Dear Directors of the Polish American Congress,

I would like to wish you and your loved ones a Merry and Healthy Christmas Holiday. This year has given us more challenges than we ever imagined. Let's hope for a better 2021!

As part of the New Year, I would like us all to bolster our initiatives to increase and sustain political participation within the Polish American Community. When reaching out to your communities, remind your members of the many ways they can participate in the political process in addition to voting. Things like participating in town hall meetings, keeping in touch with local representatives, attending community events, and even just having a conversation with your neighbors to build upon community bonds, are just some of the many ways people can have their voices heard in government. Please be sure to encourage your members to run for office if they are interested in doing so! With the participation of a large and mobilized citizenry, Polish Americans will be able to have a much bigger impact on decisions made in domestic matters. I would like us to increase our focus on legislation concerning domestic issues as well.

Continued on next page...
Starting in January 2021, we will begin working with the Biden Administration. As an organization, we need to establish at least one political action committee in every state where we have a Polish American Congress Division. Please continue to advocate the need to repeal the NATO-Russia Funding Act, which will permit NATO to establish permanent bases in Poland.

A note of appreciation to Mr. Mark Pienkos for his contributions to the Polish American Congress as the National Vice President of Public Relations, and for publishing a total of 37 editions of the PAC Newsletter.

I welcome your thoughts on all of the above, as well as any other concerns you have. When things get overwhelming, take a moment to remember why you work so hard. Our mission in the Polish American Congress is to serve something bigger than ourselves.

We work tirelessly on behalf of the Polish American communities that we live in.

The legacy of this work will remain long after we leave this Earth. I know that no words can describe how difficult this year has been. Thank you for all of your hard work. I extend my deepest condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones to this pandemic.

Once again, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy, Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Spula
Frank J. Spula, President

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COMMEMORATING POLAND’S INDEPENDENCE DAY

On November 8, 2020, we commemorated Poland’s Independence Day at Our Lady Queen of Poland (OLQP) Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Polish American Congress Washington Metro Area Division (PAC-WMAD) requested the Holy Mass which was celebrated by Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, S.Chr., Pastor of OLQP Parish. The OLQP Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634 provided the honor guard. Attending this special event were the Deputy Attaché from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland and representatives of the Polish Legion of American Veterans (PLAV) and the Polish Scouting Organization ZHP USA, as well as PAC-WMAD.

In his homily, Fr. Frydrych talked about Poland’s heritage and history. He noted the struggles and sacrifices of our predecessors. Faith and hope sustained them and now it is our turn to continue their legacy. He recalled Pope St. John Paul II’s first Apostolic visit to Poland in 1979, and quoted from his homilies in both Krakow and Warsaw. St. John Paul II stated:

“My fellow-countrymen, with the greatest warmth I again give thanks, together with you, for the gift of having been baptized more than a thousand years ago…So, before going away, I beg you once again to accept the whole of the spiritual legacy which goes by the name of ‘Poland’, with the faith, hope and charity that Christ poured into us at our Holy Baptism.”

During these challenging Covid-19 pandemic times, we are thankful for our blessings, including the gift of Pope St. John Paul II and his enduring legacy.

Some of the representatives who were in attendance at the Holy Mass commemorating Poland’s Independence Day on Nov. 8, 2020, at Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland. (L-R): Thaddeus Mirecki (PAC-WMAD-President), Andy Michaels (K of C Council 16634), Dr. Edwarda Buda-Okreglak (PLAV; PAC-WMAD), Richard Okreglak (PLAV; K of C Council 16634; PAC-WMAD), Stefan Witczak (K of C Council 16634), OLQP Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych (K of C Council 16634-Chaplain), Franklin Morton (K of C Council 16634-DeputyGK), Col. Pawel Marzeda (Embassy of the Republic of Poland-Deputy Attaché), Bozenna Buda (PAC-WMAD-Director; Polish Scouting Org, ZHP USA), Jacek Marczynski (PAC-WMAD-VP; K of C Council 16634).

[Photo: Bozenna Buda]
COMMEMORATION OF POLAND'S INDEPENDENCE DAY IN PERTH AMBOY, NEW JERSEY

Submitted by Adam Stepien

On Sunday morning, November 8, 2020 the commemoration of the 102nd anniversary of Poland’s Independence Day took place in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Though the Polish State was established in 966 by the first king of the Piast dynasty, Mieszko I, who converted to Christianity, Poland’s history was marked by discontinuity. After having been partitioned by her three rapacious imperialist neighbors and erased from the map of Europe for 123 years, the Second Polish Republic was established on November 11, 1918, after all three of the empires which occupied Poland were defeated in World War I.

