

Sacred Heart Parish

Polonia, WI

ICONOGRAPHIC PLAN

Sacred Heart Parish Family in Polonia, WI is embarking on a Beautification Project that is intended to more fully capture and express the theological and human realities of our parish. Following is a general outline of our iconographic plan which conveys our general vision. The vision is based on three basic pillars. The first is salvation history, starting with the Old Testament ultimately focusing on the Book of Revelation; the second is our parish history; the third is who we are as a parish family today. The artistry in the church must tell a story summarizing those three pillars.

The Book of Revelation is the culmination of salvation history, which is the story of the Bible. In the Book of Revelation is shown the Heavenly Liturgy. At Mass, we enter into the Heavenly Liturgy. At every Mass, the entire Church is present which includes; the angels in heaven; the Church Triumphant (those human souls already in heaven); the Church Suffering (those going through final purification in Purgatory); the Church Militant (those here on earth still fighting the battle against evil, sin, and death). All are present at every Mass because at every Mass we literally enter into the Heavenly Liturgy, the Book of Revelation; we don't simply imitate it. Therefore, in some way, the whole Church at the Heavenly Liturgy should be artistically depicted. This should be spread throughout the church building and be especially present in the sanctuary.

Since the Book of Revelation is the culmination of salvation history, part of the church should show some Old Testament figures directly related to the covenant such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and/or David. Adding to these human figures, those people who are already departed and are personally familiar to the parishioners should be depicted. This brings us to our history.

Historically speaking Sacred Heart is the second oldest Polish parish in the United States. Established in 1864, it was and continues to be the center piece of the Polish community in central Wisconsin. The town name, "Polonia", literally translated means "where Poles gather outside of Poland". It is also translated "Little Poland". With the still strong connection to their Polish heritage, it is important that the Patron of Poland, Our Lady of Czestochowa ought to be depicted somewhere in the church proper. Another historical consideration might be Fr. Dombrowski who was responsible for moving the parish from its original location in Ellis to its current location.

There are two other Polish people who personally help bring together the history and who we are today. They are St. Maria Faustina Kowalska and Pope St. John Paul II. St. Faustina was a nun in Poland in the 1920's and 30's and is our Lord's apostle of mercy, bringing the devotion of the Divine Mercy to the world. In the year 2000 at St. Faustina's canonization Mass, then Pope John Paul II declared that from that point on the whole Church would celebrate the second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday. Three years prior to the pope's announcement, because of the deep faith and strong Polish heritage, Sacred Heart Parish began celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday. Divine Mercy is a cornerstone devotion here at Sacred Heart. Both of these Polish saints were prime movers of this devotion and are recognizable to the parishioners.

Another note about Pope St. John Paul, II...In 1976, slightly more than two years before he would be elected Pope John Paul II, then Karol Cardinal Wojtyla traveled to the United States and would personally visit the Stevens Point area including Polonia and Sacred Heart Parish.

Finally and certainly not the least important part of Sacred Heart Parish family is Brother James Miller, FSC, Servant of God. Brother Miller and his family belonged to St. Martin's parish which is kitty corner to the original location of Sacred Heart Parish. When St. Martin's closed in 1972, the Miller family moved to Sacred Heart parish. Brother Miller was martyred on February 13, 1982 in Nicaragua. Brother Miller has been declared a martyr and the cause for his canonization continues to move forward. Brother Miller is known by a very large number of current Sacred Heart parishioners.

It is important that as we depict the Heavenly Host, we include the faces of saints who are not only recognizable but also contemporary to those in the parish today. This helps show that sainthood, to which we are all called, is not for others but for each of us and is attainable.

The texture and colors chosen should be commensurate with traditional Polish style, being warm and rich yet not dark. The final product should look other-worldly lift the soul to prayer beckoning them to come a rest with the Lord. When one walks into the church, they should leave the world behind and enter into heaven. The theology of salvation history and the sacramental action of the whole Church should come alive as one enters the church building. It should be a place where one wants to spend time, a place that tells the story of the universal Church through the people of Sacred Heart Parish in Polonia.

Our ultimate goal is to create such a beautiful, heavenly environment that people from outside of this community will think it worthwhile to make the journey here for a time of personal prayer and spiritual rest.