NATIONAL PARISHES WITHIN ETHNIC ENCLAVES: THE GRADUAL PROCESS OF AMERICANIZING CATHOLIC IMMIGRANTS TO BALTIMORE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role that religion played in the process of Americanizing immigrants to the United States. This topic is significant in regards to the study of immigrants within cities such as New York, Chicago, and Boston, amongst others. However, the city of Baltimore has been vastly underrepresented in immigration research. As the second largest immigrant port in the United States, Baltimore is steeped in Catholic tradition, and is an ideal city for a study on the role of the Catholic Church in Americanizing Catholic immigrants. Through the use of oral histories, archdiocesan and parish histories, and secondary texts, Baltimore can be seen as a haven for Catholic immigrants due to the national parishes within the ethnic enclaves throughout the city. These national parishes fostered numerous Americanizing agencies, including the school system, confraternities, and beneficial societies, all of which were founded by the Catholic clergy and, coupled with their traditional language, celebrations, and culture, allowed for a gradual transition into mainstream society. This gradual process of Americanization, instituted by the Catholic hierarchy, was a well thought out and executed process wherein, through the development of the national parishes, newcomers to America would experience the phases of immigrant, ethnic, and
American. The preponderance of the evidence suggests that such a gradual method of Americanization would be equally effective today for Catholic immigrants in the United States.
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INTRODUCTION

The United States of America is a nation founded by and developed through immigration. From the English settlements in Massachusetts and Virginia to the Spanish settlements in Florida, the beginnings of the nation that exists as the United States today can be traced to immigration. Of course, this is not to say that the Native Americans did not play a role nor is it an attempt to minimize their role, but rather it is recognition that the founding of the modern day nation was predicated on the role of the immigrants. From the time of these early immigrant communities onward, there has almost always been a steady influx of new arrivals from other countries who were brought or chose to come here in an effort to make a better life for themselves. Whether they sought the “American Dream,” an opportunity to flee oppression, or they came here for a specific purpose, each of them as individuals and as ethnic groups have left an indelible legacy on America. While it can be argued whether or not America is truly a “melting pot”\(^1\) or a “salad bowl,”\(^2\) it is as true today as it has been throughout history that immigrants have played an important role in the creation of America and that America has played a crucial role in the creation of the American immigrant.

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\(^1\) The analogy of the “melting pot” refers to the idea of intermingled ethnicities that were melded together to create one singular ethnicity within the United States, that of the American. This particular view on immigration is one which predominantly reflects the dominant culture at the expense of the minority ethnic cultures. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1922* 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 21.

\(^2\) The analogy of the “salad bowl” suggests the mixing together all of the different cultures into the United States, the way lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, croutons, and other things might be mixed together in a salad bowl. This particular view however, does not reflect the commonality that has come to exist between ethnic minority cultures and the American mainstream.
The beginning of immigration to the United States is hard to pinpoint as there were no records of immigrants kept until 1820 and it was not a part of the census until 1850. The first major wave of immigrants to the United States begins arriving in the 1820s. Since then, over seventy-five million immigrants have entered the country by a variety of different means and for a number of different reasons. During the past decade alone, an average of more than one million immigrants entered the United States per year from a wide array of countries such as China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, India, Mexico, Philippines, and the United Kingdom. Like their predecessors before them, they sought entry into America in order to attain a better life for themselves and their families through political, social, or economic safety and success, a process filled with as many challenges today as it was for immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Americanization

It has been a test for immigrants to the United States and their subsequent generations to find their way into the society that surrounded them. In circumnavigating this process, it has been necessary for immigrants to assimilate into American society, that is to say, they must make an attempt to become American. However, it was not necessarily an easy process and the degree to which this was an achievable goal differed

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between immigrant groups. Numerous scholars disagree entirely with the concept of assimilation, arguing that it did not or could not occur; however, in all cases, there is a certain extent to which it became necessary for an immigrant or immigrant group to fit into society, a process that was typically challenging. Becoming American necessarily meant demonstrating a willingness “to shed some of their own cultural distinctions in the process of becoming American.”\footnote{Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and John L. Esposito, eds., \textit{Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States} (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 2.} This task was not to be taken lightly.

