

Reverend Monsignor

(1908-2006)

Lawrence (Wawrzyniec) Anthony Wnuk



POLISH SPIRIT



Born in Witrogoszcz, Poland, Wawrzyniec Antoni Wnuk studied at the Gniezno seminary and was ordained in 1933. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned at the German concentration camps Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Dachau. Rescued by American troops, Wnuk assumed pastoral duties at a Displaced Persons' camp in Westphalia, and in 1947 became Chief Pastoral Coordinator for the British Occupation Zone of Germany. In 1951, he was transferred to St. Wladyslaw Parish in Hamtramck, Michigan.

In 1957, Father Wnuk was charged with creating a new parish, Our Lady of Victory, in Chatham, Ontario, and four years later became prelate of Holy Trinity Polish Parish in Windsor. He co-founded the first Canadian convent for Polish Ursuline Sisters in Windsor in 1965. To promote cultural activities, in 1977 he founded the Polish Canadian Centre Association of Windsor, and two years later initiated the Polonia Park Housing Project, a complex of 342 townhouses for low-income families. He did much private charitable work, including raising money for foundations and academic bursaries. He retired as parish priest in 1983, but continued charitable work.

In 1985, he became the Reverend Monsignor Wnuk when Pope John Paul II named him Pronotary Apostolic, second only to the Papal Nuncio as the Pope's personal representative in Canada.

His many awards included the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal (1992), the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta from the Polish government (1994), a medal from Nicholas Copernicus University in Poland for financially supporting its Astronomy Department (1999), the International Year of the Volunteer Certificate of Appreciation (2001), the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal (2002) and the Order of the Province of Ontario (2004).

Father Wnuk passed away on August 6th, 2006, his 98th birthday. His remains were returned to Poland for burial at the Ursuline Sanctuary in Pniewy.

Photos from top left clockwise:
• Rev. Monsignor Anthony Wnuk • Polonia Park Housing Project, Windsor – corner stone ceremony, 1979 • Polish Canadian Center, Windsor, opening ceremony, 1983 • Holy Trinity Church, Windsor
All photos – Ursuline Sisters' archives