

A History of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church West Rutland, Vermont



The following is extracted from a brief history of the parish written by the late Father Patrick Hannon, from a Polish history of the parish by an unknown author, records at the Diocesan archives, parish archives, and parishioners.

The first record of Polish settlement in West Rutland was in the year 1890. Work in the marble quarries attracted fellow countrymen. By 1893 there were fifteen married couples and fifty-eight single men. In the following years, a Polish priest would periodically hear their confessions, offer Mass and preach sermons. Records indicate that a Father Chalupka of Chicopee, Mass. and a Father Molekaitis from Albany, N.Y. made visits.

In his 1902 parish report to Bishop Michaud, Father Carty, then pastor of St. Bridget's church, mentioned that there were approximately four hundred Polish people living here. He recommended that they have their own pastor.

In the spring of 1903, Bishop Michaud asked a priest of the Springfield, Mass. Diocese, a Msgr. Smith, who was scheduled to go to Rome, to find some Polish priests that would agree to come to Vermont.

The priest made inquiries in Rome and was put in touch with Valentine Michulka and Francis Kolodziej. It happened that the three of them met in St. Peter's square while awaiting for the announcement of the new Pope who was Pius X, later canonized a saint.

After completing their studies at the Gregorian University and the Seminary of Cardinal Respighi in Rome, Italy, they were ordained on May 28, 1904 in Rome, Italy.

After their ordination, they were given a few months to return home and visit with their relatives and friends. Father Michulka, son of Thomas and Mary Kaspryszak, was born on February 25, 1878 in Chlopy, Poland. His early studies were with St. Michael's Society, founded by Bronislaw Markiewicz in Miejsce Piastowe in the southeastern part of Poland.

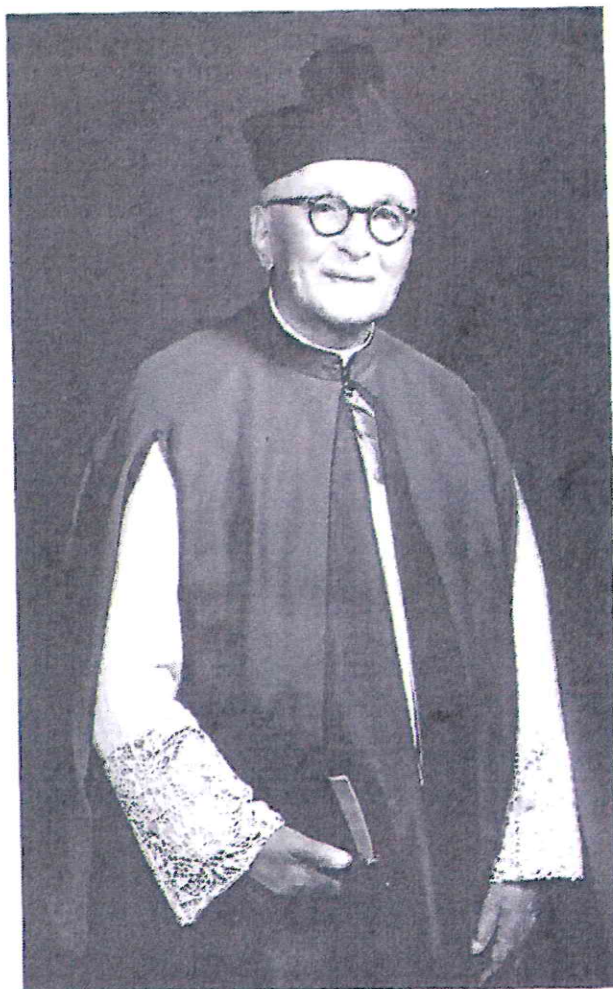
They arrived in Vermont on November 4, 1904. Bishop Michaud decided that the Pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka would be determined by a drawing of lots. Father Michulka drew the paper for West Rutland. He arrived in West Rutland on November 8, 1904 and was to reside with Father Carty of St. Bridget's.

Father Kolodziej went to Readsboro, Vermont, an assistant as he knew the Italian language and after a few years of labors in Vermont, he settled in Adams, Mass. where he died in 1929.

Father Michulka wasted no time in making a census of the Polish people. He found eighty-four families and three hundred and sixty-six single men living in West and Center Rutland. He visited his parishioners three or four times a year and at the same time collected funds for the proposed building of a church.

