

# Devotion to St. John Paul II brings honor to pastor

Last year when Tom Lanza, a parishioner of St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish in Kendall Park was accepted by Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski as a seminarian, he called his pastor, Father Robert G. Lynam to share the good news. Father Lynam asked him why he chose the priesthood and Lanza replied, "Because of John Paul II." "And why John Paul II?" Father Lynam queried. Lanza said, "Because you always talk about him."

Anyone who knows Father Lynam knows of his deep devotion to St. John Paul II. "In my priestly life he has been journeying with me over the past 27 years," he said last year at the end of the Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonization of the late pope. He called the Mass, celebrated by Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, archbishop of Krakow and former personal secretary to Pope John Paul II, "a gift, a grace."

Now Father Lynam says he has received another gift, a grace from St.

John Paul II. Cardinal Dziwisz has appointed him an honorary Canon of St. Florian and St. John Paul II Chapter in Krakow. He will be installed November 4.

In a letter written to Father Lynam, making the announcement, Cardinal Dziwisz recalled the Mass of Thanksgiving, saying that he "was moved and inspired by the beautiful liturgy and the great banquet after it, which brought a significant donation for the International Center of St. John Paul II here in Krakow." He also thanked Father Lynam for his ongoing support of the center, "Be Not Afraid."

The cardinal noted that he saw a great devotion to St. John Paul II at St.



Father Robert G. Lynam  
Pastor, St. Augustine of Canterbury

Augustine Parish and thanked Father Lynam for his "personal love and dedication to this great Saint from Krakow," which he said "can be an inspiration and example to many."

It was Father Lynam's great devotion to St. John Paul II and his contributions to the center being established in Poland that prompted Cardinal Dziwisz to propose that Father Lynam fill one of the vacancies as a Canon of the Ba-

silica of St. Florian. The basilica's Chapter of Canons approved the appointment.

The Basilica of St. Florian is significant in connection with St. John Paul II as it was the first assignment for Fr. Karol Wojtyla. The future St. John Paul II served

as an associate priest at the Basilica for four years. As Pope, John Paul II elevated the Church of St. Florian to a minor Basilica and he reinstated the order of Canons there.

According to Canon Law, "The presbyteral council and college of consultors fulfill many of the functions previously assigned to the Chapter of Canons." That means that while when first established the Chapter of Canons served as an advisory body to the bishop, today its role is mainly liturgical. Honorary canons, however, have the title in name only but they are vested in special clerical robes. Father Lynam will also receive a cross and ring signifying the office.

In thanking Cardinal Dziwisz for his newly bestowed honor, Father Lynam wrote, "As I told my parishioners to be named a Canon of Saint Florian by you, Your Eminence, is a "grace" from Saint John Paul II to affirm me in the gift of my priesthood! DZIEKUJE!!!"

— Joanne Ward

## For their efforts priests earn title of honorary Canon

During World War II, the cathedral in the Archdiocese of Wroclaw, Poland was totally destroyed. After the war, the cathedral was taken over by the government, and subsequently used by the Polish Studies department of the University of Wroclaw. In the 1990s the cathedral was finally returned to the Archdiocese of Wroclaw. Many people helped in its restoration. One of them was Father Richard Abramowicz, a priest from the Diocese of Metuchen. His contribution did not go unrecognized.

In 1993, Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz conferred the title of honorary Canon in the Archdiocese of Wroclaw on Father Abramowicz for "significant contributions toward the rebuilding of the cathedral in Wroclaw.

According to Canon Law, a canon is a member of a Chapter of Canons which can belong either to a cathedral or a collegial church. When first established the cathedral chapter of canons served as the bishop's senate and counsel. Today, the role of a chapter is usually liturgical, and it is a role that is limited to the cathedral or church with which it is associated. In Poland a canon serves as an advisor to the head of their cathedral or basilica. Honorary canons are approved by the chapter, but have the title in name only.

Father Abramowicz, began studying for the priesthood in 1981 when his wife Rita died. He was ordained by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick in 1986 and assigned to St. Stephen Parish, Perth Amboy and then Sacred Heart Parish, Manville. He died in 2005.

It was not until two decades later that another diocesan priest received the title of honorary Canon in Poland.

### Father Stanley Walega

Last year, Bishop Henryk Tomasik, who



Father Jozef Maciej Melaniuk

Father Stanley Walega

Father Richard Abramowicz

heads the Diocese of Radom in Poland asked Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski to approve the conferral of the title of honorary Canon on Father Stanley Walega, now retired.

Born in Poland, Father Walega was ordained there in 1964. He served as associate pastor in two parishes in Poland before coming to the United States in 1974. His first assignment was as associate pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, Ozone Park, N.Y. He then relocated into what was then the Diocese of Trenton.

In a letter to Bishop Bootkoski, Bishop Tomasik noted that Father Walega was celebrating the 50th anniversary of his priesthood. He then said, "We appreciate his great concern and care for the Polish immigrants who, for various reasons, found themselves on American soil." Through direct contacts the bishop said he had learned of Father Walega's pastoral work in Holy Family Parish, Carteret, St. Stephen Parish (now Pope John Paul II Parish) Perth Amboy, St. Cecilia Parish Iselin, and as pastor of St. Mary of Czestochowa, Bound Brook.

Bishop Tomasik noted that Father Walega had ties with former bishops of

Radom and with Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, then president of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Healthcare Workers. So "as proof of our gratitude and recognition," the bishop asked that Father Walega join the body of the Cathedral Chapter (Capitula) in Radom and receive the title of honorary Canon of its Chapter.

### Father Jozef Maciej Melaniuk

On September 12, Father Jozef Maciej Melaniuk, pastor of Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish, South Plainfield, will become the diocese's latest honorary Canon in Poland.

Born in Suwalki, Poland, Father Melaniuk wanted to become a priest since he was in the second grade. A family situation, however, convinced him to delay his vocation. As a young man, he moved to Wroclaw, in southwestern Poland, where he earned a master's degree in experimental physics from the University of Wroclaw. He went on to study for his PhD while serving as an adjunct professor of physics at the Technical University of Wroclaw.

A providential vacation to France pulled him off the path of becoming a scientist and in 1981 he came to the United States to enter the seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood May 31, 1986 in St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral, Metuchen by then-Bishop Theodore McCarrick.

In his letter sent to Bishop Bootkoski in January, Bishop Edward Janiak, who heads the Diocese of Kalisz in Poland, asked for permission to bestow the Office of honorary Canon on Father Melaniuk.

The decision to honor Father Melaniuk "was made collectively to express our gratitude for his charitable assistance to our diocese and his care and concern in the rescuing of the former residence of the Canons of Gniezno in Chocz, which today is a part of the Diocese of Kalisz," wrote Bishop Janiak.

With the approval of Bishop Bootkoski, Father Melaniuk is planning to travel to Poland next month to accept the title of honorary Canon in the Diocese of Kalisz.

— Joanne Ward