

# HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF THE P.N.C.C.

*By Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich, Jr.*

- 1866 - Francis Hodur is born in Zarki, Austrian-ruled Poland.
- 1870 - Vatican Council 1 – Dogma of Papal Infallibility proclaimed
- Old Catholic Church organizes in Germany and Switzerland, linking with Dutch Old Catholics
- 1889 - Declaration of the Union of Utrecht published
- 1890s - Independent parishes and movements in Polish American Catholic Communities of Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and Scranton
- 1893 - Seminarian Francis Hodur came to the United States.
- He is ordained a priest at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Cathedral in Scranton.
  - He is assigned as assistant priest at Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish in Scranton’s South Side.
- 1895 - Fr. Hodur is assigned as the pastor of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Parish in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania in September.
- Founding of All Saints Independent (Old Catholic) parish in Chicago, Illinois under Bp. Anthony Kozlowski, who is consecrated by Old Catholic Bishops in 1897
  - Founding of Holy Mother of the Rosary Parish under Bp. Stephen Kaminski in Buffalo, New York; he is consecrated by independent Archbishop Joseph Rene Villate
- 1896 - Rioting by Sacred Hearts Parish parishioners, following a dispute over cemetery funds; parishioners want a say in the governance of the parish property and funds
- 1897 - Organization of St. Stanislaus Parish in Scranton, PA, March 14; March 21 first Mass celebrated by Fr. Hodur
- Fr. Hodur’s “Kościół Narodowy” (National Church) program announced; calling for:
    1. Legal ownership of church properties
    2. Parish government in secular matters by parish committees elected by the parishioners
    3. Appointment to pastorates of priests approved by parishioners
    4. Appointment of Polish bishops in America by Rome with input by clergy and laity
  - Weekly *Straż* (*The Guard*) is the quasi-organ of the program.
- 1898 - Fr. Hodur is excommunicated. (He burns the excommunication document and throws the ashes in a nearby brook.)
- In *Straż* Fr. Hodur challenged several Roman Catholic Church teachings, including papal infallibility and supremacy.
- 1900 - At a December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting a decision is made by Fr. Hodur and his parishioners not to return to the Roman Catholic Church. By then “Polish National” parishes had been organized in Priceburg (later known as Dickson City), Plymouth, Duryea and Wilkes-Barre, all in Pennsylvania.
- 1901 - First Mass celebrated in Polish on Christmas Day
- 1904 - 1<sup>st</sup> General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church is held in September in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Its actions include:

1. A decisive break with the Roman Catholic Church
  2. Election of Fr. Hodur as Bishop
  3. *Straż (The Guard)* as official organ/newspaper
  4. Election of a Great Church Council of clergy and laity
  5. A Church Constitution for the Church is adopted, providing for Synods and a Great Church Council.
- 1905 - The Polish National Catholic Church Seminary is founded. (It is later named Savonarola Theological Seminary.)
- 1906 - Continuation and conclusion of the First Synod – Two Feast Days were instituted: Feast of Brotherly Love (Second Sunday in September) and Feast of Poor Shepherds (First Sunday after Christmas)
- 1907 - On September 29<sup>th</sup> Fr. Hodur is consecrated a Bishop by Dutch Old Catholic bishops, Utrecht, Holland (the Polish National Catholic Church has unquestionable orders and Apostolic Succession).
- The Chicago-based independent movement joins the Polish National Catholic Church after the death of Bishop Kozlowski in Chicago.
- 1908 - The Polish National Union of America (Spójnia) fraternal insurance organization is founded by members of the Polish National Catholic Church.
- Saw the first Polish Roman Catholic bishop in the United States (one year after Bishop Hodur was consecrated)
- 1909 - 2nd General Synod – The Word of God heard and preached is recognized as a sacrament. “Polish National Catholic Church of America” is underscored as its legal denominational name
- 1911 - Death of Bishop Kaminski (leader of the Buffalo-based independence movement; many of its parishes join the Polish National Catholic Church
- 1913 - Three provincial synods held (Wilkes-Barre, PA; Chicopee, MA; Passaic, NJ) to discuss the Church’s “Confession of Faith” written by Bp. Hodur.
- 1914 - 3<sup>rd</sup> General Synod is held in Chicago, Illinois, adopts the “Confession of Faith” and institutes three new Feast Days: Feast of the Institution of the Polish National Catholic Church (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of March), Feast of the Fatherland (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in May), and the Feast of the Christian Family (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in October).
- 1921 - 4<sup>th</sup> General Synod –
- Missionary activities to begin in Poland upon its regaining independence
  - Symbol of Polish National Catholic Church adopted
  - “Tyle lat” (Through the Years) adopted as church anthem
  - General Confession adopted church wide with same validity as auricular (private) confession
  - Fr. Francis Bończak begins mission to Poland.
- 1922 - The Eleven Great Principles of the Polish National Catholic Church, authored by Bishop Francis Hodur, were published in “Po Drodze Życia” (Along the Road of Life) in honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church.
- 1923 - December –*Rola Boża, (God’s Field)* newspaper becomes the official Church organ.

