial concept, although the idea was discussed (and held) at times in some Detroit congregations – whether the people through their duly formed society or the bishop through an officially appointed pastor constituted the foundational origin of the parish. Perhaps the notion may have been used as the basis of the 1920 jubilee celebration simply as a reminder of the views held at least by some founders of St. Albertus Parish. This appears likely all the more so since until very recent times, neither the bishop nor the chancery issued any specific official documents or charters of parochial erection in the diocese. Consequently, the foundation date, though generally associated with the bishop's appointment of a pastor for a particular nationality or a specific territory, gave parochial chroniclers and jubilee committees an opportunity to select, partly out of a sense of pride and partly out of a desire for historical priority, any likely earlier manifestation of parochial birth.

In this instance, the choice fell upon the birthday of St. Stanislaus Kostka Society which was identified as the birthdate of St. Albertus congregation. Still, aside from the canonically questionable attribution of the date of the parish's origin to the beginning of a lay organization not yet recognized by the bishop as the nucleus of a new congregation nor possessed of any parochial property or priest, the January 1, 1870, date of St. Stanislaus Kostka Society itself suffers from a difficulty which rules out its use as a foundation date of St. Albertus Parish. There is no extant proof that the society was, in fact, established January 1, 1870.

Two surviving accounts of the origin of St. Stanislaus Kostka Society do not support the January 1, 1870, date given by the 1920 golden jubilee *Album* . . . — in its annotated list of St. Albertus' parochial societies. Writing thirteen years earlier, Wincenty Smolczynski stated in his 1907 directory of Detroit's Polish community and its organizations that St. Stanislaus Kostka Society "was founded December 19, 1870, and incorporated January 21, 1871." Writing seventeen years after the St. Albertus fiftieth anniversary of 1920, F. W. Dziob, claiming to have read the organization's booklet of rules and regulations published in 1896, affirmed in his centennial jubilee account of Detroit's Polish settlement that the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society "was organized in 1870" as the first Polish society in Detroit and incorporated in 1871. Perhaps a copy of that 1896 booklet may yet be found to help resolve this chronological problem.

Less than four months after the parish's golden jubilee, the parishioners of St. Albertus congregation organized a special anniversary celebration in honor of Fr. Herr's twenty-five years of priestly service. The jubilee Mass was celebrated by Fr. Herr in the presence of Bishop Michael James Gallagher, who succeeded the deceased Bishop Foley in July, 1918. Rev. Casimir Skory of Grand Rapids, preached the jubilee sermon. Sunday evening, the children (trained by the Sisters) enacted a special commemorative program of words and music in honor of the pastor.

This parochial tribute to Fr. Herr was in part a token of esteem and in part a recognition of his services not only to the congregation but also to the Polish community in Detroit. Fr. Herr showed a keen interest in the development of the Polish Roman Catholic Association which had been founded in St. Albertus Parish in 1894 and which Rev. Francis Mueller had helped to expand. Fr. Herr hosted the conventions of the Association in the parish on two occasions. In July 1916, he placed the church and the auditorium at the disposal of the organization's Eighteenth Convention. Three years later, in June 1919, he invited Bishop Gallagher to preside at the Association's silver jubilee Mass.

Bishop Gallagher made the observance especially memorable, because he spoke to the capacity crowd not only in English but also in Polish. His words of felicitation and episcopal blessing, spoken with an Irish brogue that Rev. Stephen Woznicki's (his secretary's) coaching was unable wholly to eliminate but uttered from a compassionate and sympathetic soul, captured the hearts of the Polish Catholics and brought tears to their eyes as well as smiles to their lips. Here was a bishop who cared for them and their ways, and they loved him as they would one of their own heritage.

Another banner celebration year for St. Albertus Parish was 1923 when three of its native sons — the most in any one year — were ordained to the

priesthood. They included Fathers Edward Kokowicz, Leon Malinowski, and Edward Miotke. Fr. Herr noted the exceptional event (which brought with it three First Mass Celebrations) in his annual report for 1923 with a special feeling of pride and satisfaction. Earlier, he had rejoiced with his congregation at the ordinations of two other sons of St. Albertus Parish: Fathers Joseph Przybylski ordained July 6, 1913, and Zygmunt Dziaekiewicz raised to the priesthood June 17, 1916.

