

Panna Maria Heritage Center

Visitor Experience, #3 in Series

The Rotunda, “Go Make Disciples of All Nations” (Matt. 28:19).

As visitors move from the lobby and enter the rotunda, audio wands will be available that allow visitors to hear narrated stories about each exhibit. Visitors will have the opportunity to hear the stories in their choice of one of three languages – English, Polish or Spanish. Tour narration will also be offered in student versions, appealing to younger audiences.

The visitor will first hear a narrator explaining that the rotunda represents the SPIRITUAL HUB of the Center. As they enter the rotunda, on the circular ledge above, they will view the great and last command of Jesus Christ “Go Make Disciples of All Nations” displayed in colorful text in English, Polish and Spanish. Icons – the dove or Holy Spirit, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Christian symbol of fish and anchor – separate the statement in each language.



Figure 1: Saints Cyril and Methodius

Above, the ceiling of the dome is decorated with gold stars on a blue field. Below, is a life size portrait of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The figures are painted in the style of a 10th Century icon, mounted to metal panels, cutout, and affixed to a base so the two figures free-stand in the center of the rotunda.

Various saints are responsible for our being Christian and Catholic, e.g., the Irish owe their faith to St. Patrick, the people of Mexico became Catholic through Our Lady of Guadalupe in year 1531. Prince Mieszko I married a Czech girl Dobrava who was Catholic. The prince asked to be baptized. With his baptism you have both the beginning of the Polish nation and the beginning of the Catholic faith in Poland in 966.

Saints Cyril and Methodius, the narrator explains, were a vital link in the chain of events that led to the Christianization of Poland and Eastern Europe. It was these two brothers who brought Christianity to the people in a language

they could understand. In 1980, Pope John Paul II declared these two Greek brothers to be “Co-Patron Saints of Europe.”

In the rotunda, surrounding Cyril and Methodius are four niches; each niche contains the portrait of a different saint revered in the Silesian Polish culture. A narration will explain the significance of the four saints: 1) Our Lady of Czestochowa, spiritual heart of Poland and its people, 2) St. Stanislaus (1030-1078), Bishop of Krakow and Martyr, Patron Saint of Poland, 3) St. Hedwig (1174-1243), mother of seven children, widowed, then became a Cistercian nun, founder of hospitals and Patroness of Silesia, and 4) St. Hyacinth (1185-1257) Apostle of Poland, native of our ancestral Silesian area in Poland.



Our Lady of Czestochowa



St. Stanislaus, Patron Saint of Poland

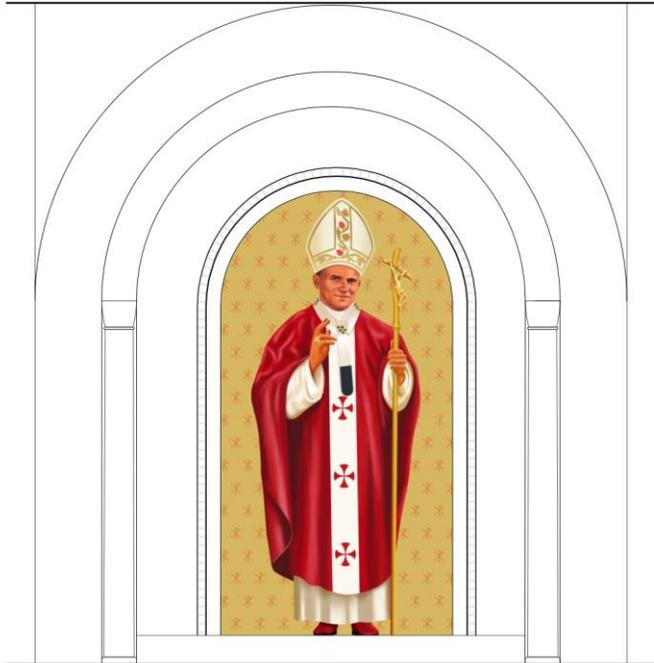


St. Hedwig



St. Hyacinth

At the end of the rotunda is a special niche reserved for Saint John Paul II, the first non-Italian pontiff since the 16th Century, and affectionately known by the Polish people as “St. John Paul II **the Great**.” The narrator comments on John Paul II’s role as the leader of the Church, reaffirming traditional Catholic traditions regarding morality and human dignity, and as one of the most influential world leaders of the 20th Century.



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Paintings for the Panna Maria Heritage Center

Twenty-two original paintings have been commissioned for the Panna Maria Heritage Center.

These paintings depict images and scenes that would otherwise not be able to be viewed. They are not drawn from, or copies of, other

paintings. The scenes and images depicted are unique to the Silesian Polish Immigrant story at the heart of the Panna Maria Heritage Center.

Steve Harding, Houston, is our designer. I, Bishop Yanta, first met Steve when I served on the prestigious Kenedy Memorial Foundation, Corpus Christi, 1999-2004. When their original ranch headquarters building in Sarita, Texas, was converted into a museum, Steve was our designer and I served on the committee.

Lobby Mural – already described in Visitor Experience, #2 in Series

Mural 9’ x 30’ mural depicts the history of the arrival of the first Silesian immigrants in Texas through the first trips back to the Silesian homeland in the 1970s, to reconnect with their history.

As visitors complete their tour of the rotunda, they are offered two choices – to enter the main theater and view an introductory film or to enter the main exhibit room. The main exhibit room provides a tour through the history of Poland beginning in 966, the Silesian Polish immigration to the United States and Texas starting in 1854, a view of 20th Century Poland, and the evolution of Texas Silesian communities to the present.

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We are grateful to Thomas Moy and Sons Water Well Drilling, Inc., for their donation of our own water well for the Center. The Blessing of the new water well took place in conjunction with the Panna Maria Turkey Dinner, October 11 celebration. May God Bless Your Generosity and in memorializing our Silesian Polish family, relatives, and ancestors. Their strong faith, hard working lives, long-suffering endurance, sacrificing love, and Catholic family values will not be minimized or forgotten. We are the recipients, beneficiaries, and stewards of these values and traditions. Thanks and Praise be to God!



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If you wish to receive these newsletters regularly by e-mail or U.S. mail, simply send us your information to our e-mail or U.S. mail address below.

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Please pray to our Lord and the intercession of our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and our Polish saints, for the success of our heritage (and faith) center. Our families will be strengthened.

* * *

Prayer, the greatest power on earth.
May God Bless You and Yours,

Retired Bishop John W. Yanta, President; Panna Maria Heritage Center
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Please visit our web site, www.pannamariacenter.org, and follow the progress of the project, Panna Maria Heritage Center, on Facebook.

Next: "A brief overview of the early history of Poland and the regions of Silesia where our ancestors lived."