



Polish-American  
Association  
of  
Harrisburg, Inc.

[www.polamhar.org](http://www.polamhar.org)

listopad/November 2011

Carolyn Blaszczyk, Redactor

### President's Message

Dear Friends,

Can you believe that we are coming to the end of year 2011? The older I get the quicker time goes by and I seem to be playing catch up all the time. I don't know about you but I need to slow down and simplify my life.

It was lovely to see some of you at Allen Theater in October as we celebrated Polish-American Heritage Month with the movie, *Nine Days That Changed the World*, about Bl. John Paul II's first visit to Poland after he became Pope. It was an emotional evening recalling the impact of his life on Poland and the world. We had a good time, and I am grateful for your support of this event.

Our Polish American Association has one more big event on the calendar for this year – *WIGILIA* on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Since this event starts our new membership year we need to make sure to pay our dues on time to enjoy our wonderful feast of traditional foods. Mark your calendars, bring your traditional dishes to share with others, invite some of your friends and, hopefully, we will see you all there.

One more item of business, please note that this will be my last year as President. It's time for me to retire and

allow another member's creativity to shine. I am excited to see that the new Board is already making a difference. We need your help to make the Association even stronger. Please volunteer your time and share your ideas as we transition to our new leadership. We are in need of a talented computer-savvy person to take over management and further development of our website. We just said good-bye to Halina and Dr. Wojtek Wyczalkowski, who are now enjoying their retirement in St. Augustine, Florida. Earlier this year we also "lost" Jurek & Lena Wrzos, who also retired to the same town. Both families were very active and loyal members of the association. Lena & Wojtek served for years on the board. Thanks Guys! We miss you already.

Mrs. Danuta Shaffer, who moved to a nursing home in Arizona, sends her love to all of you. We have been talking on the phone regularly for the last few months. She just had successful gall bladder surgery and is recovering nicely. She misses her friends in our area, but loves her precious time with her daughter Anna.

Most American families are now beginning plans for Thanksgiving. In Poland, Poles just celebrated All Saints Day and All Souls Day. These are important holidays in Polish culture, and many Poles travel home to be with

family and friends to celebrate the lives of their deceased family members and friends. They visit cemeteries, burn candles, and pray for them. These are somber days filled with bittersweet memories of loved ones. I asked my sister, during our phone conversation, if she noticed any difference in Polish cemeteries due to the crisis in the world economy. She replied, very quickly, "Absolutely not, the graves were as beautifully decorated as ever, covered with gorgeous flower arrangements and hundreds of candles." Tradition won out over saving money for a rainy day!

I want to be home in Poland so badly during every holiday season, but that was not to be this year....

Please come to Wigilia! Let's bring some cheer to our troubled world as we await the Christmas Holidays.

Agata Czopek

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### **Poland's President Awards the Commander Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland**

Poland's President Bronisław Komorowski awarded Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank, the Commander Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland on October 21, 2011. The award was made in recognition of Mr. Trichet's outstanding services in supporting economic reforms in Poland and in developing international cooperation in the area of finance.

President Komorowski noted that the current crisis in the Euro zone is a

turning point in the history of the whole European Union and can also turn out to be the most difficult moment since the outset of European integration

The President emphasized that the global financial crisis highlighted certain failings in the institutional organization and in the very functioning of the Euro zone and the entire EU. Stability of the Euro zone was shaken and the shortcomings of its structure painfully surfaced. He noted some institutional solutions and the rules underpinning their functioning need to be recast, others need to be more strictly followed, while others need simply to be supplemented. Bearing in mind all the weakness in the Euro zone structure and viewed against the backdrop of the earlier integration efforts, the monetary union is an absolutely unique project.

Alluding to the success of the common currency, the President pointed to price stability, effective struggle against inflation, additional trade volumes, economic growth and the 14 million new jobs created.

At the same time, President Komorowski underscored that the Euro zone is also "a project of tomorrow" for countries beyond its boundaries, such as Poland. He explained that Poland does not want to stay helplessly on the sidelines waiting for the Polish Złoty to be replaced by the Euro, but to actively take part in reforming the monetary union, participating in the Euro Pact Plus, and actively co-shaping new rules of economic governance.

<http://www.president.pl/en/news/news/art,228,president-euro-zone-crisis-is-a-turning-point.html>

## **Official Visit by the Emir of Qatar**

His Highness Sheik Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani paid an official visit to Poland on October 20, 2011. The official welcoming ceremony was followed by plenary talks chaired by President Bronisław Komorowski and the Emir, and a private meeting between them.

