

Hundreds honor Królewski at St Hyacinth Requiem

By Robert Strybel, Polish/Polonian Affairs Writer

Michał Królewski, who went on to his eternal reward on Oct. 11, 2005, was mourned and eulogized on Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2005, at St Hyacinth's Church, one of Detroit's venerable old Polonian parishes. Some 300 people who loved, admired and remembered Michał turned out for the memorial Mass. They remembered him as a Polish teacher at Hamtramck's St Ladislaus High School and as the organizer of numerous study tours to Poland, which Michał preferred to call "pilgrimages to our ancestral homeland."

Others thought of him as the founder of the Polish-American Folk Theatre, American-Polish Assistance Association, Galicja Folk Dance Ensemble, Piast and Janusz Korczak Schools and the creator of the "Pokój" news bulletin. Michał was remembered as a friend and supporter Polonia's historic old parishes as well as the Orchard Lake Schools and a tireless champion of cultural, educational and charitable causes too numerous to mention. They knew him as someone who had made an indelible imprint on Polonia and in many cases had personally touched their lives.

The Mass was concelebrated by some of Detroit Polonia's most prominent clergy including Chancellor Emeritus of the Orchard Lake Schools, Monsignor Stanley Milewski, current Chancellor Father Timothy Whalen, St Hyacinth's Pastor Father Francis Skalski, Father George Rutkowski and Father Roman Pasieczny. Michał Królewski's ashes had been placed on a catafalque together with a sacred icon and symbolic embroidered Slavic scarf in the altar area, done up in white and red flowers. In the main homily, Monsignor Milewski paid a beautiful tribute to the deceased, whom he likened to those mentioned in the gospel reading as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and in general generously giving to those in need. The homilist added that in one way or another Michał had touched the lives of everyone attending the memorial Mass.

The offertory procession included Michał's two godchildren and Basia Gronet, one of the original PAFT members, wearing folk attire and carrying a copy of the history of St Hyacinth Parish. In his remarks after Mass, Father Skalski recalled the huge history book Michał had written about the parish some 25 years ago. He then presented the book to Michał's elderly mother "na pamiątkę". The liturgy was enhanced by several Polish hymns including the traditional funeral hymn "Witaj, Królowo Nieba" ("Hail Queen of Heaven"). Both before and after Mass, many people queued for an opportunity to inscribe their final tribute to Michał Królewski in the book of condolence.

A funeral reception followed in the parish social hall, catered by Michał's cousin Pani Terenia, owner of Hamtramck's Under the Eagle Restaurant. Many of those in attendance were looking forward to a light-hearted social gathering in Michał's honor being planned by some of Michał's closest friends, including Basia Gronet and Karen Majewski, for January 22, 2006.

It will be held at the PNA Hall in Michał's old Hamtramck stomping grounds and should be just the way he would have liked. As Karen put it: "We hope it will be an appropriate send-off for Michał." People will be encouraged to eat too much, drink too much, tell their favorite Królewski stories, cry on each other's shoulders, and laugh like hell."

Perhaps those in attendance will hear about the unusual occurrence Karen and a few others experienced the night Michał died. “Michał visited several of us the night of Tuesday the 12th, waking us up with one weird thing or another between 3:30 and 4:00 am,” Karen recalled. “In my case, it was a computer thing sitting on our dresser in the bedroom that suddenly played a melody. I had never heard it play music before, in fact, I never even knew it COULD play music.”

The January 22 evening of fellowship and nostalgia is also expected to raise some funds, enabling Michał’s brain child, the American-Polish Assistance Association, to continue its cultural and charitable mission. And that would have been to Michał’s liking as well! Those interested in more information may contact Karen at kmajewska@comcast.net or visit the APAA website: <http://www.apaa.us>
