



CHANCERY OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE

POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Bishop Anthony D. Kopka

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Dear Diocesan Family in Christ,

Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was born our Savior! I am delighted to be the Diocesan Bishop of the Western Diocese and the head of this special family in Christ. I look forward to working with all of the clergy and faithful of this diocese for many years to come.

It is with great joy that I extend with my wife, Darlene, our wishes for a very merry Christmas and a blessed New Year to you and your family and friends. I ask God our Father to bless all of us and to continue to guide us by the Holy Spirit in carrying out the mission and ministry He entrusted to us through His Son. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and in Him we are united as His Church to build one another up and to influence all others.

As you know, with Advent and Christmas the Church begins a new liturgical year, which is

immediately followed by a new calendar year. It seems a most appropriate time to start something new in the Diocese as well. So, with this Christmas greeting I am including what will become at least a quarterly mailing of my Chancery Newsletter. At this time I want to thank my Executive Assistant, Christine Wachna for her fine assistance in preparing this newsletter.

The Chancery Newsletter will include news about and announcements and appeals from the Western Diocese and its parishes, commissions and organizations, and from the Polish National Catholic Church and its commissions and organizations. The Chancery Newsletter will also include notices and directives from my office - the Chancery - and the Office of the Prime Bishop of the PNCC. It will also include updates and reminders specific to clergy, parishes, commissions, organizations or the Council that are pertinent

to the whole Diocese.

The Chancery Newsletter will be mailed to all priests, deacons and clerics of the Diocese, all members of the Diocesan Council, all officers of the Parish Committees of every Diocesan Parish, and all members of every Diocesan Commission and Diocesan Committee.

Please be sure to communicate the information I am sharing with you in the Chancery Newsletter to the other members of your parish. We need to have regular and open communication between us and with all of the members of our Diocesan Family. Communication is a two-way process, therefore, your feedback and the response of your fellow parishioners is always welcome. I expect open, honest and fair dialogue that glorifies God, promotes and advances the mission and ministry of Christ, and permeates Christian love.

May each Holy Mass offered at your parish be glorious and be blessed with fruitfulness, and may

the birth of our Lord and Savior be celebrated with great faith, joy and thankfulness!

Merry Christmas!

Bishop Anthony D. Kopka



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2010 Events ~ National Church

Mission & Evangelism Workshop April 30-May 2

The National Mission & Evangelism Commission of the PNCC will be holding their annual workshop at All Saints Cathedral in Chicago. Many members of the commission are from the Western Diocese and their work is supported by me and the Diocesan Mission & Evangelism Commission. Please be sure to discuss at your Annual Parish Meeting participation from your parish in this workshop, which will offer many good ideas and programs that may be used in your parish for growth and spiritual enrichment. The Diocesan Commission, the Cathedral Parish and I strongly encourage priests and members of your parish to participate. So please block out those dates and promote this worthwhile program in your parish. Details will be forthcoming soon.

PNCC General Synod: October 4-8

As members of the PNCC, we must hold in high regard that which makes us unique in Catholic Christendom. Therefore, we must appreciate, promote

and preserve our democratic heritage as Catholic Christians, which dates back to the Early Church that we read about in the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament.

In our Church, clergy and laity ought to work hand-in-hand and side-by-side at the parish level, the diocesan level and the national or general church level. Our democratic tradition is near and dear to my heart. Therefore, I will do all that I can to support, uphold and edify our brand of democracy.

As your Diocesan Bishop, I do expect every parish to be represented by lay delegates at our upcoming General Synod, besides having every priest participate. Parishes should have been saving up money in order to send a delegation and if your parish has not, please be sure to do what you can now to have funds available. We know General Synods are held every four years and parishes should budget for them as well as Diocesan Synods.

At the General Synod next fall, we will be electing a new Prime Bishop as well as two candidates for the office of

Bishop. The Synod will take place in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada and flights may be booked to the airport in Buffalo, New York. Also be sure that every delegate has a current passport.

National Youth Convocation July 26-30

This national PNCC program will be held this summer at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ, which is located in the Central Diocese. The Western Diocese has a long-standing tradition of being one of the largest diocesan groups to attend this bi-annual event. I hope that all youth, ages 12 and up, have been working hard to raise the needed funds to attend. I encourage all parishes to assist financially all prospective youth participants and adults, who will be chaperones. The youth are not the future, but the present, and are a vital part of the Body of Christ. Please encourage the youth of your parish, not only to attend the Convo, but to fulfill their mission as members of the church body as often as possible.