He paid Father Carty \$100 per month for his room and board, and for the use of the church for services for his parishioners. His assistant's salary at St. Bridget's was about \$33.

In the spring of 1905 the land for the new church and rectory was purchased from Albert G. Dodge of Proctor for \$800.



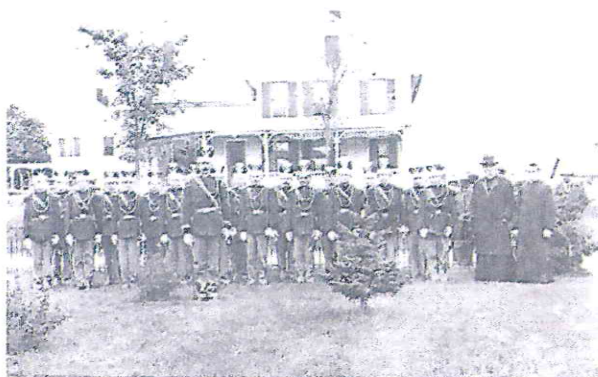
Rt. Rev. Valentine Michulka, P.A.

In the report for 1905, Father Michulka states that "A piece of land situated on the corner of Barnes Street and Castleton Road was bought on the 25th day of May, 1905. We began to break the ground for the church foundation on the 15th day of August. The cornerstone was blessed and laid by Most Reverend Bishop on October 22nd, 1905. Contractor for the church all complete is J.W. Dornsife. Foundations for a parsonage were also laid this year." The Marble companies made donations of marble for the foundation of the church and it was hauled from the quarries to the site by parishioners after their daily work was finished. Work continued during the winter as it was a mild one.

In his report he also states that "During this year I have visited in Poultney about fifty Polish people; Fowler (Florence) about one hundred and thirty; Bellows Falls about one hundred; Proctor about fifty; South Dorset, thirty; Winooski about thirty, and Morrisville, thirty. Mass was celebrated in Florence (Folwer) once a month until 1968.

The first Mass was celebrated in the new church on Easter Sunday in 1906 with no pews and only a temporary altar. It was not until June that the church was completely finished. The total cost was \$13,600.

J.W. Dornsife was the contractor for the church and he also built the rectory, at a cost of \$5,000, which was occupied on August 20, 1906.



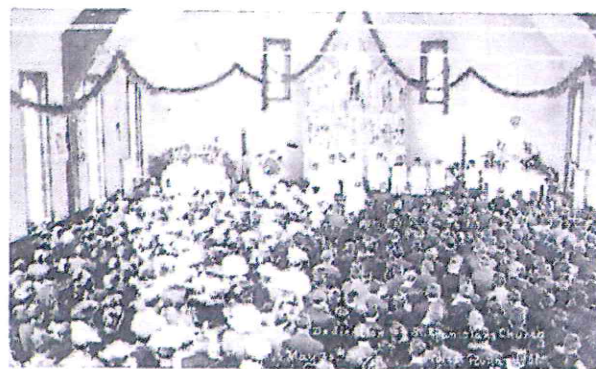
On May 30, 1907, Bishop Michaud blessed St. Stanislaus Kostka Church before a large gathering of West Rutlanders. In addition to the local clergy, there were priests from Albany, Schenectady, Amsterdam and Buffalo, N.Y.

The completion of the church and rectory left St. Stanislaus Kostka parish with a debt of \$9,500. Considering the low wages in those days, average of \$1.25 per day for day work and \$1.75 for night work, one can easily conclude that the Polish people were extremely generous toward their church. The debt was paid off by 1910.

The year 1907 was a memorable one for the parishioners for it marked not only the dedication of a new church and rectory, but also the opening of the first parochial school on January 7th with thirty pupils attending. Before this, catechism classes were held on Sundays at three p.m. first at St. Bridget's and later at Sacred Heart Mission church, given for use by Father Norbert Proulx as well as for use for church services for about 8 months.

In the new school, the children were taught in their native language by Maximilian Gannas, a seminarian

from Poland. Mr. Gannas, later Msgr. Gannas, a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan. He was Father Michulka's right hand man for two years before returning to the seminary to complete his studies. He was a teacher and church organist. He organized a choir among the young men, put on plays at Christmas and even built the stage and scenery. He died in 1964.