During his nineteen-year pastorate, Fr. Herr had nearly twenty assistant priests to help him, at various times, in the administration of the parish. Most of the time he could depend on three curates, but on occasion he was limited to one or two priests and then rewarded temporarily with four.

Eighteen priests are listed in the Catholic Directories of these years as assistants at St. Albertus Church. They include: Roman Klafkowski (1913-1918); Joseph Wilemski (1913); Paul Sonsalla (1913); Marcellus Arminski (1917); Paul Sonsalla again (1917-1922); Joseph Przybylski (1919); Joseph Czarkowski (1919-1920); Adam Marcinkiewicz (1920-1932); Vincent Anuszkiewicz (1921); John Raczynski (1922-1927); Alexander Jarzembowski (1923); Michael Sajnaj (1924-1925); Henry Podsiad (1926); Alexander Wilczewski (1927); John Miller (1928-1932); Boleslaus Pakizer (1928); Aloysius Guzicki (1929-1932); and Joseph Piaskowski (1930-1932).

With the help of the assistant priests, Fr. Herr compiled an impressive sacramental record during his nineteen-year pastorate from May 1913 to February 1932. The number of marriages totalled nearly 1,800, with an annual average of ninety-four weddings. The highest annual figure occurred in 1914, when the war broke out in Europe; 214 marriages were solemnized. The lowest figure for any given year was thirty-three, which was recorded for 1931. Besides the highest 1,914 total, there were eight additional years when the yearly sum exceeded 100 marriages. The first notable decline occurred in 1922, when eighty-two weddings were celebrated; after 1923 no year reached the sum of 100 weddings.

Baptisms totalled nearly 4,800 for an annual average of about 250. The highest annual figure of 689 was reached in 1916, while the lowest (159) was tabulated for 1919. The heaviest concentration of baptisms occurred between 1912 and 1924 when the annual totals fluctuated in excess of between 300 and 600 baptisms. With 1925, the yearly baptismal figures drop below 300 (except in 1926), and keep gradually moving toward a total below 200.

The funeral statistics record also followed a declining, though fluctuating, pattern. The funerals totalled over 3,000 for an annual average of more than 160. The highest number of funerals, 236, was recorded for 1916; the lowest, 104, for 1930. Four years had more than 200 funerals (1913, 1916, 1917, and 1918); all the others annually numbered more than 100 funerals. From 1916 on, children seven years old or younger (who earlier tended to constitute the larger group among the deceased) assume a secondary position in the statistics.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENTS

World War I, which provided Fr. Herr with the first practical test of his American-mindedness at St. Albertus congregation, also exerted an influence upon his financial administration of the parish. A methodical man, almost an

accountant in a cassock and Roman collar, he carefully watched not only the course of national and world events but also meticulously recorded the flow of parish revenues and expenditures. He kept a special ledger of the parish financial account throughout his pastorate from May 1913 to February 1932. The ledger enabled him to fill out his annual reports to the chancery more easily and efficiently, and at the same time helped him plan and execute his projects with greater assurance and less guesswork.

Encouraged by Henry Ford's January 1914 announcement of a minimum wage of five dollars a day as well as by the war prosperity which began in 1915 and was to last through 1918, Fr. Herr boldly went forward with the purchase of additional real estate and the construction of the parish's finest school, even though this meant saddling the congregation with the largest debt in its entire history. But the action was neither hasty nor ill-advised.

Fr. Herr began with a congregation of 2,000 hard-working generous families devoted to the parish. War prosperity raised his annual revenues not only above \$30,000 (never reached before), but also beyond \$40,000. And after the brief postwar recession, the seven years of plenty that Detroit with its automobile industry entered upon in 1922 reflected themselves also in the annual parish income. This climbed above \$50,000 and hovered close to \$60,000. It enabled Fr. Herr not only to cope with necessary maintenance expenditures but also to start whittling down the parish debt, and hopefully eliminate it altogether.

But in the meantime, in the mid-Twenties, families began moving out of the parish particularly to the northern area of the city, joining or helping to form new parishes. By 1932, the parish shrank to 1,300 families (by over one-third), a decline which also manifested itself in the school enrollment. The congregation was still entirely Polish, but the parish membership rolls had seen their best days, all the more so since the new Quota Immigration Law of 1924 set discriminatory restrictions on future Polish arrivals to America. The parish could not count on replenishment of its migrating families by immigrants from a now resurrected and reunited Poland anxious to keep its population at home.