Agreements were signed between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the State of Qatar on cooperation in tourism, and between the Polish Chamber of Commerce and the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry establishing the Polish-Qatar Business Council.

President Komorowski noted that Poland is a country which values freedom and appreciates those who act on behalf of freedom for others. Their meeting took place the same day as the death of Libya's dictator Muammar Kaddafi. President Komorowski noted that the death of the last dictator in North Africa coincides with the Polish conviction that the world is progressing in the right direction, and that a transformation to freedom will not be reversed.

The President went on to say that the state of Qatar, from the very outset, has been committed to fostering freedom and democracy in North Africa. He considered their meeting a unique opportunity to speak together and to plan for the future in the context of a completed trade agreement on gas supplies, which is important to both countries. He also expressed his hope that the agreement will pave the way for entirely new opportunities to be explored in many other areas of economic, political and cultural life.

The Emir stated that he had followed the development of the Solidarity movement and admired it very much. He added that he appreciated the way Poland is weathering the economic crisis and that the measures Poland has taken in defense of her economy show good governance and vision.

<http://www.president.pl/en/news/news/art,226,visit-by-the-emir-of-qatar.html>

### **How to Contact Us:**

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### **Newsletter**

Comments and suggestions for the newsletter are always welcome and can be submitted to the Editor at 717-889-2623 or at cbis2@comcast.net. Deadline for submission of articles for the next newsletter is **January 31, 2012**.

## **Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia! Merry Christmas!**

Among Poles, wherever they are, the most beloved and beautiful of all traditional festivities is that of Christmas Eve. It is then that the Wigilia, or Christmas Eve Dinner is served. It is a solemnly celebrated occasion and arouses deep feelings of kinship among family members. For days in advance, Poles prepare the traditional foods and everyone anxiously awaits the moment when the first star, known as the Gwiazdka, appears in the eastern sky. It is then that the feast to commemorate the birth of the Christ Child begins.

There is always a thin layer of hay under the white tablecloth in memory of the Godchild in the manger. Before sitting down at the table, everyone breaks the traditional wafer, or Opłatek, and exchanges good wishes for health, wealth and happiness in the New Year. This is such a deeply moving moment. The Opłatek is a thin, unleavened wafer similar to the altar bread in the Roman Catholic Church. It is stamped with the figures of the Godchild, the blessed Mary, and the holy angels. The wafer is known as the bread of love and is often sent by mail to absent family members.

The dinner itself is fixed at seven, nine or eleven courses. In no case must there be an odd number of people at the table, otherwise it is said that some of the feasters would not live to see another Christmas. A lighted candle in the window symbolizes the hope that the Godchild, in the form of a stranger, may come to share the Wigilia and an extra place is set at the table for the unexpected guest. This belief stems from the ancient Polish adage, "A guest in the home is God in the home."

The traditional Wigilia meal is meatless. Items that would normally be included in a traditional Wigilia menu include mushroom soup, boiled potatoes (kartofle), pickled herring (sledzie), fried fish, pierogi, beans and sauerkraut (groch i kapusta), a dried fruit compote, babka, platek, assorted pastries, nuts and candies.

After the meal the members of the family sing Polish Christmas Carols, kolędy while the children wait impatiently around the Christmas tree or choinka for the gifts to be exchanged.

Christmas Eve Mass is called the Pasterka, the Shepherds Watch, and there is popular belief in Poland that while the congregation is praying, peace descends on the snow-clad, sleeping earth and domestic animals assume voices, which only the innocent of heart may hear.

Christmas Day itself is spent in rest, prayer, and visits to family members. From Christmas Day until the twelfth night, boys trudge from village to village with an illuminated star and sing carols.

On the feast of the Epiphany, the priest and the organist visit the homes, bless them and write over their doors the initials of the three wise men - KMB (Kasper, Melchior and Balthazar) - in the belief that this will spare the homes from misfortune.

The Christmas season closes on February 2, known as Candlemas Day. On that day, people carry candles to church and have them blessed for use in their homes during storms, sickness and death.

<http://www.polishamericancenter.org/Wigilia.htm>

# Polish American Association of Harrisburg

## Wigilia



Sharing Oplatek at the traditional Christmas Eve Dinner, "Wigilia."

Our Christmas Eve Supper celebration will be held on Saturday, December 10, 2011 at the Linglestown Fire Hall, 5901 Linglestown Road. Festivities begin at 5:00 PM. All Association members, their family and guests are invited to attend.