The commemoration began at 11:00 AM with the celebration of Holy Mass at St. Stephen’s Church (Saint John Paul II Parish) in Perth Amboy where the faithful prayed for Poland their Homeland at a time of resurgent Kremlin revanchism.

After Holy Mass, the commemoration continued with the raising of Poland’s flag in the circle at City Hall. The flag raising was organized by the United Poles in America. The President of United Poles in America, Mrs. Katarzyna Kolek delivered welcoming remarks and introduced the three speakers:

• Father Slawomir Romanowski, Pastor of St. John Paul II Parish
• Mayor of Perth Amboy Mrs. Wilda Diaz, who described both the long history and contributions of Polish-Americans to the City of Perth Amboy and read the Mayor’s Proclamation in Commemoration of Poland’s Independence Day
• 2020 Grand Marshal of the New York/ New Jersey/Connecticut General Pulaski Memorial Parade, Mrs. Jadwiga Kopala

After the speeches, the national anthems of the United States and Poland were sung by two girls who are pupils at the United Poles in America Polish School, the anthems were followed by the Flag Raising, and wreath laying.

Expressions of gratitude for honored dead combatants were offered by The Pulaski Cadets, whose Commander is Captain Stanley Bankowski. Pupils of the United Poles in America Polish School, and representatives of several other Polish organizations, were among the approximately 70 people who participated in this moving commemoration.

After the commemoration, all enjoyed pączki/doughnuts provided by United Poles in America.

(Editor’s Note: Mr. Stepien offered the following remarks about this special day. Adam said, “The event was sponsored by the United Poles in America from Perth Amboy. It was a big success. I don’t think anyone expected that during these times it could be so successful.”)
"The fall of the Berlin Wall makes for nice pictures. But it all started in the shipyards" is a quote from Lech Walesa.

It’s an important point that Walesa makes because it highlights what reflects much of America’s lack of understanding of Polish history and culture, which too often gets overshadowed by the Anglo-German-French focus on Europe.

Author Michael Crichton wrote, “If you don’t know history, then you don’t know anything. You are a leaf that doesn’t know it’s part of a tree.”

Well I’m a leaf from a Polish tree with deep Polish roots, and I want to know as much as I can about that tree, winter, summer, spring, and fall. Luckily, I crossed paths with Professor Donald Pienkos and Poland native Irena Fraczek, who not only know a lot about Poland, but who are uniquely able to share that knowledge. They are the driving force behind a collection of Books and Information on Polish History and Culture, assembled in a brochure called: “Do You Know Poland?”. Not only is the material inside a great read, note the image on the front cover, wrapped in a red and white banner forming the outline of Poland. Within the cover image, Irena has blended iconic images of some of Poland’s great individuals alongside some of the simple yet life affirming elements or histories making up the fabric in the story of Poland and its people. With Irena’s creation, she challenges each and every one of us on our knowledge of Poland and asks us to identify the individuals shown or what each of the images means or represents.

**DO YOU KNOW POLAND?**

**Books and Information on Polish History and Culture**

Click here to view cover image | Click here for full brochure

The Contest! Join in on the fun!

In a contest or challenge to you with no prizes other than the pride of really knowing Poland, can you identify each of the figures/images shown in the cover image? Starting at the 11 o’clock position and moving clockwise from outer edge to inner, describe what is shown and its meaning or significance. Some of the answers can be answered simply, and some have answers on several levels, with the most informed and complete answers rating higher points. The more you know and can tell us about the image the better your score.

**Continued on next page...**
Winners will be announced at the beginning of March 2021 on the PAC – Wisconsin Division website (pacwisconsin.com), as well as reported in a PAC Newsletter story in 2021. Also, a full and complete explanation of each image within the outline of Poland image will be given. Please email your answers by Sunday, January 31, 2021 to David Rydzewski at david.rydzewski@att.net. Plenty of time to get your Christmas shopping done, celebrate the New Year, and submit your answers to participate in the contest. Have fun!

Since our brochure was done initially for the members of the Polish American Congress–Wisconsin Division, one of the sixteen pages covers Polish organizations in Wisconsin. But everything else in the brochure covers a wide range of Polish and Polish-American topics. For members of the PAC, or anyone with Polish heritage, it can help us in our shared understanding of the bigger picture of Poland, its history and culture. That is why the Wisconsin Division is eager to make this available to others. Not as a sole or complete guide to everything Polish, but as a good starting point for a base understanding, which we hope will spark other Polish-Americans to expand and share with their Polish brothers and sisters.

I have found the more I know about Poland and its people, the more respect and admiration I have for them and the greater my yearning of wanting to be more "Polish.”