While the St. Albertus School records presented a less depressing picture, they were hardly more encouraging in longer-range prospects. Fr. Herr had started with 1,338 children in 1913 in the old brick school. His new school skyrocketed the attendance to its highest level in the institution's history — 1,875 students, according to the extant school records for 1920-21, which seem to be more reliable than the 1,675 total given by the Catholic Directory for 1921 and 1922 as the school's highest enrollment. By 1932, the attendance dropped over 100 percent to 899 students.

To this slow but steady exodus of young families out of the old crowded neighborhood of St. Albertus Parish to more open areas to the north and northeast was added the unexpected sharp blow of the great depression which followed upon the heels of the stock market crash of October 1929. While this may have temporarily stopped the movement of families out of the parish, the ensuing unemployment affected parish revenues and brought them down to less than \$35,000 annually.

But these would be problems for Fr. Herr's successor to face along with a debt of \$184,000 plus over \$7,600 in unpaid bills for a total of \$190,000. On the bright side, Fr. Herr would leave his successor a parish plant estimated by insurance assessors at nearly \$370,000.

One financial project on which Fr. Herr counted for help in diminishing the parish debt was the sale of the old school. In 1920, he found two prospective purchasers, one of whom offered \$10,000 for the building. Subsequently, however, both interested parties backed out of the transaction. In the end, Fr. Herr's successor not only had to tear down the old building but also had to pay \$10,500 in back taxes on it.

In his financial management of parochial properties and affairs, Fr. Herr depended not only upon legal and episcopal advice but also upon the help of the members of the parish committee. Among the laymen of the parish they collaborated most closely with the pastor and rendered him valuable counsel and support by their business and commercial experience.

Perhaps the three trustees to whom Fr. Herr turned most frequently during his pastorate for advice were Basil Lemke, Stanley Zacharias, and Joseph Lemke. The two Lemkes, in particular, represented the pioneer element of the parish.

With the help of several devout women parishioners, Fr. Herr added another society to those already in existence in the parish. Called The Altar Society under the Patronage of St. Theresa, the organization was founded in March 1930, at the suggestion of Mary Smuczynska and Elizabeth Fetta. The first officers included Mary Smuczynska (president), Elizabeth Fetta (vice-president), Clara Choike (treasurer), and Anna Frackowiak (secretary). Also in 1930, Fr. Herr assisted Mary Zoltowska in establishing the St. Hedwig Chapter of the Polish Women's Alliance at St. Albertus Parish. The Alliance, founded in 1898, was and still is the largest organization of Polish American women in the United States.

Fr. Herr also organized the St. Albertus ushers in 1920 with the help of J. Grupezynski, A. J. Rathnaw, J. Jaworski, Fr. Koss Sr., S. Perzyk, and B. Hunsinger. Prior to this, the Sunday collections had usually been taken up by the altar boys.

The parish organization which flourished best during Fr. Herr's pastorate was the Young Men's Club of St. Albertus Parish. The Club won its greatest laurels in the 1920's both in baseball and basket ball. It helped to produce one of the city's greatest Polish basketball players in George Jaglowicz who won All-City Honors at Eastern High and later played at the University of Detroit.

A more personal achievement of Fr. Herr was his publication of the first printed bulletin of St. Albertus Parish. Titled *Paraffjanin* (Parishioner), it was at first a four-page bilingual publication which made its appearance in July 1928 (and not 1930 as a Polish periodical bibliography erroneously notes). Fr. Herr served both as editor and publisher of the bulletin.

This parish bulletin was the third such publication to be issued by a Polish parish in Detroit. The first, called *Kronika Paraffji Sw. Andrzeja* (Chronicle of St. Andrew Parish) originated in 1925 under the editorship of Rev. Stephen Trepczynski. The second emanated from Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish in 1926 under the title *Pamietnik (Diary)*. Like the *Paraffjanin* of St. Albertus, the *Pamietnik* was a bilingual monthly. Only the St. Andrew *Kronika* was published exclusively in Polish.

The *Paraffjanin* (if it is to be judged in the light of its contemporary publications) carried news of local interest to members of St. Albertus congregation — notices of baptisms, marriages, funerals, special parish

celebrations and entertainments, appointments of priests, schedules of religious services, and occasional words of counsel to children and parents. School news also began to appear as well as information about club and parish society activities. As a result of the bulletin's informational value to later parochial chroniclers, it is to be deeply deplored that the *Paraffjanin* which Fr. Herr started with such foresight has survived in a single issue (of which two or three copies exist). It is dated *Pazdziernik* (October) 1947, Volume XIX, Number 4, and commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of St. Albertus Church.

