

## Rochester parish strives to preserve its Polish pride

### Parish Profile

St. Stanislaus  
Rochester



By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When approximately 100 Polish immigrant families settled in St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in 1889, this area of northeast Rochester was surrounded by open fields.

Although St. Stanislaus is now part of a busy city neighborhood, a crucial aspect of the parish endures: the tight Polish Catholic bonds created by those founding members.

Those ethnic roots came to the fore again when St. Stanislaus' pastoral planning process began in 1997, said Patricia Curry, parish planning team chair. Although St. Stanislaus is happy to collaborate with neighboring parishes, she explained that the parish is also fervent about maintaining its uniqueness.

"It's the tradition, the heritage. People realize it's not just the language we're fighting for," Curry remarked.

Kathy Urbanic knows this closeness well. It wasn't until she began high school, she acknowledged, that it dawned on her just how intimate the St. Stanislaus community is.

"(High school) was the first time that people didn't show up where everybody knew everybody. I became aware of how rich I was, how lucky I was," said Urbanic, who in 1991 published *Shoulder to Shoulder*. The 259-page book chronicles the first 100 years of Polish immigrants in Rochester.

Urbanic said that St. Stanislaus' priority on tradition is also attractive to new parishioners, both Polish and non-Polish.

"A newer generation is attracted to that sense of family," Urbanic said.

Deacon Raymond Mielcarek, parish administrator, explained that this bonding arose from the struggles that Polish Catholics experienced in their homeland.

"There's a depth of faith. We've survived World War II; German persecutions; Communist persecutions," Deacon Mielcarek said.

St. Stanislaus Parish consists of approximately 900 families. The parish added about 75 people after St. Theresa's Church, a Polish parish based less than a



Greg Francis/Staff photographer  
Sister Marie Dominic Bennett, SSJ, is congratulated by St. Stanislaus parishioner Gabriela Jaskot during a reception in the parish hall after a 60th Jubilee Mass held July 11 in honor of Sister Bennett.

mile south of St. Stanislaus, closed in June 1997. Deacon Mielcarek estimated that two-thirds of St. Stanislaus is Polish, compared with more than 90 percent 40 years ago.

The current church facility, which has been a fixture on Hudson Avenue near Norton Street since 1909, features weekend liturgies in three different languages. In addition to the parish's English and Polish Masses, each Sunday afternoon St. Stanislaus serves as host for the only Tridentine Latin Mass sanctioned by the Rochester Diocese. That Mass is attended mostly by non-parishioners.

Dawn Marie Chmiel, music program coordinator, noted that her choirs can sing in the three languages as well.

"We include many different styles of music, including Gregorian chants, traditional Polish hymns, traditional English hymns and also selections from modern-day composers," Chmiel remarked.

Yet the St. Stanislaus community is warm and outgoing no matter what language is spoken, according to Todd Carr, the parish's maintenance supervisor.

"Sometimes I have to run and find someone (to translate)," Carr said. "But whether I can communicate with them or not, they've been very nice people."

"These are the most affectionate people. They start hugging and kissing, and going like this," Curry said, laughing, as she pinched her cheeks. "These people are great. It's truly a family. They will do anything for you, believe me."

Father Adam Ogorzaly has noticed this warmth from the time he arrived at St. Stanislaus as the parish priest in November 1997.

"I've just experienced a wonderful welcome. Everybody is so nice to me," Father Ogorzaly commented.

The parish will be at its welcoming best when it soon hosts the 25th annual St.

### SNAPSHOT

St. Stanislaus Kostka Church  
1124 Hudson Ave.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14621  
Phone: 716/467-3068

Registered households: 900  
Ministerial staff:

Pastoral administrator:

Deacon Raymond Mielcarek

Parish priest:

Father Adam Ogorzaly

In residence:

Father Valentine Jankowiak

In residence:

Sister Marie Dominic Bennett,  
SSJ

Pastoral visitor:

Florence Dynski

Building liaison:

Sister Sheila Luber, SSJ

Parish secretary:

Vicky Cetner

Music director:

Dawn Chmiel

Parish pastoral council chair:

Gary Kaleta

Stanislaus parish festival. The gala event, to be held on parish grounds, will take place Friday, Aug. 7, from 6 p.m. to midnight; and Saturday, Aug. 8, from 5 p.m. to midnight.

The festival serves as St. Stanislaus' major fundraiser as well as a unifying event for parishioners past and present, said Connie Kawka, festival co-chair.

"We have reunions here. It's a fundraiser, but it's also a community builder," Kawka remarked.

Festival volunteers have already braced for the onslaught by baking and freezing 11,500 pierogis — small pastries filled with meat, cheese or potatoes.

"We started making them in late May," said Eleanor Kawka, festival co-chair along with her sister.

"The Polish food is a magnet," Connie Kawka agreed.

Added Curry: "This is not a low-fat, low-cholesterol parish."

Gary Kaleta, parish pastoral council chair, noted that festival-goers include more than the St. Stanislaus community.

"People come from all over the state for the Polish food," Kaleta said.

Kaleta added that fans of the festival hail from even more distant corners of the country.

"Somebody from Texas asked if I could ship him a festival T-shirt," he reported.

## In support of St. Stanislaus

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