![CEEC Logo](image)

**PERMANENT BASES WITH AMERICAN TROOPS IN NATO’S EAST CENTRAL EUROPEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES**

Written by John Czop  
PAC Director of Policy

At their weekly meeting on 10 December 2020, the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) decided to prepare questions for friendly United States Senators to ask Mr. Anthony Blinken at his confirmation hearings, which will take place early next year. The top question for President-Elect Biden's choice as Secretary of State is: "Should the United States withdraw from the NATO – Russia Founding Act?"

This agreement was signed by all NATO member countries and the Russian Federation on 27 May 1997 at the NATO Paris Summit. At that time, many were persuaded that Russia was on the road to democracy and respect for international law. Twenty--three years later, it is clear that the Russian Federation has been a serial violator of international law, because Putin’s Kremlin has breached the United Nations Organization Charter several times by using armed force to change internationally recognized borders in Georgia and Ukraine. Kremlin revanchism makes moot the NATO – Russia Founding Act. This outdated agreement is an impediment to the security of East Central Europe.

The NATO – Russia Founding Act prohibits the establishment of permanent NATO bases in the former satellite countries of the Soviet Union and in the three Baltic States.

The NATO – Russia Founding Act is the principal obstacle to the establishment of permanent NATO bases garrisoned by American armed forces in Poland and the other NATO countries in East Central Europe and the Baltic States. Permanent NATO bases will send a strong message to the Kremlin: NATO with American troops is committed, over the long term, to the defense of this strategic region from Kremlin revanchism.

Readers recall that the establishment of permanent NATO bases with American armed forces in Poland has been the top goal of the Polish American Congress. In their greetings to newly elected, or re-elected, members of Congress, Polish American Congress officers and members should let their representatives know that Poland helps to protect United States national security interests and promotes American values of free enterprise and democracy in East Central Europe. This is why Poland should have permanent NATO bases.
The final touches are being made to the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria, TX, with its doors set to open to the public in the next few months. As you can see from the accompanying photos, the Center is amazingly beautiful and a fitting tribute to the Polish immigrants who came to Texas in the mid-1850s. Panna Maria is the first and oldest permanent Polish settlement in America. As this decade-long project nears completion, founder Bishop Emeritus John W. Yanta, in his 90th year of an active and remarkable life, reflects on this journey of faith.

I always knew I was Polish. My parents, John Andrew Yanta and Mary Magdalene Pollok, could both trace their lineage back to the original immigration in 1854. I began to embrace my Polishness in the 1970s, as founder of the Texas division of the Polish American Congress, co-founding the Polish American Priests Association, and accepting a Kościuszko Foundation Scholarship to study Polish at the Jagellonian University.

As a Bishop, I received Catholic newspapers from around the country and one told of a diocese in Pennsylvania converting their old Catholic school into a heritage center. That got me to thinking about applying that idea to Panna Maria, using a room or two in the old public-school building.

But then God’s Providence intervened. Shale oil had been discovered in Karnes and DeWitt counties in Texas where the Polish people had settled. I am part of that. So even with eight children in our family, my 1/8 share helped with the startup costs for this $14M dollar project. We’re almost at $12M today. Additionally, while serving with the Kenedy Foundation in the Corpus Christi area, I gained experience in turning their old headquarters into a museum.

However, health issues challenged me in December 2016, and I was in the hospital and rehabilitation for over six months.

I had to have a tracheotomy and now must live life with this condition, but thanks to the Lord, I am OK and still active. With the faith and commitment of the project’s leaders, staff, and our many generous donors, we continued.

I hope that the project always remains faithful to its goal of being a first class Polish-American endeavor. Our immigrant ancestors gave us a first class beginning and I, as one of the descendants, realize the debt I owe to them. We must pass on their history of faith, and devotion to family, community, and their Polishness. To Polonia across America and our brethren in Poland, I invite you to please come see what God has enabled us to do, and I thank Him for being with us, step by step, all along the way.

Please be sure to visit our website at polishheritagecentertx.org, or contact Development Director John Cebrowski through email at jcebrowski39@gmail.com to learn more and to contribute.

(Editor’s Note: Here are just a few photos providing a glimpse of the Polish Heritage Center. Again, visit our website for more information and photos. Spectacular! Also, please contribute to this amazing and wonderful project!)
"Biden Presidency not necessarily bad for Poland,"
Says Ex-Ambassador

The new administration of Joe Biden will not necessarily be bad for Poland, a former US ambassador to Poland stated recently. Poland’s place in the Donald Trump's foreign policy was unique, acknowledged former US ambassador to Poland Steve Mull, now a professor at the University of Virginia. At a time of frosty relations between the US and the EU, Warsaw and Washington shared a deep commitment to America's increased military presence in Poland and both sides strongly opposed illegal immigration. US-Polish bonds were strengthened by a shared belief in traditional patriotism as well as family and religious values. "Although many aspects of American foreign policy will change, I do not think that will occur in Poland’s case," Mull said. There may be differences in the approach to such things as LGBT minority rights, but both countries will continue to support Poland’s role in NATO's eastern flank and share opposition to the controversial Russo-German Nord Stream 2 project. Biden is well-versed in Polish affairs, has visited Poland on several occasions and while vice-president was sent as a special envoy to Warsaw following Russia’s 2014 attack on Ukraine. In fact, he quipped that he would soon be known as "Joe Bidenski," Mull added.