Scholars from a wide range of academic backgrounds have disagreed over the process by which each of these immigrant groups became integrated into American life. In almost all cases, it is fair to say that immigrants seldom manage to individually incorporate themselves into the mainstream society upon arrival. It is more accurate to say that this gradual process takes place over time during subsequent generations of immigrants, also referred to as ethnics. Elliot Barkan proposes such a system of assimilation which anticipates a seven step process which begins with first contact and concludes with full entrance to the core society.\footnote{Elliot Barkan, “Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age,” in Peter Kivisto, ed., \textit{Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age} (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 193.} Along the way it is necessary that an immigrant successfully complete each stage, contact, acculturation, adaptation, accommodation, integration, and assimilation to core society.\footnote{Ibid.} For Barkan then, assimilation is a multistep, bi-directional process wherein the ethnic group largely
disavows its ethnicity and culture for that of the dominant society. It is this which proves to be the flaw in the process, that assimilation results in the rejection of “cultural, linguistic, behavioral and identificational characteristics of their original group” in order to fully embrace these characteristics within the host country. Consequently, many immigrants and ethnics are unable to reach this final phase as they are unwilling to let go of many aspect from their previous lifestyle.

If Barkan’s assessment makes it nearly impossible for immigrants to reach the end goal because they must lose their culture, Higham offers a counter proposal that makes assimilation almost equally as challenging. Higham proposes a three-tier hierarchy of immigrants placing settlers at the top, immigrants in the middle, and captives at the base. In this system, immigrant groups or ethnicities as they become, are not required to relinquish their cultural background. In fact, there is an expectation that they will hold fast to their collective memory. The problem is that out of this process, there becomes no identifiable mainstream. If Massachusetts and Virginians each have their own collective memory, as Higham asserts, what is it that makes them both American? It appears here that what results from Higham’s theory is just a series

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9 Ibid., 189.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 63-66.
of collective memories that may or may not coalesce into an actual mainstream ideology to be shared by all making it impossible for assimilation of any sort to truly exist.

Finally, Richard Alba and Victor Nee offer a significant counterargument to both of these claims that takes a middle ground to provide a more achievable explanation for the process of becoming mainstream American. They conclude that the process is neither one where ethnic boundaries are completely torn down, nor one where they are left intact, but rather one where the walls meld together bringing the mainstream and ethnic groups closer together through the culture that they share. Indeed, based on the historical precedents offered by various immigrant groups, it is possible to see how such groups have contributed aspects of their culture to the United States while at the same time accepting aspects of American culture and integrating them into their lives. The resulting blend of culture includes even their collective memories, fostering a belief in a shared experience by all, not simply by a singular ethnic group as Higham asserts. Their argument is well documented through the history that they offer on the genesis of immigration laws as well as through the previously mentioned historical precedents set by a wide range of different immigrant and ethnic groups.

Catholic immigrants provide a perfect example of this process. Initially in America, the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to become a part of the mainstream could be limited by any number of reasons, but a major obstacle in the

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White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant United States was being Catholic.\textsuperscript{14} John Higham places Catholicism as one of the three principal elements of Nativism\textsuperscript{15} in the United States, along with fear of foreign radicals and a pro-Anglo-Saxon bias.\textsuperscript{16} Of the three, it is the anti-Catholic perspective that can be seen throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century history of the United States. However, today, Catholicism exists as a part of the mainstream of American religion alongside Protestantism and Judaism as well.\textsuperscript{17} The process of reaching this mainstream standing was one of give and take. The Catholicism of today, as Alba and Nee point out, is one that “combines a high level of religious observance with individualistic dissent from some Catholic teachings” a consequence of blending with mainstream America.\textsuperscript{18} The process by which Catholicism and mainstream, Protestant American culture melded together is one of crucial significance to immigrants of a wide array of ethnic backgrounds.