2010 Events & Announcements ~ Western Diocese

Winter Youth Retreat December 30, 2009 -January 1, 2010

I am happy to announce that our youth are planning a new event, which we hope will be an annual one! The Western Diocese United Youth Association and the All Saints Cathedral Youth Group are holding a Winter Youth Retreat this month. Any youth of the ages of 13 and older may attend. The cost is only \$20 for food at the Cathedral and lodging at the Chancery. Participants are responsible for their own sleeping bags, towels and personal hygiene items as well as travel costs. We are asking parishes to assist their youth for transportation expenses. The retreat begins at 3:00 p.m. on

December 30th at the Cathedral and ends with Mass and brunch on New Year's Day. For more information please contact the Chancery Office or the Retreat Organizer, Krysta Kurzynski, at 630-776-0194. The registration deadline is December 26th.

58th Choirs Convention & Concert June 25-27

The Cleveland Circle of the United Choirs of the Western Diocese will host a convention and concert in Parma, OH. I encourage all of those who have a love of music to share their precious gift in praising the Lord with the faithful at this event. For additional information, please

contact Chris Paulus at 216-901-9973 or email: mpaulus1301@yahoo.com.

Youth Gathering 2010: August 9-12

It is my hope that we will be able to offer a church summer camp program for our youth on an annual basis. The Youth Chaplain, Father John Kowalczyk, and the Western Diocese Youth Association & Commission and I are planning the Diocesan Youth Gathering this summer, again at Camp Selah in Reading, MI. Please be sure to encourage your youth to attend as well as some adults to serve as both counselors and chaperones. The program is open to youth of the ages 8-21. Additional information regarding this event will be forthcoming.





Western Diocese News

Deacon Program

On October 30th I mailed out materials to all of the parishes regarding the Deacon Program that I have re-established in the Western Diocese. The following was included in the mailing: (2) Diaconate Program Handbooks; (2) applications which may be photocopied; (2) self-evaluation forms for prospective candidates; (2) evaluation forms to be completed by the pastor; (4) sets of promotional flyers to be displayed in the church vestibule and parish hall; and (8) promotional ads to be used in bulletins, newsletters or on Web sites. Please be sure that you promote this program earnestly and enthusiastically within your parish. AND please pray that the men being called by God will respond by enrolling in the Diocesan Deacon Program.

Minor Order Elevations

Before my arrival to this Diocese, there have been two men studying for the

Diaconate. On November 22nd I tonsured Angelo Pierro to the Clerical state and conferred the minor orders of Porter and Reader. On January 3rd I will elevate Cleric Thomas Opala to the minor orders of Porter, Reader and Blessor. Cleric Pierro is serving St. Paul's Parish in Belleview, FL, where he is a member; and Cleric Opala is serving St. Mary's Parish in West Allis, WI, where he is a member. I congratulate both men for their fine work and look forward to helping them become Deacons in our Church.

Pastoral Visits to Parishes

It has always been my belief that a Diocesan Bishop should make regular visits to all the parishes within his Diocese. Attending parish anniversaries and administering Confirmation should not be the only times a Diocesan Bishop makes his visits. The Bishop is not only the pastor of the Cathedral parish, but also of all the parishes within his Diocese. Therefore, I have been busy traveling

throughout the Diocese and have had wonderful and warm receptions wherever I have gone. I thank our clergy and faithful for their welcome and hospitality.

So far, I have visited 13 parishes: Sacred Heart of Jesus in Walton Hills, OH; St. Hedwig's and St. John's in Chicago, IL; St. Michael's in Cedar Lake, IN; Holy Name of Jesus in Milwaukee, WI; St. Francis in McHenry, IL; St. Paul's in Belleview, St. Mary's in St. Petersburg and St. Joseph's in Davie, FL; Divine Word in Chicago; Our Savior in Dearborn Heights, Holy Cross in Hamtramck and All Saints in Sterling Heights, MI.

My next two visits will be to Ss. Peter & Paul in South Milwaukee and St. Mary's in West Allis, WI. I have also traveled to the closed parish of Holy Cross in Pe Ell, WA in order to deconsecrate the church for demolition. I do plan to visit the rest of the parishes before the end of next summer.



Western Diocese Appeals

Ministry to the Sick and Homebound

I believe we should all make every effort we can to keep every member of the church from feeling isolated or alone. We need to use all of the means available to us to help the sick and the homebound. We must do all that we can to keep attention on those who are hurting and those who can no longer come to church. Every member of the church can participate in this ministry. I know people are visiting, phoning, writing notes or sending cards to, e-mailing or instant

messaging, sharing gifts with, and providing different kinds of care for our sick and isolated church members; and I would appreciate being informed of any other ways your parish carries out this ministry. However, I would like us to: 1) involve as many as we possibly can in this ministry, 2) be as frequent and as constant as we can, and 3) come up with new ways to reach out and minister to those who are sick and homebound.

The Diocesan Mission & Evangelism Commission is working with me to

develop a more comprehensive and effective ministry to our sick and homebound. I would like the Diocesan Council and the Clergy Conference to help me in the same way. I will update every parish about this work and the ways in which this ministry is being fulfilled by parishes and parish groups in the Western Diocese.