Poland Orders 45 Million Doses of COVID-19 Vaccines

The Polish’s government has announced details of its plans to make the Covid-19 available to the country’s population. It will be available free of charge and on a voluntary basis. Three weeks after being vaccinated a patient will receive a booster dose of the vaccine. Healthcare staff on the front-lines of the pandemic war on the Coronavirus, the elderly and uniformed services will be the first to be vaccinated. Although the procedure will remain voluntary, the authorities hope that 70% to 80% of the population will choose to get vaccinated. The immunization campaign is due to begin at the end of January. Since the start of the epidemic in Poland on March 4, 2020, by early December the number of Covid-19 cases had crossed the one million mark. and the overall death toll was approaching 19,000. During that period 647,000 patients had recovered. The hardest hit have been populous, urbanized regions including Mazowieckie (Warsaw), Małopolskie (Kraków), Śląsk (Katowice) and Wielkopolskie (Poznań). The fewest cases and deaths have been recorded in largely rural voivodeships such as Opolskie, Lubuskie and Podlaskie.

New Financial-Aid for Pandemic-Crippled Businesses

The government continues to introduce successive financial-aid programs for business sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has announced another hefty stimulus package for companies affected by the Covid-19 crisis. He said the package would be worth at least 35 billion złotys or $9.3 billion (at the rate of $1 = 3.68 złotys), including 3 billion złotys for micro-companies, 7 billion for small and medium-sized businesses, and 25 billion for large companies in nearly 40 different fields. The latest assistance package is expected to help 200,000 businesses weather the crisis and save some 372,000 jobs in the restaurant, entertainment, and fitness sectors as well as retail trade.

Polish Economy To Grow 2.9% in 2021 and 3.8% in 2022 – OECD

The Organization for Economic Cooperation ad Development recently said it expected the Polish economy to shrink 3.5 percent in 2020, but then rebound and expand by 2.9 percent in 2021. In its latest Economic Survey of Poland, it said it expected Polish GDP to grow 3.8 percent in 2022. “Poland will likely exit the Covid-19 crisis with fewer scars than many other countries thanks to the strength of its economy going into the crisis and its swift response with containment and support measures when the pandemic struck,” OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría said in a statement. “Yet reforms to tackle long-standing challenges are now even more essential if Poland is to get back to the pace of gains in living standards seen in recent years,” he added.

Continued on next page...
Poland To Phase Out Coal Industry by 2049

After years of being attacked by the EU and foreign environmentalist groups for dragging its feet on climate change, for the first time Poland has put a timeline on ending coal-mining. Some 80 percent of Poland’s electricity is still generated by coal-fired powerplants. Following prolonged and often turbulent negotiations amid an underground miners’ occupation strike, the Polish government, miners’ unions and the state-owned coal firm, Polish Mining Group agreed a plan to phase out collieries by 2049. That should enable the country to meet the EU’s climate targets of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Previously Warsaw had been reluctant to agree to a deadline fearing a labor unrest in the Śląsk region where collieries have long been a way of life and family tradition.

Poland – A Leading European Maker of Electric Buses

In the first nine months of 2020, the share of Polish-made electric buses amounted to nearly one-third out of all new electric buses registered in Europe. The largest player is Poland’s own Solaris Bus & Coach Co. which manufactures city buses, cross-country coaches, trolleybuses, and trams. The Warsaw-based Industrial Development Agency is planning to launch the production of electric buses in 2021. Foreign companies have also set up shop in Poland. Volvo of Sweden operates an electric-bus factory in the southwestern Polish city the central city of Starachowice. Other producers are reportedly considering setting up similar facilities in Poland.

Poland To Face England, Lesser Rivals in Soccer’s 2022 World Cup

At a random drawing held recently in Zurich, Switzerland, Poland was drawn against England, Hungary, Albania, Andorra and San Marino in Group I of the 2022 World Cup. While the remaining rivals do not represent an insurmountable challenge, England is a formidable rival that strikes fear into Polish footballers, coaches and fans alike. Since 1938, Poland has qualified for eight World Cups. It stunned the world at the 1974 event by eliminating World Champion England from the qualifiers. Poland’s best result so far were the bronze medals it won in 1974 and 1982, a period known as the golden era of Polish international football.

