

Polish Club



Catholics

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Mass and hearing confessions. The team also provides sacramental care for Hispanic Catholics in Lewis and Mason counties, as well for those on Grays Harbor.

The only other priests on Grays Harbor are Walter Albrecht of Aberdeen, 78, who is retired but has been helping out where he can, and John McLaughlin, 60, who pastors St. Joseph in Elma and its mission, St. John in Monteseano.

IN the months since Father Dominic — an iron-willed Croat who endured torture at the hands of the Nazis — was incapacitated, Aberdeen's Polish congregation has been ministered to mainly by Father Albrecht, at first, then by two priests from the Society of Christ, a Polish missionary order not connected with the Archdiocese of Seattle.

An arrangement was made between the Society and the Archdiocese on a trial basis from September 1995 through February 1996. With the approval of the Archdiocese, the Revs. Richard Philiposki from St. Stanislaus in Portland and Peter Dzikowski of Saints Peter and Paul in Tacoma have been alternating saying weekend Masses at the Aberdeen church.

The Archdiocese, however, recently announced that "the Society of Christ is unable to make any permanent commitment to future staffing for the parish beyond permission given to F. Richard Philiposki (sic) to assist so long as he is assigned to Portland."

But Philiposki's assignment in Portland is scheduled to be in effect until 1999, Polish parishioners point out. (Philiposki has said, though, that other circumstances could ar-



KATHY QUIGG/DAILY WORLD

Lifelong members of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Aberdeen Walt Mierzwa, right, and Ben and Edie LaBounty stand inside the 90-year-old church discussing possible ways to save their parish.

ise that could end his assignment in Portland sooner.)

IN light of the Society's lack of "a permanent commitment" to provide a priest for Saints Peter and Paul in Aberdeen, the Archdiocese has refused to give permission for weekend Masses to continue at the Polish church.

Although some kind of services during the week are being offered by the hard-pressed local ministry team, the last weekend Mass at the Polish church was April 20. (Catholics have an obligation to attend Mass on either Saturday evening or Sunday).

The Archdiocese has given permission for the Society of Christ to provide a "priest chaplain" who would "continue to celebrate and observe Polish customs and tradi-

tions" here "on an occasional basis" — and only on weekdays.

The Archdiocese has also suggested that the members of the Harbor ministry team work with the Polish church "to effect a transition of the parish from a free standing parish to some other appropriate status in relationship to Saint Mary Parish ..."

"No way!" the parishioners at the Polish church say. And the fact that weekend Masses were suspended a mere two to three weeks after their staunch refusal to accept that plan has them shaking their heads. They're shocked and angry.

Sister Deanna, the head of the local ministry team, is a woman with a major mission on her hands. Change, she said, is seldom easy.

She likened the parishioners' response to the various stages of grief. "When we deal with something this momentous," she said, "we go through denial ... then there is anger ... then bargaining ... I think that's a natural kind of response."

But the Polish church parishioners say they are shocked because Father Philiposki had offered his services to the Archdiocese for at least an additional six-month period of "extended care" — through Aug. 31. And the Archdiocese admits that the leader of the Society of Christ is willing to allow Philiposki to help Saints Peter and Paul for at least as long as the priest remains at Portland.

PHILIPOSKI composed a letter, dated Jan. 25, with his

offer to the Archdiocese. In the letter, a copy of which Philiposki provided to parishioners, the priest from Portland suggested that during the extended period, "an all-out attempt would be made to reach out to those who could be potential members — former parishioners, inactive Catholics and those who are of Polish or Slavic heritage having the canonical right to belong to the parish."

A canonical right is a privilege established by church law. In this case, the right would include only those of Polish or other Eastern European heritage.

Father Philiposki acknowledged in the letter that the extension should be subject to evaluation before it expires.

"If the trial period proves satisfactory in the opinion of the Society of Christ, Archbishop of Seattle and the parishioners of Saints Peter & Paul," the priest wrote, "then a contract could be made for an (a third) extended period of time for pastoral care over the parish."

OFFICIALS from the Archdiocese and the Society of Christ met on March 13 to discuss the Polish church in Aberdeen. The conclusion, in the view of the Archdiocese, was "that in order for the community to become a viable Polish national parish, 'an all out attempt' — in F. Richard's (Philiposki) words — would need to be made to recruit potential members..."

The Archdiocese also concluded that if such an effort were made, it "would put at risk the already fragile structure and membership of six faith communities in the Harbor Region which are presently unable to support and fund the basics of pastoral care and staffing."

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