Western Diocese Appeals - continued

Sacred Vocations Development Fund

Since the beginning of the Polish National Catholic Church one of the principal reasons we have not been able to really grow and flourish is because of the perennial shortage of priests. I believe our church has never truly devoted as much attention and resources that we can to develop Sacred Vocations. Since my consecration as a Bishop three years ago I have always pledged to the Lord that Sacred Vocations would be a priority in my episcopal ministry. Therefore, I am turning to the priests and the faithful of this Diocese to join me in this renewed and re-focused effort of promoting the Priesthood and the Diaconate. As with any worthwhile effort, we need funding, so I am proposing the establishment of the Sacred Vocations Development Fund.

My hope is to create a substantial amount for this fund, so that we can

encourage and help to train men to become deacons and priests, but also to provide continuing education for those who are already serving as deacons and priests. I would also like to use this fund to provide more benefits for our clergy as well as bonuses to reward those who are doing exceptional work for the Lord and His Church.

So please keep this fund in mind and encourage people to plan on making substantial gifts, bequests, memorials and tributes. More details will be forthcoming following discussions at upcoming Diocesan Council meetings in regard to this new fund that I am proposing.



Concelebration Vestments

Because I would like to stir a new spirit of unity and since we are a liturgical church, I ordered new vestments to be worn by all of the clergy of our Diocese when they celebrate Holy Mass with me, invoking the Holy Spirit. The vestments are red and include everything useful for confirmations and for Mass offered at Diocesan and Seniorate events and at national church events hosted by our Diocese. They were purchased with diocesan monies. In September the Diocesan Council decided to ask parishes and individual members for donations, which may be made in memory of loved ones or in tribute to anyone. There are 27 vestments at approximately \$200 each and one valued at approximately \$300. Checks may be made payable to the "Western Diocese PNCC" and mailed to the Chancery Office.

Proposal Going Before the Diocesan Council



PNU Insurance Plan for Clergy

Currently, the majority of clergy in the PNCC are covered by term insurance that has no cash value. A need for affordable insurance for the clergy arose from the various diocesan synods. It is the goal of the Polish National Union to have 100% coverage for the clergy of the PNCC. Policies are being offered to priests of all ages and they are a guaranteed issue with no medical underwriting, which means no priest will be denied. The amounts of

insurance available to PNC clergy who are 70 and younger are: \$5,000 - \$10,000 - \$15,000 - \$20,000. For those who are older than 70, the PNU can only offer \$5,000 policies.

The average annual premium for a \$20,000 policy for priests in the Western Diocese is just \$481. Most of our clergy are between the ages of 50 and 59 and the average premium cost is \$593. The next biggest group is between 40 and 49 for an average premium of \$394. Four are between 60 and 69 for an average premium of \$965. One priest is in his 30s and his premium for a \$20,000 policy is only \$260. The total cost for the 20 priests in our diocese under the age of 70 is \$11,620.

This is a phenomenal deal that no

other insurance company will make for life insurance that will never be terminated and will always have cash value. The PNU (Spojnia) is not making a single penny on these policies and is incurring all of the underwriting costs.

Our Chief Financial Officer, Marty Wachna, and I will be presenting to the Diocesan Council the following recommendation for discussion and action: Resolved, that the Diocese provide \$20,000 of life insurance to each qualified clergyman of the Western Diocese and that parishes reimburse half of the cost for their parish priest. (Parishes which share a priest may each contribute towards half of the premium cost.) Feedback on this proposal would be greatly appreciated. Please contact the Chancery Office.



Reminders to the Clergy of the Western Diocese

Clergy Conference — May 10-12, 2010

Every priest is obligated to attend the Clergy Conference of the Western Diocese. I would also like every cleric and deacon to attend. It is the obligation of every parish to pay for the travel, lodging and meal expense of its priest. (Deacons and clerics can apply to the Chancery for assistance.) It is critical for the development and growth of our parishes and diocese that every priest participates in the entire conference. As your Diocesan Bishop, I expect every priest and every parish to meet these obligations. Details about the conference in Techny, IL will be forthcoming. For now, be sure to reserve May 10, 11 and 12 for the Diocesan Clergy Conference. You have time now to make whatever arrangements you need to make in order to be in attendance.

Eucharistic Ministers

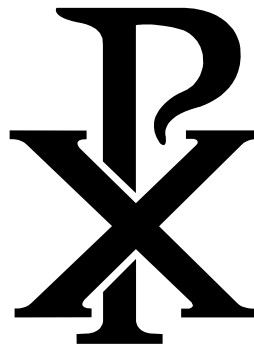
In the Polish National Catholic Church we maintain the sacred and ancient tradition of preserving the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist, because we believe that the consecrated bread and wine are mystically the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In our tradition we permit only Bishops, Priests and Deacons to hold the precious Body and Blood of Christ and to distribute Holy Communion. Therefore, we do not allow lay people to handle the Sacred Body of Christ. As your Diocesan Bishop, I will not permit the use of lay Eucharistic Ministers.