Kino Lorber Acquires N.A. Rights To Polish Oscar Hopeful

Kino Lorber, a leading distributor of art-house and international films, has acquired North American distribution rights to “Never Gonna Snow Again.” The movie by Polish directorial duo, Małgorzata Szumowska and Michał Englert, is Poland’s candidate for an Academy Award in the best foreign film category. The plot follows the life of a Ukrainian masseur, played by Alec Utgoff, who enriches the lives of rich, unfulfilled residents living in a walled-off community. The cast also includes such leading Polish actors as Maja Ostaszewska, Agata Kulesza, Łukasz Simlat and Andrzej Chyra. Premiered at the 2020 Venice Festival, the film has also been shown at international festivals in London, Seville, and Bergen. It is due to go on general release in Poland in 2021.

Polish American Heritage Month in Erie County

Submitted by PAC – Western New York Division

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a damper on many things…one of which being the chance to present a proclamation designating October 2020 as Polish American Heritage Month in Erie County, but better late than never!

Erie County Legislator presented the proclamation to the President of the Polish American Congress WNY Division Jim Lawicki and board member and national director Michael Zachowicz, two champions for the Polish American community on behalf of the entire Erie County Legislature.

Mr. Todaro indicated that the Polish American community in the history of our great nation has contributed a large amount of hard work, a deep commitment to community, faith and family values—all of which has helped shape the character of Western New York. He stated that it seems fitting—as Buffalo is the Dyngus Day capitol of America where people gather from all around to celebrate their roots.
"Polski Lew" — Ignacy Jan Paderewski, gdyby żył miałby 160 lat.

Ten wielki Polak, pianista i mąż stanu jest nie tylko jednym z ojców niepodległości ale także polskim pionierem na zachodzie Ameryki.

Przyczynił się do rozwoju Kalifornijskiego miasteczka Paso Robles, gdzie założył własną winnicę.

Do zachodnich stanów Ameryki Paderewski dotarł po koncertach w Nowym Jorku i San Francisco. Tam zagrał w Teatrze Operowym Fishera, który był wtedy jedną z najbardziej nowoczesnych sal koncertowych w Kalifornii.

Podróże i koncerty po Ameryce odbywał na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku, kiedy to San Francisco było największym miastem w Kalifornii San Diego i Los Angeles były niewielkimi miejscowościami. Przejazd z San Francisco do Los Angeles, pociągiem trwał 12 godzin. Jednak odległości i trud podróży nie przeszkodziły artysty w podróży do Paso Robles, gdzie wielokrotnie przebywał pomiędzy 1914 a 1939 rokiem.

Paderewski był uniwersalnie uwielbianą postacią i robił wiele wrażeń na publiczności. Amerykańskie media dużo o nim pisały. Los Angeles Times poświęcił mu blisko 230 artykułów, w czasie gdy grywał koncerty w USA.

W 1914 roku musiał na jakiś czas zawiesić koncerty, ponieważ jego prawa ręka stała się praktycznie bezwładna od przepracowania. To właśnie wtedy wybrał się po raz pierwszy do Paso Robles, małej wtedy miejscowości w hrabstwie San Luis Obispo. Szczególną atrakcją dla nadwyrężonego pracą Paderewskiego okazały się źródła siarczanowe oraz łaźnie do kąpieli błotnych. Odzyskał tam sprawność ręki w stopniu pozwalającym mu grać ponownie koncerty.

Południowa Kalifornia urzekła go do tego stopnia, że postanowił zakupić w Paso Robles rancho.

Zbudował tam winnicę, gdzie produkował własne wino. Rancho San Ignacio, znane było z uprawy winogron z gatunku Zinfindel.

Przyczynił się do rozwoju tego liczącego obecnie 33 tysiące mieszkańców miasta. W centrum Paso Robles mieści się pomnik polskiego męża stanu, pianisty i kompozytora, który okazał się być także dobrym farmerem. Nigdy jednak nie zbudował domu na terenie swojej winnicy, zawsze zatrzymywał się w hotelu Paso Robles, który niestety spłonął. Został odbudowany a obecnie nazywa się Paso Robles Inn, czyli lokalny zajazd.

Paderewski jest bardzo ważną postacią dla mieszkańców tej malowniczej okolicy. Wielkie znaczenie ma dla nich to, że premier i minister spraw zagranicznych Polski, właśnie w Paso Robles osiedlił się i grał koncerty. Są dumni, że ten wielki Polak był jednym z lokalnych osadników. Do dzisiaj przechowywane są tutaj przedmioty, które należały do Paderewskiego.