Therefore, it stands to reason that if Catholicism presented a problem for assimilation in the nineteenth and twentieth century, one of two things had to occur. Either immigrants had to minimize the role of Catholicism in their lives or Catholicism served to help immigrants and their families in the process of integration into the

\textsuperscript{14} Higham, \textit{Strangers in the Land}, 5.

\textsuperscript{15} Nativism is defined by Higham as the “intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (ie., “un-American”) connections.” Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 5-11.

\textsuperscript{17} While it is true that there are a wide array of different religions practiced in the United States, Protestantism, Judaism, and Christianity sit atop the list as the primary three religions in American history.

\textsuperscript{18} Alba and Nee, \textit{Remaking the American Mainstream}, 283.
mainstream society. The first of these two possibilities would result in the diminished
capacity of the Catholic Church in the United States whereby it would either have to
transform radically to become an American institution free from “Roman control” or it
would cease to exist. Therefore, the author believes that it is the latter of these two
approaches that most Catholic immigrants followed in their process of Americanization.
Indeed, Catholicism, and religion in general, is a dynamic part of society as a whole and
can be altered for the purposes of an individual or a congregation or even an entire
national church.\textsuperscript{19} It is this dynamism which fits so functionally into the idea of
becoming American which requires a willingness on the behalf of the immigrants “to
shed some of their own cultural distinctions in the process of becoming American.”\textsuperscript{20} At
the forefront of this process of “conversion” was the Catholic Church as it Americanized
itself and subsequently the immigrants within it as well.

For the purpose of this paper then, Americanization will be defined as the
process by which an immigrant or an early generation American of ethnic origin
becomes able to succeed in mainstream American society. This process includes, but is
not limited to, being able to speak English, participate in the governmental process, and
function in mainstream American society, by meeting certain social standards,
behaviors, or expectations that are held as important within the United States. In order
for these criteria to be met, however, it is necessary that an immigrant have access and

\textsuperscript{19} Haddad, et al., \textit{Religion and Immigration}, 1.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 2.
the means to achieve these goals, opportunities not afforded to all immigrants as their primary task upon arrival was survival. It also requires an immigrant to have the desire to achieve this process. A lack of such desire may result from an individual’s focus on one or two aspects of American society such as their own economic gain or the educational futures of their children, thus disregarding the possibility of achieving Americanization for themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to also look at those first, second and in some cases third generation immigrants or ethnics, in order to see how they traversed this process of becoming American. Ultimately, immigrants or their subsequent generations were indeed able to find an approach by which they could enter the mainstream, whether they chose to remain a part of it or not.

Immigration in America

Any study of the flow of immigrants into the United States must first look at the process by which some of the major ethnic groups entered America. As was previously stated, the first major wave of recorded immigrants began in the 1820s and would last until 1870. During this time period, the majority of the immigrants arriving in America were from Britain, including those of Scotch and Welsh heritage, Ireland, and Germany. Each of these groups came for different reasons, ranging from an opportunity to settle a land where opportunity abounded to escaping famine and economic and political upheavals in the old country. They also landed in an equally wide array of ports.21 Their port of entry, whether it be New York, Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, or

21 Bergquist, Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1820-1870, 7-10.
Charleston, was often chosen as a result of established trade routes, such as the Liverpool to New York route or the Bremen to Baltimore route.\textsuperscript{22} Such reasoning was also largely based on what they desired to achieve in their adopted homeland. Upon arrival in the United States, they actively sought out communities in which they could thrive. Some, like the Irish, found themselves outside of the mainstream communities due to their inability to speak English and their abject poverty, while others, such as the British, found easy access to becoming a part of mainstream society. Somewhere in between these two groups were the Germans, who were generally well educated and early on made an effort to become integrated into society. It is clear then, that their acceptance into the mainstream was a direct correlation to their ethnic background, financial situation upon arrival, and ability to speak English. In all cases, these early immigrants laid the ground work for the next great wave of migration into the United States.