While devoting most of his time to the service of St. Albertus Parish, Fr. Herr also made himself available for special diocesan duties imposed upon him first by Bishop John Foley and continued subsequently by Bishop Michael Gallagher. Throughout his entire pastorate, Fr. Herr was also a diocesan examiner of teachers. For seventeen years he was likewise a member either of the Diocesan School Board or the East-Side Deanery School Board. For three years (1918 through 1920), he also served on the Bishop's Board of Diocesan Consultants. He was the first Polish priest to act in this capacity in the Diocese of Detroit.

Fr. Herr retained a lifelong appreciative memory for Bishop John Foley, who presided over the Detroit Diocese from November 1888 to January 1919. Bishop Foley ordained him, gave him his first priestly appointment, made him pastor of St. Albertus, and assigned him to the Diocesan School Board. In this attitude, Fr. Herr reflected the sentiments of the people of St. Albertus Parish who regarded Bishop Foley as a special friend of theirs. They never forgot that one of his first episcopal acts upon arrival to Detroit in November 1888 — five months after the lifting of the interdict by Rev. Edward Joos, the interim administrator of the diocese — was to visit the neighborhood of St. Albertus and speak with the people in person. They retained this visit of friendship and good will as a treasured memory.

The people of St. Albertus also had other reasons for remembering Bishop Foley with gratitude. He appointed four worthy and efficient pastors for them — Fathers Casimir Rohowski CPPS, Florian Chodniewicz, Francis Mueller, and Joseph Herr — who gave the parish not only a new image but also a position of leadership in Detroit's Polish community. Bishop Foley ordained more native sons of the parish to the priesthood — the first eight — than any other Detroit prelate. He performed the first four ordination rites in St. Albertus Church and presided at some of its most impressive ceremonies. Much (if not most) of the parish's real estate and all the present buildings (except the church) became part of St. Albertus property with his approval and during his episcopate. And even today there may still be alive some (perhaps former) members of St. Albertus congregation who were among the hundreds he confirmed in the parish during his nearly thirty-years as Bishop of Detroit.

The Polish Catholics of the city and the diocese likewise have more than one reason for keeping Bishop Foley in their prayers. He authorized the establishment of fifteen new Polish parishes in Detroit and its immediate suburbs. He personally ordained thirty-three Polish-American priests of whom nineteen were to serve in the Detroit Diocese. He spoke out in defence of the Polish clergy against the vitriolic attacks of certain anticlerical newspapers. He appointed priests to diocesan boards and was the first to include a Polish priest

among his consultors. He, finally, made it possible for the overcrowded Polish Seminary in Detroit to move to the beautiful and commodious quarters in Orchard Lake, by helping the Seminary take over the buildings of the defunct Michigan Military Academy in 1909.

Though Fr. Herr's record of service was not as impressive as Bishop Foley's, it was notable enough to win him special recognition in 1930 from the University of Detroit, his one-time Alma Mater. During the annual commencement exercises in June of that year, Fr. Herr received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in recognition of his varied activities and services. Again, Fr. Herr was the first Polish priest honored in this fashion by the University of Detroit, and he welcomed the distinction with humility and gratitude.

