



‘His Grace Worked Through You’: The Story of Monsignor L.A. Wnuk

Monsignor Wnuk’s extraordinary life is an example of the power of the human spirit. His faith and generosity were unwavering in the face of tragedy — in short, Monsignor Wnuk’s story is one that must be told.



Lawrence Anthony Wnuk was born on August 6, 1908 in Dzwierzno, Poland to parents John Wnuk and Agnes Kowalski. From a young age, he learned the virtues of grace, humility, and love of God from his parents, traits that remained with him for his entire life. He attended the seminaries in Gniezo and Poznan and was eventually ordained on June 10, 1933 in Poznan. His ordination was performed by His Eminence August Cardinal Hlond for the Diocese of Gniezo, and he returned there after his ordination. He served as assistant pastor in Inowroclaw (in Gniezo) from 1933-1939, and in Czechostowa from 1939-1942.

The Second World War broke out in the fall of 1939, and the young Father Wnuk was already in the thick of action: at Gniezo, he used his own car to transport dying and wounded soldiers, and before the war was a year old, he was arrested and moved to Piotrków Trybunalski. A second arrest came on the Feast of the Assumption in 1943, and on August 15th of that year, he was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. He would later be transferred to Buchenwald in 1944, before being marched to Dachau in April 1945 alongside two thousand other inmates. Only 280 people completed the march.

After the war, he worked in a camp for other liberated people. By 1947 he was appointed chief chaplain of a German prison, where he worked alongside the occupying British army. Father Wnuk and his superiors were keenly aware that many Polish people were moving to the United States and elsewhere; the thought was that there needed to be Polish priest to work with these new immigrants. With that in mind, he went to Michigan in 1951, and was pastor of St. Ladislaus Parish in Detroit from 1951-1957. From there he came to the Diocese of London, where he organized the parish of Our Lady of Victory in



Chatham and built the Church. He was incardinated into the diocese on November 26, 1964, and remained in Chatham until 1961, when he became pastor at Holy Trinity Parish in Windsor. On April 30, 1969, he was made an Honourary Canon of the Cathedral Basilica of Gniezno; he was made a Prelate of Honour in May 28, 1977; and on June 16, 1986, he was made a Prelate of Honour and an Apostolic Proto Notary by Pope John Paul II, whom he knew back when the pontiff was the Archbishop of Krakow.

To say that Father Wnuk accomplished much is an understatement. It is very telling that, on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee in 1983, Bishop Gervais said that, “Our High Priest led you from service in Poland to Germany, to the United States, and finally to our diocese; in each place His grace worked through you, and in each place your share in His ministry has meant blessings for those you served.”

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