- 1924 - 5<sup>th</sup> General Synod -
- Three dioceses formed: Eastern Diocese, Central Diocese and the Diocese of Poland
  - Four Bishops elected and consecrated: Valentine Gawrychowski, Francis Bończak, Leon Grochowski, and John Gritenas (Bp. Gritenas heads Lithuanian National Catholic Parishes and Bp. Grochowski later heads the Western Diocese)
  - Bishop Francis Hodur is “Prime Bishop.”
- 1926 - The Great Church Council created the Western Diocese.
- 1928 - Provincial Synod created the Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese.
- A Provincial Synod elects Fr. John Z. Jasinski as Bishop of the Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese.
  - First Synod of the Diocese of Poland in Warsaw elects Fr. Władysław Faron as its Bishop
- 1930 - Bishop Hodur wrote his “Apocalypse of the Twentieth Century” – June 30, 1930.
- Bp. Władysław Faron is consecrated for Diocese of Poland.
- 1931 - 6<sup>th</sup> General Synod – Buffalo, New York - Bishop Hodur laments the spiritual decline of the Church feeling many saw the Polish National Catholic Church as just a copy of the Roman Catholic Church – He offers to step down as Prime Bishop. The synod affirms the Polish National Catholic belief in:
- The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist
  - The role of the priest as minister of the Sacrament of Matrimony (not as a witness as in the Roman Catholic Church)
  - Mass facing the people instituted in Scranton by Bp. Hodur – Altar of Sacrifice introduced
- 1935 - Special Synod – Fr. John Misiaszek elected bishop. (He was to head the Central Diocese.)
- Administrative rank of Senior Priest implemented
  - Second Polish Synod is held in Warsaw. Fr. Joseph Padewski elected Bishop.
- Bishop John Misiaszek and Bishop Joseph Padewski are consecrated in Scranton, PA.
- 1936 - Fr. Joseph Lesniak is elected bishop at a Diocesan Synod and is consecrated to head the Eastern Diocese
- 1939 - Nazis force the Diocese of Poland to break with the Polish National Catholic Church and call itself “Old Catholic Church of the Utrecht Union of the General Government.” Bp. Padewski is, in turn, then returned to the United States via a 1944 internee exchange.
- 1946 - 7<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- Intercommunion is established with the Episcopal Church.
- 1949 - 8<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- Prime Bishop Grochowski elected to be the second Prime Bishop.
- 1951 - Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak elected Bishop of the Eastern Diocese at a Diocesan Synod. Bishop Soltysiak is consecrated at Holy Trinity Parish in Manchester, New Hampshire and Manchester becomes the 3rd See of the Eastern Diocese.
- Bp. Padewski dies while held in a communist prison for trial.
  - The Polish Diocese breaks from the Polish National Catholic Church and is renamed the “Polish Catholic Church.” (Polsko-Katolicki Kościół).
- 1953 - Prime Bishop Francis Hodur dies on February 16, 1953.