After sharing the Oplatek, we'll enjoy some delicious, traditional Wigilia foods followed by singing of both Polish kolędy and American carols. In keeping with tradition, our Wigilia meal will be meatless. The Association will provide fish and beverages. Everyone is asked to bring a favorite Polish or American dish, large enough to share with about ten people.

Please contact **Lorraine Buchinski at 717-534-2058 no later than Friday December 2** to make a reservation. Please provide the number of adults and the names, ages and gender of each child attending.

As always, Wigilia is free to members. Guests and members who have not submitted their 2012 dues by the date of the dinner will be charged \$10.00 each and \$5.00 for each child between the ages of 6-12. There is no charge for children under age 6.

To facilitate admission and avoid a charge for the dinner, members are encouraged to submit their dues (see membership form attached) to ensure receipt by the treasurer prior to December 10.

***Jak będzie Wigilia, tak będzie cały rok.***

-- "As is wigilia, so is the entire year," a Polish proverb.

## **Polish Recipes**

The websites indicated provide videos or written directions for making some Polish dishes for Wigilia. If you would like any of the recipes and do not have access to the Internet, please contact Carolyn Blaszczyk at 717-889-2623.

### **Pierogi**

Meatless pierogi can be sweet or savory cheese, mushroom, cabbage, sauerkraut-mushroom, plum, any combination of non-meat fillings are served.

<http://video.about.com/easteuropeanfood/Ho-w-to-Make-Pierogi.htm>

### **Barszcz Czysty Czerwony**

Barszcz, "borscht," is sometimes made with a kwas or sour starter and is usually red, made with beets. This meatless soup is often served with mushroom uszka for Wigilia.

<http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/polishsoups/r/beetsoup.html>

### **Uzka**

Known as "little ears" because of their shape, mushroom-filled uszka served in beet barszcz are a favorite for Christmas Eve wigilia dinner.

<http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/uszka/r/uszka1.htm>

### **Kapusta z Grochem**

Split Peas & Cabbage is a traditional side dish at Wigilia.

<http://easteuropeanfood.about.com/od/vegetables/r/SplitPeas.htm>

### **Paczki**

Pączki are light and delicious fried Polish pastry, similar to an American jelly doughnut.

<http://video.about.com/easteuropeanfood/Ho-w-to-Make-Paczki.htm>

## **Ordering Oplátky**

For those who would like to share an oplátek with family and/or friends, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth have handmade 2x4-inch oplátky wafers, imprinted with religious designs, available now. Order forms may be obtained at their website:

<http://www.nazarethcsfn.org/item-request-form.php>. Orders may also be placed by calling their Oplátky "hotline" at 847-298-6760, x137. Donations support their Religious Order.

## **Polish Crafts**

The following craft ideas come from the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center. Detailed instructions are available on the Internet at the websites indicated. Those who do not have access to the Internet, may contact Carolyn Blaszczyk at 717-889-2623.

### **Holiday Pająki**

Pająki ("spiders") are lightweight mobiles made of straw and colored paper. They are simple to make and resemble chandeliers made of paper flowers. Small pająki can be made using paper, cord, drinking straws, string tissue paper or other lightweight decorative papers.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JXWXG3hsRg>

### **Polish Star**

Polish stars (aka porcupines) are simply made by cutting, folding and stitching together small paper circles. Like miniature pająki, they can be used as Christmas tree ornaments.

<http://info=poland.buffalo.edu/classroom/Xmas/sp3.pdf>



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YES! I want to join/renew my membership and support the Association!

Please select a dues category:

\$15.00	_____	Individual
\$10.00	_____	Individual Senior (over 65)
\$35.00	_____	Family

**SPECIAL CATEGORIES:**

For those individuals and companies who care to make a special contribution in support of the activities of the Association.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sobieski (male) \$100.00 or more      \_\_\_\_\_ Jagielonka (female) \$100.00 or more

Members in this category receive free admission to all Association events plus recognition in all event programs.

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Please return this form and enclose a check payable to the "Polish-American Association, Inc."

**Send to: Harold Shellenhamer, 6105 Ironwood Drive, Harrisburg PA 17112**

**PLEASE COMPLETE OR UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION**

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_ First name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Children's names and ages: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive the Newsletter (Please mark your choice):

By mail? \_\_\_\_\_ By e-mail? \_\_\_\_\_ By both mail and e-mail? \_\_\_\_\_



**Polish-American Association of Harrisburg  
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