

## Before the Easter Pilgrimage in Polish Hill River

# A Handful of Memories

**The Easter Pilgrimage in Polish Hill River will take place on Saturday, March 26, 2022. This year, February 6 marked the first anniversary of the celebration of Masses in Polish Hill River by Father Michał Skiba.**

On this occasion, and also in light of the upcoming Easter pilgrimage on March 26, 2022, I would like to remind everyone that St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Polish Hill River is the cradle of Polish heritage in Australia.



The construction of the church began in 1869. In 1871, Bishop Laurence Shiel consecrated this stone church, built by the hands of immigrants from Greater Poland.

There have been times of prosperity in the church's history and times of its near-total decline, even deconsecration in 1950. There was no other choice since it was said that cattle were being kept in the ruined church.

However, a time of rebuilding and

flourishing came. And all this thanks to the Polish community in Adelaide, who spared no effort, money, or time to rebuild both the church and the adjacent school classrooms. This occurred in the 1970s. In the classrooms adjacent to the church, a museum of Polish emigration was also established.

In 1980, the building was listed as a state heritage site of South Australia.

After its restoration, masses at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church were held sporadically. This continued until the arrival of Father Michał Skiba, who initiated the wonderful idea of celebrating Mass every first Sunday of the month. These services attracted many Poles. It was an opportunity not only to attend Mass, but also to meet with friends, have picnics, light bonfires on winter afternoons, and sing songs accompanied by Father Michał on the guitar...

## **Here are the most important events of the last twelve months.**

**February 2021.** Polish Hill River hosted the newly appointed Bishop Karol Kulczycki from Port Pirie. It was a great joy and pride for us Poles, as he was the first Polish bishop to be chosen in South Australia.

**March 13, 2021.** Celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Father Leon Rogalski, the first Polish priest in South Australia. Despite COVID restrictions, these celebrations attracted a large group of people, including one bus of pilgrims from Melbourne.

**October 3, 2021.** The transfer of the image of St. Teresa from the St. Teresa Residential Aged Care Facility to Polish Hill River.

**For the first time in history,** the church and museum were opened to the community in **January 2022,** a fact that must also be noted.

**On Saturday, March 5, 2022,** the Polish Hill River Church Museum will host Bishop

Karol Kulczycki along with a group of parishioner-pilgrims from Port Pirie. This will be a return visit, as in May 2021, parishioners from Adelaide visited the Cathedral in Port Pirie, where they were warmly welcomed and hosted by the local parish community.

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A significant contribution to the activities of the Polish Hill River Church Museum comes from the Committee, which consists of twelve members, all working as volunteers, some for many, many years. The Committee has elected a Board, which is made up of five members:

The Chairman of the Board is Mr. **Jerzy Mrotek**, who is responsible for overseeing all of the Committee's work.

The Vice Chairperson of the Board is Mrs. **Irena Sosnowski**. Irena has extensive knowledge in the field of emigration history and helps people search for old records, documents, or family members they are looking for.

The museum curator is Mr. **Edward Dudziński**, responsible for the collections and archives. He is the person to contact

when donating historical photographs, documents, or items to the museum.

The Treasurer is Mrs. **Krystyna Gajewski**, responsible for finances, such as payments and reports to institutions like the Taxation Office or ACNC.

The Grounds and Buildings Maintenance Manager is Mr. **Ryszard Noworolski**, who organizes other volunteers to collectively care for the grounds and buildings.

Mrs. **Alina Sajewicz**, a Committee member, is very helpful, always present during Mass, and assists in organizing coffee, tea, or refreshments.

**All the volunteers put thought and heart into ensuring that Polish Hill River functions properly.**

**Leszek Gajewski**