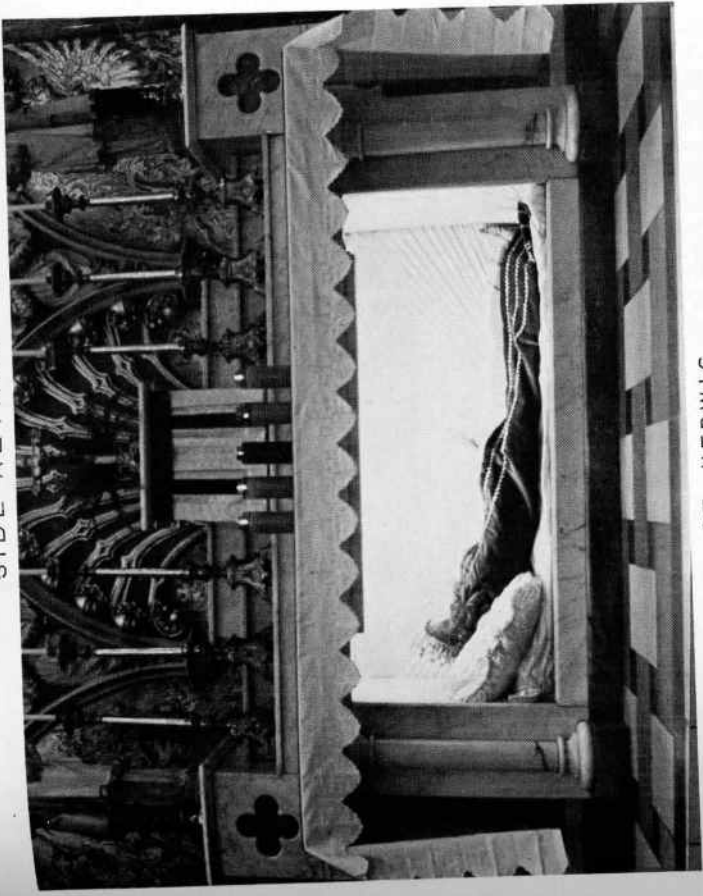
The reception of the honorary degree (as well as the changing currents of parochial and national development evident by 1930) spurred Fr. Herr to a closer scrutiny of his priestly career. He was approaching his sixtieth year and his health, never robust since his youthful exertions in the Sebawaing mission, became less dependable and more demanding of care. Once he passed his sixtieth birthday, Fr. Herr began seriously contemplating the thought of retirement from active ministry.

Fr. Herr submitted his resignation from the pastorate of St. Albertus congregation January 23, 1932. It was accepted February 1, and the new pastor, Rev. Bernard Ciesielski, was appointed two weeks later. At the time of his resignation, Fr. Herr was sixty-one years old with thirty-seven years of priestly activity behind him.

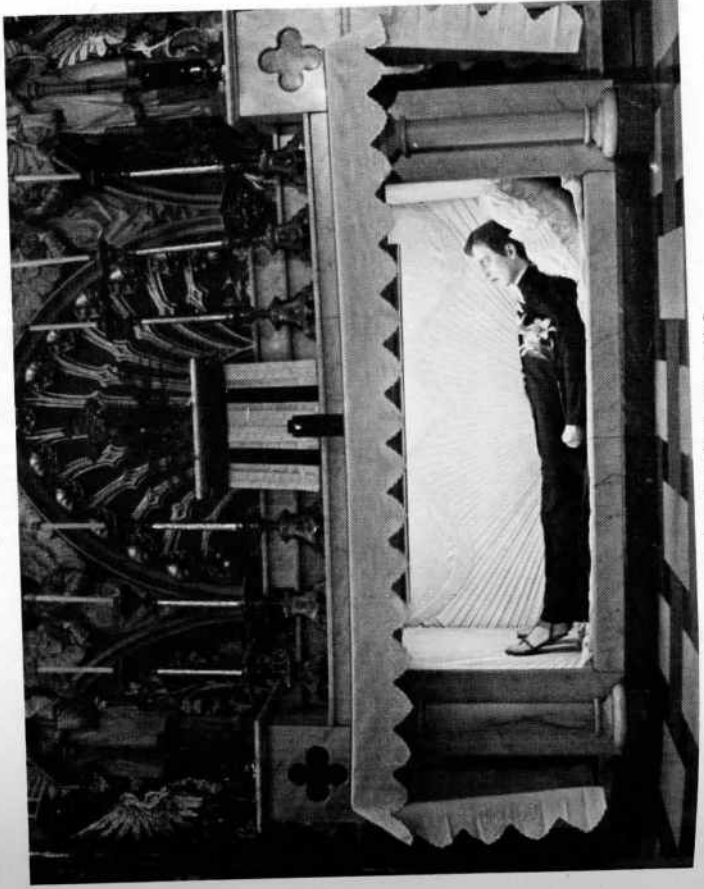
Fr. Herr did not know, or even suspect, that he had more than thirty years to live in retirement. He lived for the first eleven of these years at Grayling, then spent the remaining nineteen in Detroit. He died at Carmel Hall August 4, 1962, at the age of eighty-one, having been a priest for over sixty-seven years. At the time of his death, he was reputed to be the oldest priest in the diocese in terms of ordination seniority. His sixty-seven years of sacerdotal life certainly place him among the most longevous priests in the history of the diocese.

