

## 150th Anniversary of Father Leon Rogalski's Arrival in Hill River

# Conversations with Guests in Polish Hill River

Conducted by Lidia Mikołajewska

### About “Little Poland” in Australia – a brief conversation with diplomats



During a short break between the official speeches and the solemn mass on March 13 of this year, I managed to speak with two of the most important guests in Polish Hill River. They are representatives of the Republic of Poland: Ambassador **Michał Kołodziejcki** and Consul General **dr. Monika Kończyk**.

- I am truly delighted to be here with you in Polish Hill River, the cradle of Polishness in Australia. This is where it all began...- Ambassador of the Republic of Poland Michał Kołodziejcki started our conversation.

#### **We say this is the Mecca of the Australian Polish community.**

- This place is well-known among the Australian Polish community. I have numerous opportunities to meet Poles in all states of Australia, and the concept of Polish Hill River is something familiar and highly valued. It's something that may be underrated locally...

#### **Oh, come on, Ambassador! If it weren't for the Adelaide Polish community, perhaps no one would have heard of this place today!**

- Exactly, but residents of Perth or Brisbane also say: “Oh yes, this is indeed the ‘Little Poland’ in Australia.” Today's celebration, attended by such distinguished guests: the Governor-General, representatives of the parliament, people representing the Premier of South Australia, representatives of the Polish community... This notable group shows how important this event is for us, both for diplomats and for representatives of the Polish diaspora. It is significant that we can celebrate these occasions together. Unfortunately, with a one-year delay due to COVID. As I mentioned here, in Polish Hill River, everything began. The arrival of Father Leon Rogalski in Australia 150 years ago was an incredibly important support for Polish tradition, language, and faith. I greatly appreciate his efforts.

#### **Father Leon Rogalski was also a great asset to the Germans and the Irish. He not only spoke Polish but also German and English. In his official statement a few minutes ago, you mentioned that Father Leon Rogalski was “a man of the Renaissance...”**

He was undoubtedly a man who had to fulfill many roles at that time. He spoke many languages... It is thanks to him that this place was created, and because of him, we Poles in Australia feel completely different. We feel like part of this community... I wouldn't be mistaken if I said that we already put down roots here back then...

**Dr. Monika Kończyk:** - Perhaps I should add. Reading Father Rogalski's letters to his family and friends in Poland, I noticed that he was raised in a very strong Polish tradition. His family roots were incredibly strong and enduring. And it was these roots that shaped him as a person. I want to emphasize that these family values were what Father Rogalski sought to convey in his missionary work. He created a home for Catholics here, a school, a church. He formed a small community. These values never lose their significance and

are still cherished today.

**Thank you very much. It's a pity it's so brief, as you must return to further ceremonies.**

### **After a Year of Waiting**

(Gosia Hill – Honorary Consul of South Australia)



- I am very happy that this year we managed to organize this wonderful event in Polish Hill River. Last year, it was impossible due to the pandemic. So, after a year of waiting, we are all here together despite the rainy and windy weather. Organizing this gathering was certainly not easy, but thanks to many activists and volunteers, it was accomplished. I would like to sincerely congratulate and thank them all. Today we see a large number of cars in the parking lot, buses... Priests and bishops have come. Polish diplomats are also here – Ambassador Michał Kołodziejcki and Consul General Dr. Monika Kończyk. I am also pleased to be here with everyone.

### **I sincerely congratulate you**

(Małgorzata Kwiatkowska – President of the Council of the Polish Community in Australia)



- The ceremony at Polish Hill River was truly beautiful. It gathered many people not only from South Australia but also a special pilgrimage came from Melbourne. Sixteen priests concelebrated the Holy Mass. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Polish community in South Australia for nurturing this place - the museum, and for bringing it closer not only to Poles but also to Australians. I sincerely congratulate and thank all the priests who continue the work of Father Leon Rogalski.