Polish parish sets Mass **News** & Analysis

St. Stanislaus will honor pope Oct. 16

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

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Only the most momentous of. events rate the question, "Where were you when ..." For Polish-Americans, Oct. 16, 1978, is one such date. On that day, the news that Cardinal Karol Jozef Wojtyla had been elected to the papacy — becoming the first Polish pope in history, and the first non-Italian pontiff in more than 450 years — prompted a joyous ringing of the bells at Rochester's St. Stanislaus Kostka Church. That evening, a hastily arranged Mass was celebrated inside St. Stanislaus before a standing-room-only crowd. Kathy Urbanic recalled that earlier in the day, a co-worker had broken the news about the soon-to-be Pope John Paul II. She didn't believe him at first because he was fond of telling Polish jokes, even though she wasn't particularly fond of hearing them. So she braced herself for the punch line that never came.

"Then my mother called me, and then a co-worker who's a (St. Stanislaus) parishioner - all inside of one minute," she said.

"I think everyone in the parish remembers the day he was elected. Our emotions ran from disbelief to incredible pride," added Urbanic, a

historian who in 1991 released the book Shoulder to Shoulder: Polish Americans in Rochester, N.Y.

"It was unthinkable a Polish cardinal could be elected pope. My God, it was jubilation all over," said Eugene Golomb, president of the Polonia Civic Centre, an alliance of several Polish-American groups in Rochester.

Urbanic and Golomb, both parishioners at St. Stanislaus, are among the organizers of a 25th-anniversary Mass to be celebrated at the church Thursday, Oct. 16, at 6:30 p.m. Bishop Matthew H. Clark - who in 1979 was one of the first bishops appointed by Pope John Paul II — will be the presider. Jesuit Father John Podsiadlo, a native of St. Stanislaus Parish who now serves in Baltimore, will give reflections on the pope's quarter-century as head of the Roman Catholic Church.

The event also will involve neighboring parishes; diocesan priests of Polish descent; and anyone else who wishes to attend the Mass and ensuing reception in the parish auditorium. It's being cosponsored by St. Stanislaus Parish, the Polonia Civic Centre and the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester.

St. Stanislaus, located at 1124 Hudson Ave., is the largest Polish-American parish in the Rochester Diocese. However, Urbanic noted that people the world over - Polish and

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non-Polish, Catholic and non-Catholic - are planning tributes to John Paul II on Oct. 16.

"People are already calling him John Paul the Great, and his impact on history will be more visible as time goes on," Urbanic said, noting the pope's role in the fall of communism in Eastern Europe; his outspokenness on human-rights issues; and his frequent globetrotting to promote the Catholic Church.

"He's traveled all over the world ..., all in the hopes of bringing more and more people to Christianity," Golomb said. "People love him wherever he goes."

Even so, Urbanic said that the 83-year-old pope - who has returned several times to Poland dur-

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ing his papacy - will remain most deeply beloved by those who share his ancestry.

"He is so rooted to his homeland; his heart is so clearly there. For our people whose hearts are there too, it's an incredible bonding with him," Urbanic said.

Urbanic and Golomb also remarked that public perception of



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Pope John Paul II listens to the songs and cheers of Lublin University students at the Jasna Gora monastery in Czestochowa during his first trip to Poland as pope in June 1979.

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experience in office in office in office in our section in the section of the sec in office Polish-Americans --- which hasn't always been flattering - has shot up considerably since John Paul II assumed the papacy.

"That big vat of Polish jokes evaporated because he was such a great presence," Urbanic said. "It just seems that Polish people are finally getting some positive recognition,' Golomb added.

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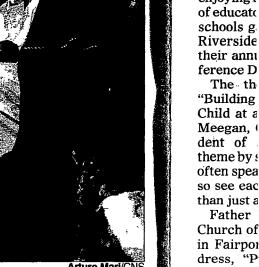
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