Fr. Herr gave St. Albertus Parish its finest school and contributed to the school's most flourishing development. He also correctly sensed the changing feelings and attitudes of the Detroit-born generation in the parish and steered the congregation tactfully into a new more American-oriented direction, appealing affectively to the sentiments of the native-born Detroiters yet not neglecting nor minimizing the needs and traditions of the immigrant parishioners.

Above all, Fr. Herr showed concern for the spiritual welfare of all members of his congregation — the young and the old, those with Polish memories and those with American dreams, the married and the single, the learned and the unlettered, the rich and the poor, the sick and the strong. His heart and purse, as well as the church with its confessional, communion rail, baptismal font and altar, the school and the rectory, were open to all as long as he was pastor of St. Albertus Parish.

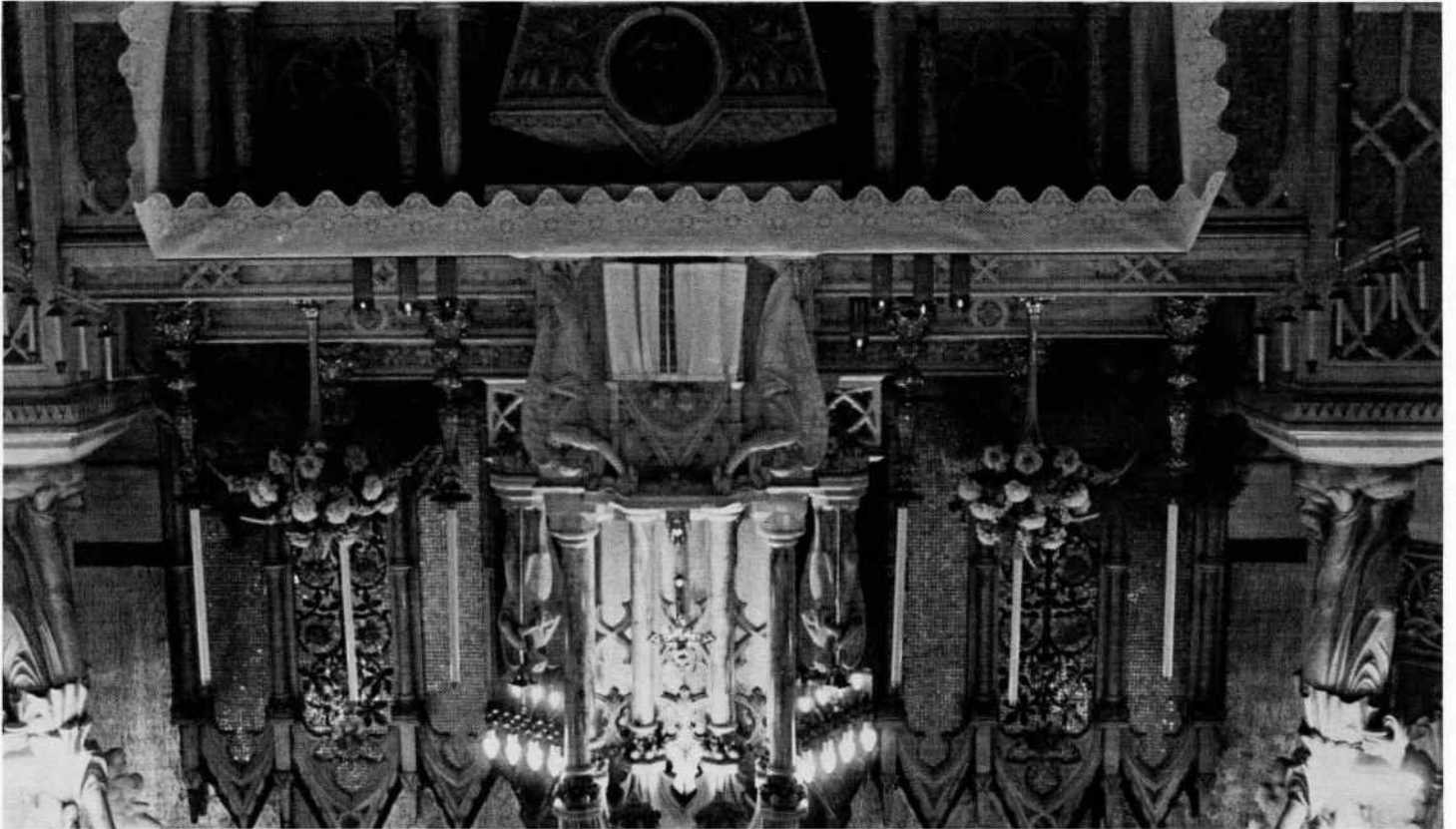


ST. HEDWIG



ST. STANISLAUS

8
MAIN ALTAR - ST. ALBERTUS CHURCH



CHAPTER 7

THE LONGTHIEST PASTOR

The first native-born Detroit to become pastor of St. Albertus Parish was Rev. Bernard Francis Ciesielski, the twelfth of the fifteen priests who guided the destiny of the congregation during the century. He was also the pastor with the longest tenure — twenty-one years and two months from February 15, 1932 to April 14, 1953 — extending from the sixtieth to the eighty-first year of the parish's existence.

Born on Detroit's West Side, September 20, 1890, the son of Francis and Mary Ciesielski, Bernard attended St. Casimir Parochial School. At fourteen (in 1904), he entered high school in the Polish Seminary near St. Albertus Church. Five years later, he moved with the seminary to Orchard Lake and there completed his philosophical and theological studies. He was ordained in the SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary Chapel July 11, 1914, at the age of twenty-four by Bishop Edward D. Kelly, auxiliary to aging Bishop John Foley.

Fr. Ciesielski labored as a priest for nearly eighteen years before he was appointed to the pastorate of St. Albertus congregation. This sacerdotal internship included seven appointments — three assistantships, two pastorates, and one administratorship — extending from the eve of World War I to the early years of the Great Depression.

Fr. Ciesielski began his ministry as an assistant-priest at St. Stanislaus Church in Detroit from July 21, 1914 to March 20, 1915. Then he served as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Ida from March 20, 1915 to July 3, 1916. He next reverted to assistant, serving from July 3, 1916 to August 8, 1918 at St. Joseph in Kalamazoo. From here he moved to St. Anthony Church in Whiteford as administrator from August 8, 1918 to September 13, 1919.