Ignacy Jan Paderewski zasłynął w USA ze swojej muzyki i przemówień. Był przyjacielem prezydenta USA, Woodrow Wilsona i ówczesnym celebrytą. Zorganizował w USA ponad 300 spotkań połączenych z koncertami, podczas których zachęcał do pomocy Polakom walczącym o wolność. Odegrał ogromną rolę w pozyskiwaniu Polonii do służby w polskiej armii. Przyczynił się współtworzenia Błękitnej Armii i tego, że blisko 30 tysięcy ochotników dotarło do Paryża i zasiliło szeregi Armii generała Hallera.

Paderewski zmarł w 1941 roku w Nowym Jorku, po tym jak nastała wojna i Polska ponownie straciła niepodległość pękło mu serce.
THE PANDEMIC – AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE OUR POLISH HERITAGE! IN 2021 . . . DO SOMETHING POLISH!

Compiled by Robert Strybel
Polish/Polonian Affairs Writer

Some suggestions presented below will have to be postponed until after the pandemic subsides. But, considering the wealth of information available on the net, everyone can familiarize themselves with their Polish heritage online without leaving home. Some examples:

Explore Your Heritage: You may still remember some Polish foods and customs of your childhood but maybe you have drifted away from it all. With the Internet, it’s so easy to refresh your memory or learn new things you never knew before.

Cultivate Your Heritage: Be sure to help uphold those Polish traditions that have survived within your family circle. But also consider introducing the new ones you have read or heard about, especially those you feel are interesting, valuable, and adaptable to your family routine and lifestyles.

Share Your Heritage: Whenever possible, share the foodways, customs, practices, and folklore of our ancestral legacy with others — friends, neighbors, fellow parishioners or club members and the general community. We cannot enrich America’s multi-cultural mosaic if we keep our heritage to ourselves.

Learn About Polonia: Learn more about the Polish-American community, also known as Polonia. Polonia is the Latin word for Poland, but it has come to mean people of Polish ancestry living outside Poland’s borders. Just Google: Polish Americans.

Attend a PolAM Event: Whether it is concert, festival, parish supper, anniversary celebration, Pączki Day festivities or other event, you will be upholding your heritage, supporting a worthwhile fund-raiser, and interacting with fellow-PolAms with similar interests. Be sure to encourage others to attend and, by all means, take the kids along when it again becomes safe to do so.

Expose Your Kids in Things Polish: Most PolAm youngsters nowadays are bombarded by e-gadgetry and other things that draw them away from their heritage. Only you can help enrich their lives with Polish substance by telling them about their ancestral legacy, reading them Polish stories (even if only in English), giving them Polish gifts and accustoming them to Polish delicacies. Don’t delay.

Recall Kopernik’s Birthday: February 9, 2021, marks the 548th birthday of Poland’s world-renowned astronomer Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicholas Copernicus). Read to your kids about the Pole “who stopped the sun and moved the earth.”

Observe Ash Wednesday: Popielec is the day when people receive ashes to mark the start of Lent, a seven-week period of prayer and penance in preparation for Easter. This somber occasion is not a time for merriment but a parish or PolAm club could hold a herring and boiled potato supper after the evening Mass.

Polish News & Entertainment: Keep abreast of what is happening in Poland and across Polonia by watching Polish TV news, TV shows and movies on YouTube.

Learn About Poland: During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Poland was part of Europe’s largest land empire, but in the late 1700s became the biggest country ever to be wiped off the map. To learn all about its history, culture, geography, and much more click here.

Honor Casimir Pulaski: Pulaski Day honoring the American Revolutionary War hero is marked in early March in some parts of America (including Illinois and Wisconsin), in mid-July in the Buffalo area and elsewhere during October. Read up on him online and share the information with your youngsters.

Easter Cooking Class: With the Eastern season not far away, interest in preparing traditional Polish holiday treats (kielbasa, bialy barszcz, babka, etc.) is at an all-time high. A club or parish kitchen, school cafeteria or even private home could be the ideal place to hold a Polish cooking class. Or find one online via Google.

Sing “Sto Lat”: This well-known song of well-wishing to honor those celebrating their namesday, birthday, anniversary, graduation, retirement, or another occasion is wonderful to learn. It is the equivalent of both “Happy Birthday” as well as “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”

Look up a Long-Lost Relative: Many PolAms have an Uncle Staś, Aunt Sophie, Cousin Mary or maybe a godchild they have drifted away from over the years. The New Year may be a good occasion to renew those ties, learn what is going on in their lives and maybe learn something about the family’s history you didn’t know before.

Promote PolAm Fraternals: Polish fraternals such as the Polish National Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons, Polish National Union, and others not only offer competitive insurance and investment opportunities. Through their various cultural programs they also promote our Polish cultural heritage as well as wholesome family activities. If you are already a member, consider expanding your coverage and signing up a youngster. If you are a professional, why not place a recent copy of your PolAm fraternals newsletter in your waiting room for others to see.

