

# ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS CAMPUS COMMUNICATOR

ST. JOHN PAUL II LITURGICAL CENTER ♦ ST. MARY'S PREPARATORY ♦ POLISH INSTITUTE OF CULTURE & RESEARCH

*"After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was." ~ Matthew 2:9*

## DECEMBER 2025



St. Mary's wins MHSAA D2 Football State Championship over Dexter (51-14) at Ford Field to become back-to-back State Champs – their 10th title in program history – a feat earned through teamwork, unity, toughness, and discipline.



It's beginning to look a lot like  
**CHRISTMAS!**

*Jingle All the Way*, our 37th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting held Sunday, November 23rd, decked the Richard & Mary Trzcinski Quad, Fr. Rakozcy Old Gym, Clarence & Lillian Constantakis Prep Classroom Building, and the Burkacki Academic Center (BAC) in the spirit of Christmas!

This time-honored tradition, a private event for alumni, families, friends, donors and benefactors of the Orchard Lake Schools who come from near and far, is a treasured celebration packed with festive fun for all ages! Hundreds attend to kick off the Christmas season, enjoy visits with Santa and his reindeer, a cozy Christmas market, crafts and stockings for the kids, live music, a lighted train ride, and even a chance to see and pet the camels, reindeer, and donkeys! The Polish Institute of Culture & Research also hosted Polish Christmas carols in the incredible Galeria exhibit space.

Fr. Witek led the blessing and the sounds of the band, Cancel Monday, built anticipation and wide-eyed wonder until it was LIGHTS ON at 6:15 PM! Special thanks to sponsors, entertainers, volunteers, dedicated staff and Robin Goddard for his unwavering commitment to the spirit of the season!

Visit [www.orchardlakeschools/jingle-all-the-way-2025](http://www.orchardlakeschools/jingle-all-the-way-2025) for more event photos moments.

Thank you **SPONSORS**

The 37th Annual Tree Lighting would not be what it was without the tremendous generosity of our financial supporters and sponsors, including our “Jingle All the Way” sponsors-Steve and Maureen Gross, and Barbara Szymanski, *in memory of Walter Szymanski*. Check out the January 2026 *Campus Communicator* for a full list of these very special contributors.



Student elves help Santa fill stockings



Cover Photo & Tree Lighting Photos by  
Tara Johnson | Art Teacher | OLSM

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The tree lighting tradition started in 1988 with Robin Goddard and student volunteers stringing about 10,000 lights from the Grotto to the tree with about 80-100 people in attendance. Each year, new surprises were added including some of the following major attractions:

- 2021** | Called Mingle All the Way and focused on inviting alumni families to attend and enjoy dessert in the Moose Room.
- 2022** | Officially named Jingle All the Way. Organizers moved it to the Quad lined with more decorations, activities and a visit from Santa.
- 2023** | Santa's reindeer and the Christmas Market were some of the new major attractions.
- 2024** | New highlights included outdoor food trucks, a children's trackless train and a camel that came to visit.
- 2025** | Additions included a donkey, an expanded Market, and over 60,000 Christmas lights!





# Looking AHEAD

## Standing with Us

As the year draws to a close, we’re reminded that the world offers us countless opportunities to give. Many causes are worthy, and all of us balance the limits of our time, talent, and resources with the needs of our families and communities.

So, when we ask for your support of the Orchard Lake Schools, it’s fair to ask:

**“WHY HERE? WHY NOW?**  
*Because what happens on this campus is the beginning of something larger. We are forming young people of conscience — students who understand that their lives are meant for service, purpose, and responsibility to others.”*

Their professions may vary, but their foundation is the same: an OLS experience that helps them discover who they are and how they are called to contribute to the world. Msgr. Walter Ziemba, former Chancellor at OLS, once reminded us of what remains one of our guiding convictions:

**“We do not educate students for themselves alone, but for the good they will bring to the Church, the nation, and the world.”**

As you consider your year-end giving, I hope you’ll reflect on the role the Orchard Lake Schools has played in your life or in the life of someone you love. Your generosity keeps this mission alive and ensures that the next generation receives the same formation and hope.

If you are able, please stand with us. Your gift is needed and as a supporter you make a lasting difference.

**To make a year-end gift, please:**

- Scan the QR Code



16620.thankyou4caring.org

- Go to the **Orchardlakeschools.com** and follow the “Support Us” link
- Make a gift by mail:  
**Orchard Lake Schools | Development Office**  
**3535 Commerce Road | Orchard Lake, MI 48324**

**With Gratitude,  
Your Friends at the Orchard Lake Schools**





# EVER FORWARD!

## ZAWSZE DO PRZODU!

### STRATEGIC MASTER PLANNING PROJECT

The “Ever Forward” Strategic Plan has been approved, and the Orchard Lake Schools has initiated a new path. We are moving on to the second phase of the Master Plan for campus. “Ever Forward” charts a path forward for the OLS and its three major operational divisions.

That path goes in the direction Fr. Dąbrowski envisioned – it leads toward OLS providing the best possible organizational structures and activities to enable the spiritual formation and educational growth of the people OLS serves.

For more information, visit [www.orchardlakeschools.com/Ever-Forward](http://www.orchardlakeschools.com/Ever-Forward)

May the Light of the Season Remind us that

# HOPE is ETERNAL

As we enter this blessed season of Christmas, the Orchard Lake Schools—St. Mary’s Preparatory, the St. John Paul II Liturgical Center, and the Polish Institute of Culture & Research—extend heartfelt wishes for peace, joy, and the warmth of Christ’s love to our entire campus community: alumni, families, and friends near and far.

In this season of light, we are reminded that the hope we celebrate at Christmas is not fleeting but eternal. The radiance of Christ’s birth continues to shine in our hearts throughout the year, guiding us with His promise of mercy, healing, and grace. We hold especially close in prayer those who are no longer with us, whose lives continue to illuminate our community through the love and faith they have inspired.

Traditionally, the special display of the Grotto lights accompanies prayer and contemplation during the holidays. This year, the lights shine in memory of Brook and Blair Harbor who passed in the July 4th flooding tragedy in Texas.