Fr. Ciesielski then served two consecutive Polish assistantships in Detroit: at St. Hyacinth Parish (September 13, 1919 to December 20, 1919) and at Assumption Parish (December 20, 1919 to September 25, 1920). He next ministered in Jackson as pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish for over eleven years (September 25, 1920 to February 2, 1932).

Fr. Ciesielski thus came to the St. Albertus pastorate with a long and varied background of priestly experience gained in seven parishes (both Polish and territorial) amid the challenges of the first world war, the prosperous Twenties, and the initial onslaught of the depression of the Thirties. He arrived in the forty-second year of his life, still full of vigor and energy, reenforced by wisdom and prudence born of meaningful encounters with life's vicissitudes. He stayed for more than two difficult decades dominated by two worldwide influences — the Great Depression and World War II — both of which put his experience and energy to severe tests.

1. DEALING WITH THE DEPRESSION

The beginning of Fr. Ciesielski's pastorate at St. Albertus Parish, in February 1932, found the congregation as well as Detroit in the throes of the country's worst depression. Banks closed their doors, factories cut down production, businesses collapsed, real estate values dropped, while unemployment mounted. Poverty and its companion, hunger, haunted the

homes of some parishioners, while delinquency and crime prowled the neighborhood streets at night to endanger the safety of the residents.



FR. BERNARD F. CIESIELSKI

Fr. Ciesielski was not a social worker, but he was a socially minded priest aware of and concerned about the needs of his congregation, especially its neediest members. More importantly, he was fortunate in having a parishioner who was both a social worker and an activist of remarkable pertinacity and leadership — Clara Swieczkowska.

Through her, and, more specifically, the Polish Activities League Miss Clara headed, Fr. Ciesielski was able to bring some relief to the neediest of his parishioners. Job placement, food baskets, clothing, coal for empty bins, milk and crackers for children, domestic employment for girls — these were some of the immediate benefits that accrued to parishioners in want through no fault of their own.

Fr. Ciesielski's intervention with the Polish Activities League also produced other minor relief services made available by the inventive and indefatigable Miss Clara: payment of insurance and gas bills, provision of street-car fare tickets, articles of furniture, shelter for homeless girls and women, securing tax reductions and extension of payments to homeowners in distress, intervention on behalf of welfare recipients, contacting old age and rehabilitation agencies to assist deserving Polish persons who had difficulties with expressing themselves in English.