- 1954 - 9<sup>th</sup> General Synod– heated discussion about Mass in English
- Fr. Seniors Thaddeus Zielinski and Joseph Kardaś elected bishops.
  - They are consecrated and assigned: Bp. Zielinski to the Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese and Bp. Kardaś to the Western Diocese.
- 1958 - 10<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- English Mass approved
  - Bishop Francis Rowinski elected and later consecrated. Bishop Rowinski is appointed to head the Western Diocese after the death of Bp. Kardaś.
- 1963 - 11<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- The election of Father Senior Eugene Magyar as Bishop for Czech and Slovak National Catholic Parishes is confirmed. The results of their Synod was accepted by the General Synod.
- 1964 - 1<sup>st</sup> National Youth Convocation is held in Buffalo, New York.
- 1967 - 12<sup>th</sup> General Synod creates the Canadian Diocese with its See in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Fr. Sen. Anthony Rysz, Fr. Sen. Walter Slowakiewicz and Fr. Sen. Joseph Nieminski elected and are consecrated on June 26, 1968.
- 1969 - Prime Bishop Leon Grochowski died while visiting Poland.
- 1971 - 13<sup>th</sup> General Synod:
- Bishop Zielinski elected third Prime Bishop.
  - Contemporary issues paper (abortion, birth control, war and drugs) discussed
  - Fr. Sr. Daniel Cyganowski elected bishop and consecrated.
- 1975 - 14<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- 1976 - Intercommunion suspended with the Episcopal Church over issue of latter's ordaining women to the priesthood.
- 1978 - 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- Bishop Francis Rowinski elected fourth Prime Bishop.
  - Fr. Seniors Thomas Gnat, John Swantek and Joseph Zawistowski elected Bishops and consecrated.
  - Intercommunion terminated with the Episcopal Church.
- 1982 - 16<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- 1984 - Polish National Catholic Church begins dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church – hopes to end animosity between the two churches and live in harmony with mutual respect for each others traditions, teachings and practices.
- 1985 - 17<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- Bishop John Swantek elected fifth Prime Bishop.
- 1990 - 18<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- Fr. Seniors Robert M. Nemkovich, Thaddeus Peplowski and Joseph Tomczyk elected candidates for bishop.
  - Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski consecrated on November 30, 1990.
  - Journeying together In Christ: The Report of the Polish National Catholic –Roman Catholic Dialogue is published.

- 1993 - Bishops Robert M. Nemkovich and Joseph Tomczyk are consecrated on October 18, 1993.
- 1994 - 19<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- 1995 - May – 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of All Saints Cathedral Parish in Chicago, IL
- October – 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral in Buffalo, NY
- 1997 - 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr Cathedral Parish and of the Polish National Catholic Church - Special Masses of Thanksgiving celebrated in all Polish National Catholic Church dioceses
- 1998 - 20<sup>th</sup> General Synod
- 1999 - Special Polish National Catholic Church Synod elects Fr. Senior Casimir Grotnik and Fr. Jan Dawidziuk candidates for bishop. They are consecrated on November 30, 1999.
- 2002 - 21<sup>st</sup> General Synod
- Bishop Robert M. Nemkovich elected as sixth Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church.
- 2003 - Journeying Together in Christ: the Journey Continues – The Report of the Polish National Catholic – Roman Catholic Dialogue 1989-2002 is published.
- November - P.N.C.C. voted out of the International Bishop Conference (IBC) of the Union of Utrecht because the P.N.C.C. remained faithful to the Catholic Faith as well as the Declaration of Utrecht
- 2005 - Prime Bishop Nemkovich attends the funeral of Pope John Paul II at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. He is greeted by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Cardinal Walter Kasper while in Rome.
- 2006 - 22<sup>nd</sup> General Synod
- Frs. Sylvester Bigaj, Anthony Kopka, John Mack and Anthony Mikovsky elected candidates for bishop.
  - The Solemnity of the Fatherland was changed to Heritage Sunday.
  - November 30, 2006 – consecration of Bishops Sylvester Bigaj, Anthony Kopka, John Mack and Anthony Mikovsky
- 2008 Declaration of Scranton promulgated by all active bishops of the Polish National Catholic Church
- 2010 Twenty-Third General Synod held in Niagara Falls, Canada
- Bishop Anthony A. Mikovsky elected as 7th Prime Bishop.
  - Fr. Sr. Paul Sobiechowski elected candidate for bishop.
- Union of Scranton documents ratified.
- 2011 In keeping with the statues of the Union of Scranton, the Polish National Catholic Church accepts the Nordic Catholic Church as a member church of the Union of Scranton.
- July 25, 2011 - Very Rev. Roald N. Flemestad consecrated to the Holy Office of Bishop for the Nordic Catholic Church by the Most Rev. Anthony A. Mikovsky, Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church at St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Cathedral in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

July 26, 2011 - Inaugural meeting of the International Catholic Bishops Conference (ICBC) held at the National Church Center of the Polish National Catholic Church, Scranton, PA.

October 18, 2011 – Consecration of Bp. Paul Sobiechowski.

2012 Special Synod Held in Scranton, Pennsylvania on June 22  
Rev. Stanley Bilinski and Rev. Bernard Nowicki are elected candidates for Bishop

September 14 – Consecration of Rt. Rev. Stanley Bilinski and Rt. Rev. Bernard Nowicki

2014 Twenty-Fourth General Synod held in Erie, Pennsylvania

2018 Twenty-Fifth General Synod held in Belleville, Illinois

2019 Special Synod Held in Scranton, Pennsylvania on October 25  
Very Rev. Jaroslaw Rafalko is elected candidate for Bishop