Continued on next page...
**PolAm Writers:** Many Polonians are unaware of the novels, short stories, and books that are written by or are about Polish Americans. If you are one of them, [check out this site](https://www.poloniam.com/writers). For information on your Polish last name means, how it came into being, how many people possess it, where they came from, where they settled, and consider developing a family tree. You can start by reading [Sto Lat: A Modern Guide to Polish Genealogy](https://www.poloniam.com/sto-lat) by Ceil Jensen (cjensen@mipolonia.net). Also, check out the Polish Genealogical Society of America. These include kielbasa, ham, and other smoked meats, home-style soups, pierogi, potato dumplings, goląbki, Polish-style condiments (horseradish, mustard, dill pickles), assorted breads, cakes, etc. The perfect surprise for someone's birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. Call (773) 545-4900 or (888)-POLANA-1 (toll-free) or visit their [website](https://www.poloniam.com). Suggest giving a Polish-flavored name to a school, library, new street, subdivision, business or institution. Suggestions include: Chopin, Copernicus, John Paul II, Kościuszko, Mickiewicz, Piłsudski, Pułaski, Siemkiewicz, Skłodowska-Curie and Sobieski. Other possibilities: Cracovia, (Kraków), Lublin, Mazovia, Poland, Pomerania, Resovia (Rzeszów), Silesia, Tarnovia (Tarnów), Tatra, Varsovia, Vistula, Warsaw, plus Mazurka, Polonaise, Polonia, Sarmatia and White Eagle Drive. A Jarmark Wielkanocny can offer assorted Easter eggs), pisanki-making kits, Easter lambs (including lamb butter molds and lamb cake pans), wicker Easter baskets, Polish cookbooks and recorded Easter hymns. Enjoy Polish sausage and ham, roasts, white and lamb cakes, Easter barszcz, horseradish, ćwikła (beets & horseradish), rye bread and recorded Easter hymns. Enjoy Polish sausage and ham, roasts, white and lamb cakes, Easter barszcz, horseradish, ćwikła (beets & horseradish), rye bread and recorded Easter hymns. 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Community Easter Breakfast: In areas where people have drifted away from the big Polish Easter breakfast, this normally family-only meal can be held as a community function. A parish social hall is the ideal venue for the breakfast held after Easter morning mass. Such a Święcone is the perfect opportunity to remind people of the Polish Easter foods of their childhood.

Throw a Polish Dinner-Party: Instead of the same old roast beef or fried chicken, next time you have company over for dinner serve something Polish. It can be the old standbys such as goląbki, kielbasa and pierogi or slightly upscale fare such as steak roll-ups, roast duck stuffed with apples or roast pork loin and prunes. There are plenty of Polish cookbooks on the market and loads old recipes online. Just Google “Polish recipes” and you will have plenty to choose from.

Organize a PolAm Bus Trip: In metropolitan areas with a sizable PolAm population, there are various points of Polish historical interest suited for group sightseeing. An organized bus tour from your club, parish, school class, nursing home or informal group could visit old Polish neighborhoods, churches, cemeteries, monuments, institutions, and businesses. The tour can include a meal at a Polish restaurant.

Polish Constitution Day: The anniversary of Poland’s May 3rd Constitution, Europe’s first modern, written constitution, is a good way to raise your community’s Polish awareness. Support any local activities marking that occasion and consider having your group organize its own. Suitable events include: a parade, memorial mass, Polish festival, exhibition, school essay and/or art for youngsters, etc.

Give Polish Gifts: Everyone likes to get a gift, so that is the perfect occasion to expose the recipient to something “Polish and beautiful”. This could include a Polish “bottle” for Tata or Dziadzio or wiśniówka (cherry cordial) for Mama or Babcia. There are also now plenty of folkcrafts, amber jewelry, crystal, books, recordings, DVDs, etc. to choose from. Check out this site for gift ideas.

Send Your Teen to Poland: That first trip to Poland makes an even greater impact on young people of formative age. They are just beginning to form their ideas and opinions and are more receptive to new sights and experiences than us older folk who are largely set in our ways. The idea of vacationing in Europe will seem far preferable to many than just hanging around the neighborhood or going to the same old lake. Check to see whether any big PolAm organizations are organizing summer camps in Poland. Alternatively, accompany your teen to Poland yourself or have a Polish relative watch over him or her.

Święcone: If your parish holds the Holy Saturday food blessing, be sure to popularize the custom among relatives and friends. If it does not, suggests to your pastor that it be introduced, but first make sure a significant number of other parishioners support the measure.