One of the notable achievements to emerge out of this varied program of social activities directed by a parishioner of St. Albertus was the establishment of a home for disabled Polish war veterans. At the behest of Clara Swieczkowska, the Union Guardian Trust Company, owner of Wanda Park in Utica, consented to allow the Polish veterans the use of the grounds and its

available buildings. In May, 1932, the Veterans Home was opened under the auspices of the Polish Activities League, but eventually came under the care of the Polish Army Veterans Association.



MISS CLARA SWIECZKOWSKA

Among the numerous persons (some of them parishioners of St. Albertus) who responded generously not once but repeatedly to the continued humanitarian importunities of Miss Clara one of the most dependable was Felician Sister Mary Clara, a nun known for her many charities. In times of urgent need or emergency appeal, she never failed to supply Panna Klara with needed food or clothing obtained from anonymous donors or (more often) from the convent's own charities treasury of goods and meager funds. Rev. Anthony Klowo, rector of the Polish Seminary at Orchard Lake, also came forward, particularly during the veteran crisis, with food and fuel.

In recognition of Miss Clara's humanitarian services during these difficult depression (as well as the earlier postwar) years, Pope Pius XI conferred upon her the order *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* at the behest of Bishop Michael James Gallagher, ordinary of the Detroit Diocese since July, 1918. The presentation was made by Bishop Gallagher in September, 1934 at a special ceremony presided over by Bishop Joseph Plagens, Polish auxiliary of Detroit since

September 1924 and a long-time friend of the Polish Activities League.

Another member of St. Albertus Parish engaged in helping World War I Polish Veterans down on their luck was Angela Zapytowska. In the postwar recession of the 1920's she had opened a free Hotel Nedza (Destitution) at Forest and McDougall Streets for impoverished ex-soldiers without work or income. Though endowed with limited funds but with seemingly limitless energy and compassion, she continued her Hotel into the depression years until the Veterans Home came into existence.

While some of his zealous parishioners were organizing means to alleviate the immediate material needs of suffering persons not only in the St. Albertus congregation but also in other parts of the Polish community in Detroit, Fr. Ciesielski was doing his best to keep the parish church and school afloat on the waves of the worldwide depression. And this required considerable captainship and exceptional navigational skill to avoid foundering the parochial vessel on the shoals of bankruptcy.

Fr. Ciesielski began his pastorate with a dangerous financial ballast of nearly \$192,000 in debts contracted by his predecessor. According to his first annual report for 1932, Fr. Ciesielski realized a total revenue of about \$34,000 from all available sources; pew rent and collections amounted to less than half of the income. In the lean years that followed, the annual income increasingly came to depend for improvement upon the so-called extraordinary sources of income — bazaars, festivals, contests, bingos, raffles, dances, games, and picnics. This and (more importantly) the refinancing of archdiocesan debts on a more favorable basis by Archbishop Edward Mooney (who took over the administration of the Detroit Archdiocese in May 1937), along with the periodic economic revivals stimulated by governmental projects and agencies, helped the parish survive the worst crises of the depression.

The outbreak of the second world war in 1939 and the renewal of industrial and economic prosperity it stimulated also effected a decided improvement in the financial climate of St. Albertus Parish. The annual revenues again climbed upwards with the result that by 1946 the parish was once again in a state of financial solvency. That year which brought the elimination of the parish debt gave Fr. Ciesielski and the congregation a justifiable feeling of pride and sense of achievement.

During the years of depression and the renewal that followed, Fr. Ciesielski also succeeded in making needed repairs, largely with the help of labor contributed by parishioners. In 1933, he repaired the church windows and the organ; the same year, he renovated the rectory which had been unrefurbished for twenty years. In 1935, he redecorated the interior of the church. Upon the conclusion of the war, in 1946, he refurbished the exterior of the church, school, and rectory and made some internal improvements. In September, 1948, he installed a new \$10,000 organ in the church and repaired the roof on the school auditorium.

Fr. Ciesielski managed to steer St. Albertus Parish through the shoals of the depression not only because he was a good steward of the congregation's properties, but also because the parishioners contributed generously of their goods and talents to the saving of the parish. In 1932, Fr. Ciesielski reported a total membership of 1,100 families who rented 1,100 of the 1,600 seatings in