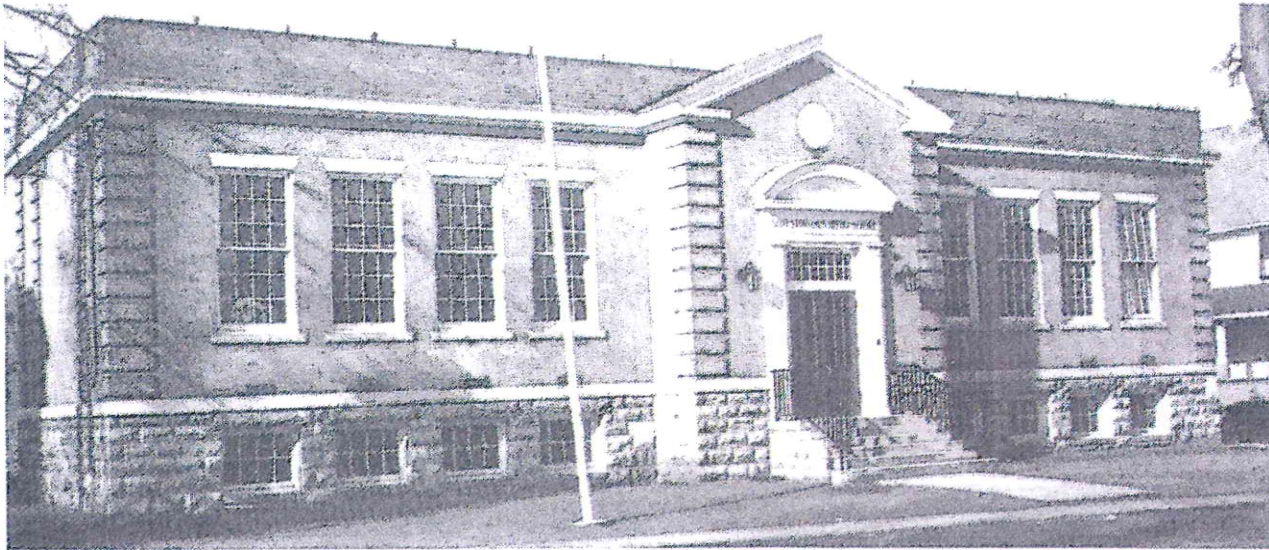


One of his fellow workers was Joseph Lipka. He came to West Rutland in the spring of 1905 and offered his services to Father Michulka. He also had been a seminarian in Poland. When the rectory was completed, he as well as Mr. Gannas, lived there. He acted as the sexton.

In May of 1906, Bishop Michaud stopped to see the new church and Father Michulka presented Joseph to him. He asked the Bishop if he would adopt him for this diocese, which he did. He completed his studies at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland, and offered his first Mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka.

After his ordination he stayed to help Father Michulka for about a year. Bishop Rice then loaned him to Bishop Bevin of Springfield, Massachusetts, for several years. After this interlude, he returned to the diocese and was assigned as an assistant at St. Stanislaus Kostka. In 1924 he was named pastor of St. Jerome's Parish, East Dorset, until his death on May 12, 1931.

St. Stanislaus Kostka School began small, but grew year by year. For the next eighteen years the school was under the direction of lay teachers. It outgrew the church



basement and, in 1922, the present sisters' convent was bought and used for the first grade (60 to 70 pupils). For one year as well, the old Episcopal Church then owned by Paul Sobotka, was used for a class. By the time the Felician Sisters arrived in 1924, there were 404 students in only six grades. The 7th and 8th grade pupils went to the public schools.

Surely they needed a school building for all these children. A meeting of the parishioners was called and this matter was discussed. It was decided to build. The cost was to be \$42,000. At this time there were 300 families in the parish. Every wage earner promised to give \$100 towards the cost. This could be paid over four years, if necessary. No tuition was to be charged for the children of parishioners. They would only be asked to pay for their own children's books.

Several months later in 1924, Father Michulka began to build St. Stanislaus School. As in the case of the church, marble for the foundation was donated by the Vermont Marble Company plus a cash donation. Parishioners helped with the work on the foundation.

The new school was opened to the students in September of 1925, staffed by the Felician Sisters and lay teachers. From then on the church basement was no longer

used as a school. Children from outside the parish were charged tuition at the rate of \$10 a year.

The school continued until 1979 when due to lack of Sisters and dwindling enrollment, it was closed. It has recently been turned into condominiums.

