

SAINT HEDWIG
Fifth and Kennedy Streets
Duquesne, Penna. 15110

A victim of the Pittsburgh Diocesan re-organization, this parish, with 40 Polish families, was founded in October, 1895. A wooden church was constructed on 'Polish Hill' in this suburb of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County. The cost was nearly \$2,000.00. Parishioners gathered to worship God in their native Polish language walking 160 wooden steps to the first church from Oliver Avenue. With the coming of the first resident Pastor- Rev. Anthony Smelsz the first Baptism was on October 19, and the first burial of Sophia Gorniak, was on November 15, 1895. By November 1896 a small hall, attached to the church served as a school for the parish children taught by Pani Smutka.



First church & school on 'Polish Hill'

Father Smelsz ministered to the Poles of Duquesne who found work in the steel mills or factories, and traveled likewise to nearby Braddock to help form Sacred Heart of Jesus parish for the Polish people. With more Catholics in the Braddock parish, Rev. Smelsz was assigned there as permanent parish, and in 1898 Rev. Henry Cichocki traveled frequently from Pittsburgh to minister to the spiritual needs of the Poles in Duquesne, but not as a resident pastor. Revs. Dziatkowiec, Kulla, and Czaplinski served the parish until 1910, when a newly ordained from the parish, Rev. Weneslaus Wisniewski was appointed pastor. He lengthened the church, added to the school hall and brought the Sisters of the Holy Ghost to guide the daily education of the parish children. These Sisters stayed with the parish teaching hundreds of Polish children for 10 years until 1921.



First Pastor-the Rev. Anthony Smelsz

In 1915 ground for burials was purchased for \$3,000.00. Several Polish priests ministered to the people for short terms until 1921 when Rev. Ladislaus Lipski was appointed Pastor. He had the little wooden church painted in 1927, only to see it burn to the ground in 1928, with a dollar loss of \$44,190.27. While parishioners rented a hall for \$10.00 a month for services, they decided to move off the hills and purchased 5 lots on the corner of Fifth & Kennedy Streets in a more populated area of Duquesne. Rev. Ladislaus Rokosz came in 1930 and completed the new church and rectory and on December 21 directed the dedication ceremonies. Father Rokosz established several organizations adding to the existing Society of St. George (1895) lasting until 1937; the Holy Rosary Society (1910); Society of St. Ursula Gr. 212 Z.P. wA.; the Polish Citizens Club (1917); the Sodality (1930), all of which made substantial contributions to the upkeep of the parish.

In 1942, Rev. L. Rokosz was transferred to St. Adalbert parish in Pittsburgh and was replaced by Rev. Stanislaus Kupiec, who won the hearts of the people and remained pastor until 1966. It was during his pastorate that St. Hedwig parish would note 75 years of service and this took place on October 21, 1945. And, what a glorious day! A Solemn High Mass was celebrated at 10:30 a.m. with Franciscan Father Remy Fac, O.F.M. Conc. as homilist. He also lead the week long Mission. Consequent Sundays were designated as Jubilee Masses with special intentions including Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life, for deceased Pastors and deceased members of the parish. Father Stanley welcomed the educational guidance of the Sisters of the Holy Ghost, who were located in Glassport at Holy Cross school, as they traveled every Saturday to teach 85 children from 10 to 12. The pastor taught high school religion on released time every Wednesday at 3 p.m. There was always hope for a parish school.



The present St. Hedwig Church of Duquesne, Pa.



Rev. S. Kupiec
Pastor-1942-67



Rev. Daniel Szczygiel
Last Resident Pastor-1967-88

Christ The Light Of The World Parish



The large Marquie indicates the merger of this Polish parish with Holy Name of Jesus, also in Duquesne, Pa. The red brick edifice serves as a 'worship site'.



Statue of Patron over sanctuary high altar

Rev. Smelsz was the first Pastor from 1895-1896. There were many until Rev. Lipski (1921-30), Rev. Rokosz (1930-42), Rev. Kupiec (1942-66) and the last appointed-Reverend Daniel Szczygiel (1967-88).

The Polish parish in Duquesne served the Poles who numbered over 200 families in 1945 at the Golden Jubilee. Sisters of the Holy Ghost (later-Spirit) came from Holy Cross parish in nearby Glassport to teach Catechism to over 85 children on Saturdays. The Pastor, Rev. Stanislaus Kupiec taught the high school parishioners on Wednesdays with released time. Rev. Kupiec served for nearly 25 years, giving solace and consolation to the people with the Word of God, Sacraments, the Holy Sacrifice of Mass and strong patriotism. Polish hymns were sung with fervor, especially at Christmas with Koledy, the haunting Lenten melodies especially with Gorzkie Zale, and hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary including Serdeczna Matko.

Employment in the local steel making facilities was important and at times devastating, especially with the extended strikes. Some younger people chose to move away reducing the number of families from 320 in 1934 to 285 or 978 souls in 1976. Rev. Kupiec died and Rev. Daniel Szczygiel was appointed the Pastor in January of 1967. Father Dan continued to keep alive the parish ethnic customs as well as Forty Hours Devotion honoring the Lord and the Patronal feastday-Swieta Jadwiga or St. Hedwig. Parishioners were great participants in Polish events beyond Duquesne and welcomed Mass in the Polish language each Sunday. Fr. Szczygiel died suddenly in February 1988, and local priests acted as Administrators with the help of retired priests until the Diocese of Pittsburgh merged the parish in 1994 into Christ, the Light of the World leaving the church as a worship site.