# THREE OLSM Generations

BY **KEN SMERECKI**  
PRESIDENT | ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Merry Christmas from my three-generation St. Mary's Preparatory family to yours! As the first in my family to walk the OLSM halls, it is a blessing to see my children and grandchildren continue the Prep tradition. During this season of gratitude, I thank our alumni for their unwavering support of our beloved alma mater—your generosity, presence, and prayers strengthen the Orchard Lake Schools community every day.

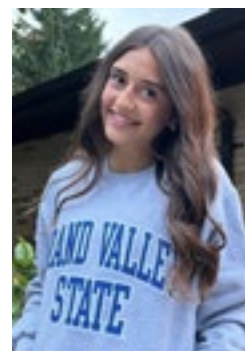
## Craig Wodecki (P'75)



The Eastside Community Chamber of Commerce recently honored Craig Wodecki (P'75) of Eastpointe, Michigan, at the 2025 Salute to Excellence awards. He was named Citizen of the Year for his efforts to go the extra mile in his community. Each year, the chamber recognizes businesses, residents, youth, educators and first responders for their service to their neighborhood. Winners are nominated by their peers.

Looking ahead to 2026, I invite you to stay engaged: visit campus to inspire today's students, join us for events from the Prep, Liturgical Center, and Polish Institute. Help support our scholarship and community service efforts and participate in Founder's Day and alumni award nominations. May the joy and peace of Christ fill your homes this Christmas and throughout the New Year.

## Mea D'Agostino (P'25)



Mea D'Agostino (P'25) is running personal bests during the championship season as a freshman at Grand Valley State University! At the Joe Plane Notre Dame Invite in South Bend, Indiana, she placed 20th (17:57.5) in her debut event – the Women's 5K – Open Division.

*Thank you, Alumni, for visiting campus first semester and meeting with OLSM students to share your career paths!*

**September** | Artist Sam Day (P'99)

**November** | Deacon Daniel Whalen (P'18) & Seminarian Brendan Tabone (P'16)

**December** | Movie Producer Andre Anton (P'02)

## Annual Alumni

# SCHOLARSHIP Event

The Annual Alumni Association Scholarship Awards is a tremendous opportunity to recognize Prep student hardship, perseverance, faith, and philanthropy, essential components for young adult leadership and character growth. Each year, juniors can enter a personal essay on why they are the obvious choice as the scholarship recipient. Members of the alumni association review them

before selecting four finalists – two from the Boys Division, two from the Girls Division – that will compete for scholarships to put toward their senior year tuition. At the heartfelt scholarship awards event, finalists read their essays to all those in attendance, and two winners (one from each division) as well as two respective 2nd place winners, are announced at the event.



ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

## ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS & NETWORKING EVENT

**Thursday, February 12 | Galeria on Campus**

*Mark your calendar & join us for an evening celebrating connections and traditions shared by Orchard Lake Schools alumni.*



WE CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE



## ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR'S SENATE

A MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM  
THAT IS AN EMBODIMENT OF AN "INNER CIRCLE,"  
THAT SUPPORTS THE **HEART** OF THE ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

MEMBERS OF THE CHANCELLOR'S SENATE ARE  
DIFFERENCE MAKERS,  
FUTURE THINKERS,  
AND COMMUNITY BUILDERS . . .  
TAKE-CHARGERS WHO HELP US MAP OUT HOW WE MOVE FORWARD  
BY ALLOWING US TO CONTINUE OUR MISSION.

Support the **HEART** of Orchard Lake.  
BECOME A SENATE MEMBER.



If you would like to join the Chancellor's Senate, scan code now or  
contact Lisa Gray at (248) 392-9974 or [lgray@orchardlakeschools.com](mailto:lgray@orchardlakeschools.com)

**THOSE WHO ENROLL NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 1, 2025 WILL RECEIVE  
AN INVITATION TO ATTEND THIS YEAR'S SENATE DINNER.**

**CHANCELLOR'S SENATE RECOGNITION DINNER**  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> • 5:30 PM**  
PINE LAKE COUNTRY CLUB • WEST BLOOMFIELD TWP, MI

## FRENCH Influence at the DIA

BY **MICHAEL PETTIT**  
FRENCH TEACHER | OLSM

For some context, we take this trip to the Detroit Institute of Arts after learning art vocabulary, practicing giving opinions and describing art, and researching French artists and the influential movements that happened in France.

During our visit to the DIA, we took small group guided tours to learn about a selection

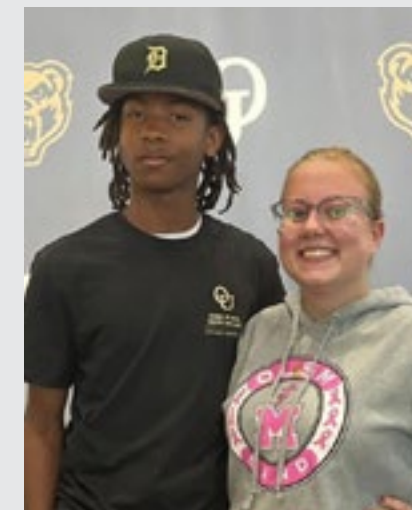
of French paintings and art movements that were popular in France. Before our tour at the DIA, we went to Cuisine, a French fine-dining restaurant in Detroit, where Chef Paul Grosz prepared us an authentic French lunch. We ate beef barley soup, Chicken ragout, halibut, vegetable strudel, and a tarte au framboise.



### Oakland University

## Honors OLSM BAND Members

Two OLSM students, 9th grader Asa Davis (bass) and 12th grader, Delaney Walstad (saxophone), had the privilege of performing with the Oakland University Honor Bands. "Congratulations, I'm so proud of you both," said OLSM music teacher Gina Dlugosielski. "Go Grizzlies!"





# PHOTOGRAPHY Club

BY TARA JOHNSON  
ART TEACHER | OLSM

## Eyes Memorable Moments

The photography club captured the OLS Christmas Tree Lighting and covers other events throughout the academic year including the Chancellor’s Senate. This semester, the two events are linked to a student art contest. In the past, students submitted art designs for the OLS Christmas card. Last year, however, a new tradition began where the winner was announced at the Christmas tree lighting, and then the winning designs were framed for all to see. The framed designs were on display at the first-ever OLSM art show in March of 2025 and, now that the art room has moved to the library, will be on display in the halls outside the new room.