Sacred Vessels

In accordance with the tradition mentioned above, concerning the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist, the Polish National Catholic Church hallows certain religious articles, vessels and appointments. Therefore, chalices and patens are consecrated for restricted use in the liturgy of the PNCC as are ciboriums and intinctories. The monstrance also has a restricted use. Since those vessels all hold

the precious Body and Blood of Christ, they must be handled only by those traditionally designated by the Church: Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Subdeacons.

Let us preserve the dignity and sanctity of the Holy Eucharist by keeping our sacred traditions regarding the Most Blessed Sacrament. As your Diocesan Bishop, I do not approve of any layperson handling chalices, patens, ciboriums, intinctories and monstrances. The same applies to any cleric who has not received the order of Subdeacon. However, I am aware of extreme circumstances that may necessitate the handling of sacred vessels by a layperson or cleric, but this is allowed only with my knowledge and consent.



Sale of Sacraments

I am very concerned about maintaining the dignity and sanctity of all of the Sacraments. Therefore, I expect the priests of this Diocese to uphold and preserve the dignity and sanctity of Baptism, the Word of God, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Holy Unction and Matrimony. It is very disturbing to me whenever I find out about priests who offer Baptism and Matrimony to people as a means for additional income and other priests who require payment to distribute Holy Communion or administer Holy Unction outside of the church proper. At the Diocesan Clergy Conference in May I will confer with the

priests and work with them on ways to prevent such abuses.

I remind all clergy and the faithful that Baptism brings a person into membership of the Church of which the Parish is a local representation. Also remember that Matrimony may only be administered to a Christian man and a Christian woman of which at least one is a member of the PNCC for no less than six months. Anyone who was previously married and now divorced must file an application for ecclesiastical annulment or dissolution of marriage with me three months before he or she plans a marriage in the PNCC. This includes those who were married by a civil authority or by a representative of any Christian denomination or any other religious tradition. No marriage may take place outside of the church proper without my knowledge and consent.

Prohibition of Sacred Space Rentals

As your Diocesan Bishop, I will not approve of renting the sanctuary and nave of the church to anyone or any group. I will also not permit the use of the sanctuary and nave for worship by any religious group outside of the parish. Our churches are consecrated for worship and dedicated for liturgical and sacramental use according to the Rite of the Polish National Catholic Church. This does not preclude hosting of ecumenical (Christian) or interfaith services. This also does not preclude inviting other Christian groups or churches to join us in our worship or our liturgy. However, it must be understood that the Sacraments we administer may only be received by those who share our Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith.

I do encourage the hosting of ecumenical and interfaith services for your community in which your priest and parish take part. And I will permit the rental of parish halls or classrooms for worship by outside religious groups, but only with my knowledge and consent.





Reminder to all Parishes of the Western Diocese

Parish Elections

The Parish Committee is the most crucial component of the parish. It includes the Pastor and both men and women who are elected by parishioners as officers and directors. This ought to be a wonderful partnership for managing the affairs of the parish. It is an awesome opportunity for clergy and lay people to work together for the glory of God and for building up the Body of Christ. It is my intention to do all that I can to encourage and help every Parish Committee to lead their parish and to become an example of Christian collaboration and unity.

The Parish Committee may be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting or at a special meeting called at the end of the year or at the beginning of the New Year before the Annual Parish Meeting. Parish Committees must be approved by me,

therefore, I expect to receive immediately after the election the list of names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of those who are elected.

Please remember that the parish needs to elect a chairman, vice chairman, recording secretary, financial secretary, treasurer and not less than three (3) directors. If this is not possible, please be sure to notify me. To serve on the Parish Committee, one must be a parish member for at least one year and be faithful and active in the spiritual and sacramental life of the parish. Members of the Parish Committee must also be current in financial obligations to the parish, the Diocese and the Church. If these basic qualifications are not met, then I must be notified.

Annual Parish Meetings

I am very happy to know that every

parish in the diocese is holding Annual Meetings. It is the duty of the Parish Committee Chairman (or the Vice Chairman if the Chairman is unavailable) – not the Pastor or the Administrator – to conduct Parish Meetings.

It is my hope that clergy and parish members will come together to discuss ways:

- 1) to increase weekly attendance at Holy Mass on Sundays;
- 2) to grow church membership;
- 3) to encourage men to consider becoming deacons and priests;
- 4) to make stronger relationships with and more frequent contacts to the sick and homebound.

Please be sure to share with me all of the discussions and decisions that take place during your Annual Parish Meeting.

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