The presence of the Felician Sisters in the community had a great influence on the parishioners not only in the education of their children and preparing them for future life, some in the professional field, but also their daily dedication to their religious life and practices.

One of Monsignor Michulka's hobby was keeping bees. In his younger years, he kept from 50 to 100 beehives. After the harvest, he would make his yearly census and drop off a jar of honey to each family as well as distribute it among the students to take home.

Monsignor Michulka continued his devotion and support of the St. Michael's Society in Poland. he authored a book on the life of its founder in Polish, Father Bronislav Markiewicz, whose cause is being considered for beatification.

One of the things that Monsignor Michulka took pride in was the fact that 15 young Polish priests have said their first Mass in West Rutland, nine of the priests having been born in the parish and educated in the



grammar school: Father Lucien Socinski, Joseph Glodzik, Msgr John F. Orzel, Felix J. Reczek, OFM, Paul Orzech, Benjamin Wysolmerski, Frank S. Warzocha, Stanley Skaza, and Joseph Smyrski.

The others were born in Poland and sponsored as students by Msgr. Michulka at the same institution he obtained his early priestly training. They later came to

nowski, Sister Carol-Marie Zygo, Sister Helen Hadam, Sister Pauline Godzik, Sister Julia Krysztofik, Sister Teonila Reczek; Franciscan: Sister Sophie Chrusciel; Sister Prudentia Chrusciel; Dominican: Sister Monica Socinski; Sisters of Saint Joseph: Sister Helen Regula; Sister Margaret Henry; Blicharz; and Sister Teresa Wysolmerski of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.



America as students and under his guidance they completed their theological studies in American Seminaries.

They were: Msgr Stephen Wojciechowski, Msgr Maximilian Gannas, Joseph Lipka, Bronislaw Slawinski, Francis Feresz and Joseph Stanczyk.

Religious Sister vocations from the parish included: Felician Sisters: Sister Ryszarda, Sister Amandyna Socinski, Sister Teresa Stomper, Sister Celieta Pawlusiak, Sister Filomena Gawet, Sister Ann Czachor, Sister Lucine Tar-

Father Michulka was made a member of the Papal Household with the rank of Right Reverend Monsignor on November 5, 1950. Later, he was given the added honor of Prothonotary Apostolic.

Monsignor Michulka died on February 3, 1969.

The following were Associates with Msgr. Michulka during his pastorate: Fathers Joseph Lipka, Bartholomew Slawinski, John Orzel, Anthony Jurgielewicz, Paul Orzech, Stanley Skaza, and Frank S. Warzocha.



Rt. Rev. John F. Orzel

1969-1974 and 1977-1985



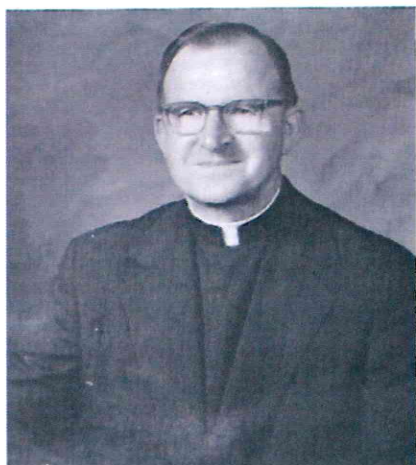
Rev. Vincent Coppola

2011-2015



Rev. Anthony L. Jurgielewicz

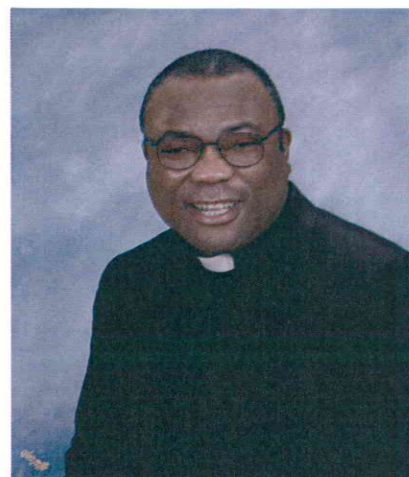
1974-1977



Rt. Rev. Frank S. Warzocha

1985-2011

**PASTORS
OF
ST. STANISLAUS
KOSTKA**



Rev. Romanus Igweonu

2015-2017



Rev. Avelino Vale

2017– Present