This year, the contest kicked off in November and the students' multimedia contest assigned criteria included the option of photography at the tree lighting. Students had an opportunity to photograph the event and digitally come up with a meaningful representation. All the submissions were evaluated, and the finalists will attend the Chancellor’s Senate Recognition Dinner at Pine Lake Country Club on Thursday, December 11th where the winning image for the 2025 OLS Christmas card is revealed prior to mailing to our campus community! The finalists’ designs will be framed for display in the 2026 OLSM art show coming to the Galeria. Check back often for more information.



## 50th Anniversary Event

# Celebrates CREW LEGACY

Next year marks a historic milestone for Orchard Lake St. Mary’s rowing as the 50th anniversary of one of our most vital and unique varsity sports. Since its founding in 1976, OLSM Crew has established a tradition of excellence, winning multiple State, Midwest, and National Championships.

In 1998, OLSM Crew also achieved a second-place finish in the coveted Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup at the Henley Royal Regatta, and one of our own - Dave Simon (P'98) - rowed for our nation's pride at the 2000 Olympic Games. In an era when only the most prestigious collegiate crews represented our nation on the world stage, Orchard Lake St. Mary’s Preparatory set a new and glorious standard. A standard that continues today.

Our Crew program has become synonymous with character. These young men and women endure long months of pain in preparation for a moment when anguish breaks either into triumph or noble defeat. Thus, a boat race is the perfect metaphor for life. If a person gives all the blood in their body to win the one, will they not spend all the might of their soul to prevail in the other? This is where the very definition of a St. Mary’s Man or Woman is born.

OLSM Crew is hosting a celebratory evening on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at the Fr. Rakoczy Gymnasium. This Golden Anniversary is a moment for us to celebrate the legacy of OLSM Crew and the generations of oarsmen who have helped build it. Please consider joining us in celebrating the honored past and help vouchsafe a proud and victorious future.







# OLSM BAND

## Christmas Concert

**When:** Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

**Where:** Banquet Room (SMAC) in the Dombrowski Fieldhouse

**Admission:** Donations for the Sr. Judie Outreach Food Drive

**Items Accepted (no glass items):** diapers (newborn to size 5), chunky Progresso soups, canned chicken, boxed cereal, individual fruit cups/applesauce, individual treats for lunches, tuna, mayo, Nutrigrain/protein bars, pasta/pasta sauce, canned vegetables, macaroni and cheese, canned ravioli, toiletries, washcloths, deodorant, razors, toilet paper, paper towels, dry cat/dog food, hats, gloves, and scarves.



Day of Service at

# HOLY SEPULCHRE

In honor of All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days, student representatives from both the Boys and the Girls Divisions of St. Mary’s Preparatory, together with faculty and staff from the Polish Institute of Culture & Research at Orchard Lake (PICROL) and St. Mary’s Preparatory, participated in the annual Day of Service at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield.

Coordinated by Ania Bieciuk, Associate Director for Polonia Affairs, and joined by Galeria Manager Elijah Majeski, Headmaster Leonard Karschnia, and Vice Regent Joseph Majcher, the group cared for the graves of Orchard Lake priests, professors, and veterans of General Józef Haller’s “Blue Army.” Students cleaned headstones, placed wreaths, and lit votive candles in honor of those who shaped the Orchard Lake legacy of faith, education, and service. Along the way, they received a history lesson that

sparked meaningful conversations and thoughtful questions about the individuals laid to rest and the heritage they continue.

This tradition aligns with the observances of All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days, when Catholics visit cemeteries to pray for the departed—a cherished practice in Polish culture and an integral part of Orchard Lake’s mission. Each year, this act of remembrance becomes a living lesson in gratitude, grounding students in the lives and sacrifices of those who came before them.

We extend our gratitude to Irena’s Pastry & Bistro, Srodek’s, and the dedicated staff of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery for their support and care, which help make this meaningful tradition possible.



Photo taken by Mietek Oniskiewicz



## Eaglet Volleyball Back-to-Back District Champs

Congratulations to our varsity volleyball team's MHSAA D1 District Championship win (2-0) over Rochester High School at Orchard Lake on October 28th! This incredible season proved that heart, grit, and unity pushed their O-Mazing winning streak.

This is a team that gives it their all, both on and off the court. The win marks a District Championship three-peat for the Eaglets!



## MHSAA D2 Football Back-to-Back State Champs

What a D2 football state championship finish at Ford Field for St. Mary's, the back-to-back champs! The win marks the 10th State Championship in program history.

On Friday, November 28, the Eaglets soared to a big win (51-14) both on offense and defense over Dexter, a team that made its first appearance at a State Championship. Quarterback Jabin Gonzales had four touchdown passes and was named player of the game. In the first half, he passed to junior Lorenzo Barber, senior Reece Hurst who returned it 27 yards deep into Dexter territory, and Daniel Taylor who finished the half with another TD. At the half, the Eaglets were up 24-14.

In the third quarter, Brandon Adams Jr. ran another TD in for 65 yards (31-14) and several points later Lorenzo Barber scored making the game (45-14).

Brannon Hardy sealed the deal in the fourth quarter with a 27-yard touchdown to finish the game and define OLSM's championship feat! Way to go, OLSM offense and defense! Leading in sacks was senior Gage Nessen. Reece Hurst and junior Caden Blankenberg recorded interceptions. Overall, the

win was fueled by a big collective team effort with multiple playmakers on both sides of the ball.

"It's great for the program, community and all the alumni who came out for the game," said Jermaine Gonzales, head coach and OLSM Athletic Director. "Last year's State Championship win was really special, and this year's group is my first football class when I got the coaching and AD job so it's an extra special moment for us to get a back-to-back state championship."



## Students Shine on

# SIGNING Day

We're so excited to share that on Wednesday, November 12th, numerous OLSM student athletes signed their National Letter of Intent (NIL) to play sports at the next level as seen by the college or university. These special moments remind us of these young athletes' sacrifices, dedication, perseverance, and commitment that have helped shape the next very impactful chapter in their athletic journey.

