



American flags share a space with a Polish wall hanging and a crucifix in Father Zygodlo's bedroom.

happy to serve the Polish-American community in Rochester for five years. Then Bishop Clark asked me to serve at St. Patrick's Parish in Seneca Falls, and the appointment took effect on June 25 of this year.

I have never had any difficulty in adjusting to new places and to new people. Also, I already knew about some of the differences between the United States and Poland. In our seminary, they had had priests from other countries speak to us about these countries.

Still, there were some things that surprised me when I came here. I remember the first time I went to a mall. It was a shock. We had nothing like that in Poland.

In church, some things are done differently here than in Poland. The greeting at the door after the Masses here is one difference. I think it is a good thing, because you can have a conversation with the people. You can have a relationship with people.

We don't have that tradition in Poland. The priest there is like God, on high. The lay people do less, and we don't have parish councils or liturgy committees. In Poland, when the pastor speaks, the matter is finished.

Even the way priests are treated by the church is different here.

I remember the first time I went to a priests' convocation. Bishop Matthew Clark talked to me as a brother priest, not like he was a bishop. Every time we have met since, Bishop Clark has



Sixth-grade students from St. Patrick's School joke with Father Zygodlo. He regularly meets with classes as part of the religious-education program.

friends, your neighbors, look and notice when you're not at church. People are afraid of their neighbors, especially in the small towns.

One thing I did have to change was when I would preach. In Poland, we do not preach at the weekday Masses. I did not have to preach on weekdays at St. Stanislaus. So when I came to Seneca Falls, I thought I would not

other countries, and this leads me to say that the United States is the best country in the whole world. Right now I appreciate very much my United States citizenship.

Here in Seneca Falls I have my computer and through the modem I am able to communicate with the whole world. Almost every day I receive the daily news in the Polish language from Warsaw. I can check the news from all over the whole world, including the aviation weather from the Finger Lakes region, since I am taking flying lessons for a pilot's license.

In the community of St. Patrick's Parish in Seneca Falls, I wish to serve everyone from the smallest child to the most senior members. "Service to God and to the people" is the motto in my heart and on my business card. After almost five months I can say that I am very happy in what I am doing and the people with whom I am working.

I would like to serve this country and the Catholic Church in whatever ways that I can. Of course, I have more opportunities here and I would like to dedicate my life as a priest and as a patriot.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Father Zygodlo is currently awaiting word from the Vatican granting him permission to be incardinated in the Diocese of Rochester. At that time, he will officially become a priest of the diocese.



Among the priest's duties is visiting residents at the Seneca Nursing Home in Waterloo. Rose Sinicropi (right) receives Communion from Father Zygodlo (center) as her son, John Sinicropi, looks on.

under martial law, they sometimes helped to carry messages for Solidarity.

I remember one time when I was driving from my parish to another parish. The police stopped me and asked where I was coming from and where I was going. I had some books from Solidarity in the car, so I was afraid. But the police saw my cassock, and let me go because I was a priest.

In 1985, when I was almost finished rebuilding the church in Suchan, my superiors recommended that I come to the United States, even though I knew no English.

I stopped briefly in Detroit and Wyandotte, Mich., and then went to Canada, where I served in Scarborough during the Christmas season. In January, 1986, I went to Endicott, N.Y., for five months as a resident in a parish there. During this time I waited for the permission and recommendation of my superior general for a permanent assignment.

On June 11, 1986, I became associate pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Theresa's parishes in Rochester. I was

always remembered my name. I was important. I wasn't just some priest at St. Stanislaus.

In Poland, I met with my superiors many times, but they never remembered my name. The church in Poland is more traditional, more conservative. I wish the church and clergy there would change.

Here, the people who belong to the church really come and worship God. They are more involved with the church and parish than are the people in Poland. There is more freedom here. You don't have any social obligation to go to church.

In Poland, though, you have to go to church because your parents, your

preach. But I did start to preach each day. The people have been very understanding, even when I say something wrong. I feel very comfortable here.

I have only good comments about the Polish church and the church in the United States. I am sure that both churches are heading in the right direction. I am very proud of my Polish heritage, but I am even prouder that on Feb. 12, 1991, I became a United States citizen and officially changed my first name from Mieczyslaw to Mitchell.

I have many friends — priests and classmates — in different countries. I have traveled widely in Europe and



A stuffed teddy bear with a stethoscope — a birthday gift from a friend — reminds Father Zygodlo of his duties as a 'spiritual doctor.'

**Insight**