(Editor’s Note: The websites listed are the suggestions of the writer and not necessarily endorsed by the PAC.)
One of the most beautiful and most revered Polish customs is the “breaking of the oplatek.” The use of the Christmas wafer (oplatek) is practiced not only by native Poles in Poland, but by people all over the world whose ancestors came from Poland.

The “oplatek” is a thin wafer, made of flour and water. For table use, it is white. In Poland, colored wafers are used to make Christmas tree decorations. Formerly, these were baked by organists or by religious and were distributed from house to house in the parish during Advent. Today, they are produced commercially and sold in religious stores and houses.

On Christmas eve, the whole family gathers and waits impatiently for the appearance of the first star. With its first gleam, they all approach a table covered with hay and a snow-white tablecloth. A vacant chair and a place setting is reserved for the unexpected guest, always provided for in hospitable Polish American homes.

The father or eldest member of the family reaches for the wafer, breaks it in half and gives one half to the mother.

Then each of them breaks a small part of each other’s piece and, after a warm kiss, they wish each other long life, good health, joy and happiness, not only for the holiday season, but for the coming year and for many years to come.

Now the same ceremony is repeated between father and their children, as well as among the children, then, with the relatives and even strangers, if they happen to be present. The ceremony over, they all sit down to a tasteful, though meatless supper, after which they sing kolendy (Christmas carols and pastorals) until the time for Midnight Mass, also known as “Pasterka.”

Sometimes, the oplatek is sent, in a greeting card, to loved ones away from home.
On Monday, December 14th, the Polish-American Association of Sarasota (PAAoS) met virtually to continue the Christmas opłatek tradition. Led by PAAoS President, Mitch Panek, twenty-three members shared Polish koledy, poems, and opłatek. The gathering was expertly organized by Sue Wardynski who is the association’s Corresponding Secretary. Due to the pandemic, the PAAoS needed to dispense with the association’s traditional in-person Wigilia and sharing of opłatek. Undaunted, the association forged on using Zoom to stay connected.

Prior to the program’s end, President Panek asked all present on the Zoom call, to wish each other well using the opłatek provided to members.

Utilizing Polish and English religious readings, poems and songs, members Chris de Janasz, G. Bak, Elizabeth Pulawski, Zosia Miroszewska, and Irena Lipinski, shared their talents with those present. Two new members, Nancy Saum and Jane Blythe, were introduced to the PAAoS Christmas season tradition. Jane expressed her appreciation for the efforts of Sue Wardynski in sending opłatek via mail to all members.
Poland: A History – Illustrated
By Adam Zamoyski

(Information courtesy of Amazon Books)

As Adam Zamoyski set out to update The Polish Way, his bestselling first history of Poland, he realized the task required not so much re-writing as re-thinking the known facts well as the assumptions of the past. The events of the last twenty years and the growth of the independent Polish state allowed him to look at Poland’s past with a fresh eye. Tracing Poland’s complex development from the Middle Ages to present day, Zamoyski examines the country’s political, economic, and military struggles, as well as its culture, art, and richly varied society through the ages, bringing the major events and characters in Poland’s history to life.

(Editor’s Note: Please visit pacwisconsin.com for excellent suggestions contained in their ‘Do You Know Poland?’ pamphlet. Author Zamoyski’s book is listed there. Please refer to page 4 in this newsletter for more information from the PAC-Wisconsin Division.)

Other Books about Poland written by Zamoyski:
- Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots, and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871
- Forgotten Few: The Polish Air Force in World War II
- The Last King of Poland
- Warsaw 1920
- Chopin: Prince of the Romantics
- The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture
- The Land of the Winged Horsemen: Art in Poland 1572-1764

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year! Wesołych Świąt!
Founded in May, 1944, the Polish American Congress is a National Umbrella Organization, representing at least 10 million Americans of Polish descent and origin. Its membership is comprised of fraternal, educational, veteran, religious, cultural, social, business, political organizations and individual membership. The Polish American community prides itself on its deeply rooted commitment to the values of family, faith, democracy, hard work and fulfillment of the American dream. We are present in every state and virtually every community in America, on various social, business and economic levels.

The Polish American Congress, an “umbrella” organization, is a federation of over 3000 Polish American organizations and clubs, ranging from national fraternal benefit societies, such as the Polish National Alliance, Polish Women’s Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons and others, including veteran, cultural, professional, religious and social associations, with aggregate membership of over one million. The PAC by-laws also provide for individual membership, as well as associate membership.

The PAC promotes civic, educational and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language and culture, but to stimulate Polish American involvement and accomplishments.

The governing body of the PAC is the Council of National Directors, consisting of directors elected by their respective State Divisions or National Organizations and up to 10 at-large directors elected by the Council. Day-to-day operations are conducted by the Executive Committee elected by the Council of National Directors for a two year term.

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