### BOYS DIVISION

**Evan Anderson**

Lacrosse | Adrian College

**Luke Jasinski**

Lacrosse | Lawrence Technological University

**Eli Peterson**

Lacrosse | Aquinas College

**Reed Johnson**

Lacrosse | Maryville University

**Tyler Shubnell**

Baseball | Grand Valley State University

**Zachary Essig**

Baseball | Central Michigan University

**Nate Bauman**

Baseball | Alma College

**Gaetano Di Ponio**

Baseball | Kalamazoo College

**Hudson Brzustewicz**

Baseball | University of Notre Dame

**Luke Crighton**

Baseball | Indiana University

**Andrew Tribul**

Baseball | Michigan State University

**Derick Conrad**

Baseball | Ohio Northern University

**Anthony Abela**

Baseball | Southern Wesleyan University

**Ricky Marinco**

Soccer | Oakland University

### GIRLS DIVISION

**Ava Gallagos**

Rowing | Duquesne University

**Sadie Ross**

Rowing | Rutgers University

**Nika Ladosenszky**

Rowing | University of Louisville

**Delaney David**

Soccer | Daytona State

**Riley Higgins**

Softball | Hope College

**Jillian Gibbs**

Volleyball | Albion College



Photos taken by OLSM Student: Ben Kaminski (@bkfliz on Instagram)



# SERVING OTHERS

## Earth & Service Club Supports Meals on Wheels

OLSM students and families came together for the 5th Annual Meals on Wheels efforts to deliver Blizzard Boxes and socks to homebound seniors in our area. On Saturday, November 8th, student leaders Eva D'Agostino, Kaylie Bordinat, Clair Beltz, Nola Ceccoli, Sam Blair, Thad Raynish, along

with parent supervisors Sarah and Fred D'Agostino, and other volunteers, helped warm the hearts of these members of our community.



## NHS Partners with Empowerment Plan

The OLSM National Honor Society (Girls Division) partnered with the Empowerment Plan to create at least 100 Care Bags to distribute to those experiencing homelessness. The Empowerment Plan employs members of the homeless population to produce durable and innovative coats that transform into sleeping bags. This employment opportunity ensures that each person hired can earn a stable income, find secure housing, and regain their independence. The Care Bags, filled with daily essentials that NHS collected, will be distributed with the sleeping bag coats that are produced. Donation

items (such as travel size toiletries, hats, gloves, snacks and more) were dropped off in November in the library or ordered directly through our Amazon Wish List. And for more information about the Empowerment Plan, located in Detroit, please visit [www.empowermentplan.org](http://www.empowermentplan.org)



## Adopt-a-Family . . . 19th Year of Tradition

Each holiday season the Moms and Dads Club and St. Mary's families show our greater community the heart of St. Mary's through our annual support of the Adopt-a-Family program. In 2006, Betsy and Bob Moran began this tradition of adopting families from our community who were in need at Christmastime. Now in its 19th year, our St. Mary's community continues to share its blessings with those who are struggling, giving help and hope inherent in our motto – God. Family. St. Mary's.

Our generous classes, through their representatives, have chosen to work with Better Way Detroit, a nonprofit founded by Fr. Marko Djonovic to provide dignity for those experiencing homelessness by offering the opportunity to work for pay. At Christmas, they create a store of donated items so families can provide Christmas for their loved ones. Prep families open their hearts by donating an item on the organization's list or making a monetary donation.



*"A Single act of kindness together allows us to make a huge impact on local families in need."*

# REFLECTION

BY FR. BERNARD WITEK  
DIRECTOR | ST. JOHN PAUL II LITURGICAL CENTER

In December we focus on the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in fact is one of the most important solemnities in our Liturgical calendar. Christmas is preceded by Advent (from Latin "ad-venire" meaning "to come to,"), which is a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord. It encompasses the four Sundays (and weekdays) that precede Christmas. This year the first Sunday of Advent was Nov 30. Our preparation in Advent has a double focus.

## In the Words of

# ST. JOHN PAUL II

*"Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord" These are the words of the Responsorial Psalm for today's liturgy of the First Sunday of Advent, a liturgical season which from year to year renews our expectation of Christ's coming. In Advent, we await an event which occurs in history and at the same time transcends it. As it does every year, this event will take place on the night of the Lord's Birth. The shepherds will hasten to the stable in Bethlehem; later the Magi will arrive from the East. Both the one and the other in a certain sense symbolize the entire human family. The exhortation that rings out in today's liturgy: "Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord" spreads to all countries, to all continents, among every people and nation ...*

*For this reason, the refrain, "Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord" sounds so appropriate. We can meet God, because he has reached out to us. He did so as the father in the parable of the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-32), because he is rich in mercy, dives in misericordia, and wants to meet us from wherever we come and wherever our journey is taking us.*

**"God comes to us whether we have sought him, ignored him and or even avoided him. He reaches out to us first; his arms open wide like a loving merciful father ..."**

**- ST. JOHN PAUL II**

In the first part of Advent, we are preparing for the second coming of Christ at the end of time, while in its second part, from December 17 to December 24, our focus is on preparation for the celebration of the anniversary of Our Lord's birth on Christmas.

St. John Paul II in his homily on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 1998, while proclaiming the Jubilee Year, made the following remarks concerning Advent:

*In today's Gospel we heard the Lord's invitation to be watchful: "Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming". And then immediately: "Therefore you also must*

*be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt 24:42, 44). The exhortation to be watchful resounds many times in the liturgy, especially in Advent, a season of preparation not only for Christmas, but also for Christ's definitive and glorious coming at the end of time. It therefore has a distinctly eschatological meaning and invites the believer to spend every day and every moment in the presence of the One "who is and who was and who is come" (Rv 1:4), to whom the future of the world and of man belongs. This is Christian hope! Without this prospect, our existence would be reduced to living for death.*





# ZAPRASZAMY



You are invited to join us for Polish 1st Sunday!

*A special Mass at the Orchard Lake Schools to pray for Polonia*

## Sunday, Jan 4<sup>th</sup> • 1:00 PM

- Polish Dinner after the Mass in the Dining Hall - Cost: \$20
- Please RSVP to the dinner by Tuesday, December 30<sup>th</sup>.
- For more information, call (248) 602-7579 or [bernardwitek@yahoo.com](mailto:bernardwitek@yahoo.com).

*at the Shrine of St. John Paul II, celebrated by Fr. Bernard Witek*

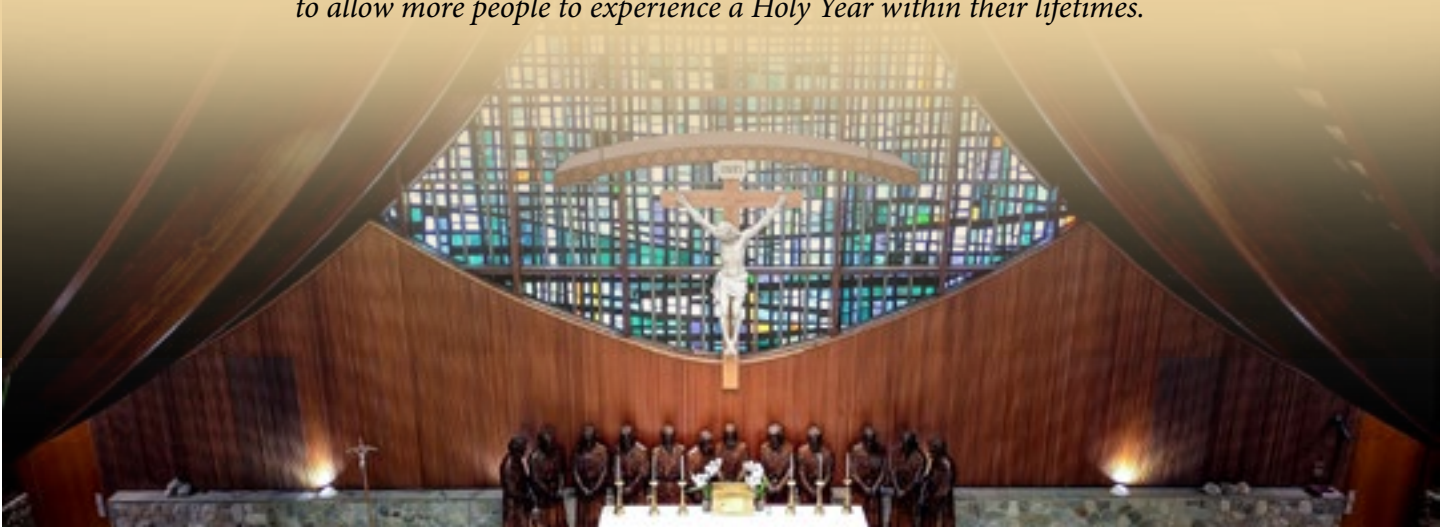


### SHRINE OF ST. JOHN PAUL II: JUBILEE YEAR PILGRIMAGE SITE

Did you know that the Archdiocese of Detroit has designated our Shrine Chapel at Orchard Lake one of 12 Detroit-area pilgrimage sites ahead of the Jubilee 2025; a place for pilgrims to visit and receive a plenary indulgence?

*The Church celebrates ordinary jubilees every 25 years. In December 2024, the late Pope Francis ushered in the Holy Year 2025 by opening the Holy Doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome for a year of grace, forgiveness and renewal — centered on the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope."*

*In 1470, Pope Paul II established the practice of celebrating jubilees every 25 years, instead of 50, to allow more people to experience a Holy Year within their lifetimes.*





## GALERIA OPEN HOURS

December 7 | 12:00 – 3:00 PM (Polish 1st Sunday)

VISITS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT. TO SCHEDULE, PLEASE CONTACT [info@picrol.org](mailto:info@picrol.org) OR CALL 248-836-1284



"POKLON PASTERZY" Zofia Stryjeńska (1891 Kraków-1976 Genewa)

## Saturday, December 13

All proceeds will benefit the St. John Paul II Liturgical Center

### Archdiocesan Shrine

4:30 ~ Music by the Filarets Choir

5:00 ~ **Holy Mass**

Campus Dining Hall

6:00 ~ **Polish Vigil Supper\***

Tickets for the Supper are \$50

Seating is limited.

Tickets must be purchased by December 5th.

To pay by check:

Please send checks to Orchard Lake Schools

ATTN: Margaret Wozny

3535 Commerce Road - Orchard Lake, MI 48324

and write "Wigilia" on memo line

**For questions, please contact:**

Margaret Wozny at [info@sjp2liturgicalcenter.com](mailto:info@sjp2liturgicalcenter.com)

or call (248) 392-9279 Ofc. / (586) 907-6788 Cell.



Scan code to purchase tickets online  
or visit [www.sjp2liturgicalcenter.com/events](http://www.sjp2liturgicalcenter.com/events)

## Sobota, 13 grudnia

Cały dochód zostanie przeznaczony na rzecz Centrum Liturgicznego św. Jana Pawła II

### Sanktuarium Archidiecezjalne

4:30 ~ Kolędy w wykonaniu

Chóru Filaretów

5:00 ~ **Msza Święta**

Jadalnia kampusowa

6:00 ~ **Polska kolacja wigilijna\***

\*Bilety na kolację w cenie \$50

Liczba miejsc jest ograniczona.

Bilety muszą być wykupione do 5 grudnia.

Płatność czekiem:

Czek proszę przesłać do Orchard Lake Schools

Do wiadomości: Margaret Wozny

3535 Commerce Road - Orchard Lake, MI 48324 oraz

napisać "Wigilia" na polu notatki.

**W razie pytań prosimy skontaktować się z**

Margaret Wozny, mailowo [info@sjp2liturgicalcenter.com](mailto:info@sjp2liturgicalcenter.com)

lub telefonicznie: (248) 392-9279 biuro.

/ (586) 907-6788 kom.



## Polish Institute

## UPDATE

BY ANIA BIECIUK

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR POLONIA AFFAIRS, POLISH  
INSTITUTE OF CULTURE & RESEARCH AT ORCHARD LAKE

As we enter the quiet, expectant beauty of December, I find myself reflecting on a deeply meaningful month at the Polish Institute. November is always a time of remembrance, gratitude, and connection. This year it brought together the very heart of who we are as

Polish Americans: people shaped by faith, heritage, history, and community.

**ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE** | Throughout November we observed All Saints' and All Souls' Days, sacred moments in our Catholic tradition that call us to remember those who have gone before us. This spirit of remembrance carried into our annual Day of Service at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery (Read more about it on page 13).

**POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY & VETERANS DAY** | We then honored two significant observances that fall on the same date. Polish Independence Day and American Veterans Day share November 11, a powerful convergence for Polish Americans. One marks the restoration of a free Poland after generations of struggle. The other honors the service and sacrifice of those who defended the United States. For our community this shared date carries a profound message. It reflects the dual loyalty, pride, and gratitude held by generations whose families fought for freedom in both homelands and whose stories continue to shape the identity of Polish Americans today.

**RECLAIMING POLISH HERITAGE** | In November we also had the privilege of hosting Miller Canfield counsel for a Polish citizenship seminar in partnership with the Kościuszko Foundation, Michigan Chapter. Many families joined us to learn about reclaiming their heritage. These gatherings

remind us that our identity is living and active and that our Institute plays a unique role in helping Polish Americans stay connected to their roots.

**FPA CLOSING CEREMONY** | The Friends of Polish Art Fine Art Competition Closing Ceremony in the Galeria came alive with conversation as several artists shared the stories, techniques, and inspirations behind their pieces, including Nancy Kozłowski, winner of the FPA Richard Kubiński Award for Best in Show for her work *Rzepak* (2020). It was a joy to learn how their work continues to inspire reflection, curiosity, and pride within our community.

**TREE LIGHTING PERFORMERS** | At the annual Tree Lighting on November 23, Cantemus Domine, the adult choir from Our Lady of Czestochowa Church in Sterling Heights, offered a beautiful a cappella performance inside the Galeria, followed by a Polish and English Christmas carol sing-along outdoors. We extend heartfelt thanks to Justyna Pal for her magnificent direction. Guests explored the Galeria from 4:00 to 8:00 PM and viewed our winter exhibit featuring selections from the Polish Institute collection.

**CONCERT & STUDENT SEMINAR** | On November 30 we welcomed soprano Dominika Zamara and pianist Vanessa Kwiatkowski for *Echoes of Europe: Arias and Songs from Poland and Beyond*. The concert proved to be the perfect post-Thanksgiving gathering for families and friends, filled with Polish, Italian, and French repertoire. Dominika, who is from Poland and joined us directly from a performance at Carnegie Hall, also offered a seminar for the Girls Division and the music classes at St. Mary's Preparatory. It was an honor to give our students the opportunity to learn from an international artist whose career reflects both discipline and passion.

As we enter the season of Advent and Christmas, we wish you and your families peace, health, and joy. May this time bring rest to your homes, warmth to your gatherings, and hope to your hearts.

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia i wszystkiego najlepszego w Nowym Roku. Niech te świąteczne dni przyniosą Państwu pokój, radość i umocnienie duchowe. Dziękujemy, że są Państwo częścią naszej wspólnoty i misji.

## Polish Citizenship by Descent Seminar Helps Many Renew

## Connections to POLAND

Last month, the Polish Institute of Culture & Research at Orchard Lake, working in partnership with the Kościuszko Foundation Michigan Chapter, welcomed a full room of guests to the Galeria for an in-depth seminar on Polish citizenship by descent. The level of interest confirmed how many individuals and families are seeking to renew their connection to Poland through formal recognition of their heritage. The session was led by two highly respected experts. Richard Walawender, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Detroit, joined us on campus, while Dr. Andrzej Kiedrzyń, senior counsel with Miller Canfield in Warsaw, connected with attendees via Zoom. Together they offered a clear and comprehensive introduction to the principles that govern Polish citizenship law.

Throughout the presentation, our speakers outlined the fundamental criteria that applicants must meet, including verified lineage, citizenship at birth, continuity of citizenship across generations, and the documentation required to demonstrate each element. They also highlighted the value

of citizenship by descent, noting that it allows individuals of Polish ancestry to reclaim an important part of their identity and benefit from the opportunities linked to European Union citizenship.

Mr. Walawender walked attendees through the legal pathways available for acquiring citizenship, explaining how one's personal history, family circumstances, residence, and marital status can shape the best route forward. His explanation of the major legal categories helped participants understand the steps most relevant to their own situations.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to both Mr. Walawender and Dr. Kiedrzyń for sharing their expertise and engaging our community in such an informative and thoughtful discussion. We are grateful as well to everyone who took the time to attend and participate. The Polish Institute is proud to support programs that strengthen Polish heritage and deepen community understanding. We look forward to welcoming you at our upcoming events.



Photo taken by Barbara Wisniewski

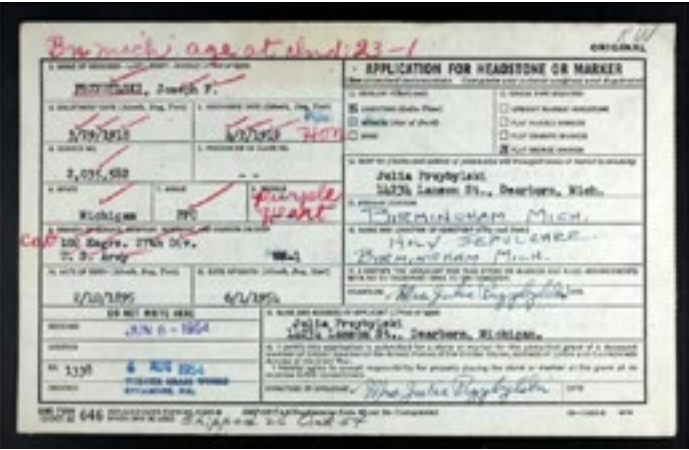


# HONORING November 11

## A Shared Story of Service and Freedom

November 11 holds deep meaning for our community. It is both Polish Independence Day and Veterans Day in the United States. On this day in 1918, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the First World War came to an end. For Poland, it marked the long-awaited restoration of independence. For the United States, it became a day to honor all who have served in its armed forces. For Polish Americans, these histories are forever intertwined.

During a recent visit to the Polish Soldiers Cemetery and the Orchard Lake Schools graves at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield, we came upon a weathered bronze grave marker, almost lost beneath brush and overgrowth. After clearing the marker, a story began to emerge—one of a nearly forgotten Polish American who served with courage in the First World War. Joseph Frank Przybylski, the son of Polish immigrants in Michigan, enlisted in 1918 at the age of 23. He served as a private in the 102nd Engineers, part of the 27th Infantry Division. His grave bears the notation “PH,” marking him as a recipient of the Purple Heart. The official application for his headstone, filed by his widow Julia, confirms this honor.



Photos by John Radzilowski

The full details of his wounding are unknown, but records suggest it may have occurred near Ypres in Belgium, where the 27th Division fought under temporary British command. The 102nd Engineers were responsible for maintaining communications with the front lines, repairing telephone wires under fire and, when necessary, carrying messages by hand through the trenches. It was dangerous, essential work.

Joseph Przybylski represents one of the hundreds of thousands of Polish Americans who have served—and continue to serve—with distinction in the United States armed forces. Their stories, often quiet and unrecorded, helped shape both nations.

As we reflect on November 11, we honor the generations who fought for Poland’s freedom, the men and women who served under the American flag, and those whose sacrifices lie etched in stone across our cemeteries. Their legacy is our inheritance, and their memory remains our responsibility.

## Year-End Sponsorship Appeal

# Preserving Our LEGACY Together



As the year draws to a close, we find ourselves looking back at the footsteps that brought us here. The Polish Institute of Culture & Research stands on ground shaped by generations who crossed oceans, rebuilt lives, and carried their faith and traditions with extraordinary courage. Their stories live in our archives, in the photographs and manuscripts entrusted to our care, and in the hearts of the families who walk through our doors.

Each season, when we fill the Galeria with art, welcome musicians from Poland and beyond, gather students for a Day of Service, or guide guests through the collections of Orchard Lake, we are continuing the work our forefathers began. They built institutions so the memory of their sacrifices would not fade. They believed that the heritage of Polish Americans was worth protecting, studying, and sharing. Today, we carry that responsibility forward.

At year’s end, we invite you to join us as a sponsor in this important mission. Your support helps us:

- **Preserve irreplaceable archives that tell the story of Polonia in America**
- **Present meaningful concerts, exhibits, lectures, and community celebrations**
- **Offer students hands-on experiences with history, culture, and the arts**
- **Protect the legacy of those who came before us, so that future generations may know where they come from**

Every contribution, large or small, strengthens this work. Sponsorship is not simply a financial gesture. It is an act of remembrance. It is a promise that we will not let the names, achievements, and sacrifices of our ancestors slip into silence. It ensures that the stories of our community remain alive, visible, and honored.

If you feel called to support our programming or sponsor an upcoming event, we would be grateful to speak with you. Together, we can carry the mission of the Polish Institute into a new year with pride and purpose.

For sponsorship information, please contact us at [info@picrol.org](mailto:info@picrol.org) or 248-836-1284.



Photos by John Radzilowski





# THE MARY PROJECT

AT ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

*Please visit and enjoy the NEW*

## WALKING ROSARY AND REFLECTION AREA

*in the Marian Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes at  
St. Mary's Preparatory.*

**WE ARE ASKING FOR DONATIONS TO HELP DEFRAY THE  
COST OF THIS ADDITION TO THE GROTTTO.**

### YOU CAN DONATE BY:

- 1) Purchasing a brick paver. Order forms are available at the gate or online at the link [www.orchardlakeschools.com/ways-to-give](http://www.orchardlakeschools.com/ways-to-give)
- 2) Leave a donation in the donation box at the Grotto inside the candle area.
- 3) Mail a check (payable to The Mary Project) to:

*The Mary Project  
3535 Commerce Road  
Orchard Lake, MI 48324*

For naming opportunities, please contact Maureen Gross at  
[themaryproject@myyahoo.com](mailto:themaryproject@myyahoo.com).

*All donations are tax deductible. EIN: 82-5453994*



*The Mary Project*



After many years of thoughtful footsteps, the pathways of the Marian Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes at Orchard Lake St. Mary's have given way to age and are in need of repair. The Mary Project needs your help to sustain this prayerful space.

We are soliciting your support to repave the walkways and paths, starting with the walkway from the Grotto towards the lake. It will be paved with custom bricks to make it much more attractive and durable than poured concrete, and we are asking that you donate one or more of the bricks.

You may individualize a brick for you, or your family, honor a loved one or create an in-memorial message. The donated bricks will become a part of the Grotto, paving the way for generations of visitors. As a friend of the Grotto and Orchard Lake Schools, please take advantage of this exceptional opportunity to have your commemorative brick(s) become a permanent part of this prayerful space.

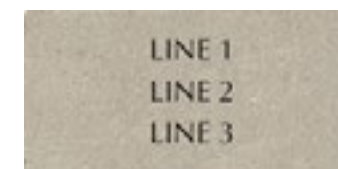
Construction of Phase 3 will begin in early November. Sales for Phase 4 (continuing towards the lake) begin September 15, 2025. There is plenty of space for additional commemorative bricks. Bricks purchased for Phase 4 are \$150 each and will be installed in November 2026.

The bricks are 4" x 8" x 2 1/4" and are engraved using state-of-the-art laser technology. Every brick engraving is guaranteed for life!

All donations are tax deductible. EIN: 82-5453994

**ALL ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 15, 2026**

**PLEASE PROOF READ CAREFULLY! \$20.00 FOR CHANGES MADE AFTER ORDER IS PLACED.**



**\$150 - 4x8 Brick**

3 lines of text, 20 characters per line (including spaces and punctuation)


Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### MAIL FORM AND PAYMENT TO:

The Mary Project  
3535 Commerce Road  
Orchard Lake, MI 48324

#### MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

The Mary Project



Polish Christmas Eve Traditions the Beauty of

WIGILIA



Christmas Eve has always held a special place in the hearts of Polish families. It is a night filled with quiet meaning, gentle ritual, and a sense of belonging that reaches back through generations.

The opłatek is always the first to be shared. This simple wafer, embossed with scenes of the Nativity, carries a deeper purpose. It symbolizes

forgiveness, unity, and the hope that peace will remain in our homes. When families break the opłatek, they offer blessings to one another and speak from the heart. It is one of the most intimate and beautiful moments of the evening.

The Wigilia table is prepared with care. A white obrus (tablecloth) reminds us of the purity and simplicity of the manger. Many tuck a bit of hay underneath as a quiet nod to the stable where Christ was born. The meal itself is meatless and made up of 12 dishes, each one representing the apostles and the fullness of the blessings we hope for in the coming year.

Children watch the sky for the first star. Only when that star appears may everyone gather at the table, pray together, break the opłatek, and begin the feast. It is a small moment, but one that brings the whole family together in anticipation and joy.

And there is the old Polish belief that on this one night animals can speak. It is a gentle reminder that all of creation rejoices at the birth of Christ, and that Wigilia is a night when the ordinary world feels touched by something sacred.

These traditions have traveled with Polish families across oceans and generations, continuing to shape Christmas Eve in our homes, reminding us of who we are and where we come from.

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia. May your Wigilia be peaceful, warm, and filled with the joy of tradition.



EXTRA-LITURGICAL DEVOTIONS

DAILY MASSES

MONDAY-FRIDAYS	7:00 PM   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
SATURDAYS	9:00 AM   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

SHRINE OPEN HOURS

SUNDAY & SATURDAY	8:00 AM – 9:00 PM	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
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EXTRA-LITURGICAL DEVOTIONS

1 <sup>ST</sup> THURSDAY 12/4	MASS   7:00 PM   DEVOTIONS * FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
1 <sup>ST</sup> FRIDAY 12/5	MASS   7:00 PM   DEVOTIONS * FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
1 <sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY 12/6	MASS   9:00 AM   DEVOTIONS * FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
TUESDAY 12/16	KRAG BIBLIJNY   7:45 PM	SEMINARY CHAPEL
THURSDAY 12/18	BIBLE STUDY AFER MASS   7:45 PM	SEMINARY CHAPEL
FRIDAY 12/19	DIVINE MERCY PRAYERS   7:45 PM	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

CONFESSIONS

MONDAY-FRIDAYS	6:00 – 6:55 PM	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
SATURDAYS	8:00 – 8:55 AM	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

December 2025

upcoming EVENTS highlights

1	Classes Resume (OLSM)
2	Boys Varsity Hockey @ CHSL Tournament   7:30 PM
4	Girls Hockey vs. Grosse Pointe South   4:30 PM Advent by Candlelight
5	Polish Institute Christmas Reception @ Galeria
6	St. Nicolas Day Girls Hockey vs. Bay City   4:00 PM
7	Polish 1st Sunday   1:00 PM (Mass Only) Galeria Open   12-3 PM
10	Boys Varsity Hockey vs. Grosse Pointe South   7:30 PM
11	Chancellor's Senate Recognition Dinner
12	End of 2nd Marking Period Dabrowski Polish Language School Wigilia @ Galeria Girls Division Junior & Senior Winter Formal
13	Girls Hockey vs. Flint   5:30 PM Wigilia Mass & Dinner
15-18	Midterm Exams
19-1/4	Christmas Recess
20	Boys Varsity Hockey vs. De La Salle   7:30 PM
24	Christmas Eve Vigil
25	Christmas Day
31	New Year's Eve



Visit [olsmathletics.com](https://olsmathletics.com) for more information on schedules and playoffs, and check for results on Instagram and Facebook.

LOOKING FOR AN IMPACTFUL CAMPUS DEDICATION OR NAMING OPPORTUNITIES  
THAT LEAVE A LASTING CAMPUS IMPRESSION FOR GENERATIONS TO ENJOY?  
CONTACT: CHRIS CZARNIK AT [CCZARNIK@ORCHARDLAKESCHOOLS.COM](mailto:CCZARNIK@ORCHARDLAKESCHOOLS.COM)

MONTHLY ENROLLMENTS

Throughout the year, donors to the Orchard Lake Schools enroll their loved ones in the “Friends of the Orchard Lake Schools”. Prayers are offered at every mass at the Archdiocesan Shrine of St. John Paul II for those names enrolled. These names are those that have been added from the month of October.

BARBARA ARNOLD	MRS. PRISCILLA GALE KING	MARK JOSEPH TONDREAU
TADEUSZ CICHOKI	JOHN MCCUNE	DUSANKA VUKELIC
RICHARD "RICKY" GERGIS	HEATHER ANN SCOTT	MAURICO M. VINUYA
CHESTER GRALA	CHERYL THIVIERGE	JOSEPH WEISS

For more enrollment information, please contact Lisa Gray at [lgray@orchardlakeschools.com](mailto:lgray@orchardlakeschools.com)



December 2025

# MASS schedule

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 | 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	MSGR. BROWNE   LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
<b>Polish 1st Sunday</b>		
1:00 PM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **MONDAY, DECEMBER 8 | FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

11:15 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	SEMINARY CHAPEL
5:30 PM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
7:00 PM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 | 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. MCDONELL   LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 | 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. WHITAKER   LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 | VIGIL FOR CHRISTMAS EVE**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   DAILY MASS	SEMINARY CHAPEL
10:30 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
MIDNIGHT	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25 | CHRISTMAS DAY**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. MCDONELL   LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 | FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. MCDONELL   LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

## **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31 | VIGIL FOR MARIAN FEAST**

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK   DAILY MASS	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
MIDNIGHT	FR. WITEK   ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

\*The Polish Mass is now live streamed at:  
[www.youtube.com/@orchardlakeschools9385](https://www.youtube.com/@orchardlakeschools9385) within the "Live" tab

**EXTRA-LITURGICAL DEVOTIONS ON PAGE 26**