The second major wave of migration into the United States took place between 1870 and 1920 and included an even wider array of immigrant groups. In addition to the continuing flow of immigrants from the countries of origins in the first major wave, the second wave comprised of large numbers of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, such as Italy, Poland, and Russia as well as Asia.\textsuperscript{23} In fact, as many as twenty-six million people entered the United States during this time period. As with the first

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 12-13; M. Mark Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors: The Other Ports of Entry to the United States} (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1988), 64.

wave, New York City was the primary destination for these immigrant groups; however east coast cities such as Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia as well as west coast cities such as San Francisco served as the primary ports of entry. However, the primary ports of entry were not necessarily the final destination for these immigrants as many headed towards the interior of the United States for cities such as Milwaukee, Detroit, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, and many others. 24 Many of the immigrants during this time period were poor and consequently experienced significant degrees of prejudice from mainstream America. Their reasons for coming to America and their chosen destinations were established for a diverse number of reasons, but some of the primary factors included location of family and friends, employment opportunities, cost of travel, and accessibility of certain ports. 25 However, at the top of this list was clearly the opportunity to find economic and social success.

The third major wave of immigration began in the 1920s as the number of immigrants entering the United States began to dwindle. In 1917, a literacy test was instituted as part of the Immigration Act of 1917, a policy aimed at limiting the number of foreigners entering the United States; however the act fell short of meeting these intended results. 26 Four years later, the Emergency Quota Act would be signed into law,

24 Ibid., 25.

25 Ibid., 30-32.

creating a ceiling of 357,800 immigrants per year.\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, the fear over immigration and a lack of assimilation became a major force in shaping immigrant legislation as the Eugenic Movement sat at the forefront of biological science and concerns over immigrant labor unrest caused grave concern amongst Americans. By the end of the 1920s, even stricter legislation incorporating an ethnically based quota system had been enacted in order to protect the United States from the “undesirable” immigrant groups attempting to gain entrance to the United States.\textsuperscript{28} The legislation of immigration would change continuously throughout the remainder of the twentieth century with the laws being tightened during times of greater anxiety and lessened during periods marked by greater optimism.\textsuperscript{29}

Despite all of the legislation of the 1920s, four million immigrants still entered the United States during that decade and like their predecessors, they came from all around the world.\textsuperscript{30} Eastern European immigrants were still trying to come in large droves in order to find work while the west coast was receiving immigrants from a wide array of Asian nations. But it was also these groups who were receiving the bulk of the negative attention as nativism, racism, and exclusion led to these immigrants being

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 12-15.

\textsuperscript{29} For more information about the history of immigration policy, read Aristide R. Zolberg, \textit{A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America} (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

\textsuperscript{30} Barkan, \textit{And Still They Come}, 20.
labeled and treated as outsiders. The ebb and flow of anxieties about immigrants and the resultant immigration laws circumscribed the number and influenced the composition of immigrant groups entering the United States. Indeed, the twentieth century saw immigrants entering the United States from a wide array of countries ranging from the early tide of Italians, Greeks and Poles to those arriving on the west coast from China and the Philippines, to the nearly continuous flow of immigrants from Mexico and many others. These immigrants came for equally varied reasons—seeking employment, social opportunities, improved health, better education, or escaping political oppression, unemployment, and poverty. Even today, these reasons serve as just some of the explanations as to why streams of immigrants entering the United States continued unabated and why immigration remains an issue of great importance in American society.

Development of Ethnic Enclaves

The process by which these immigrants entered and subsequently populated a city is another matter of extreme significance in the study of immigration. The development of a city, neighborhood by neighborhood, was in no way a random process. Indeed, in the majority of cities populated by large numbers of immigrants, it was not surprising to find the establishment of a wide array of distinctly different ethnic enclaves in one area or portion of the city. As Patrick Gallo explains, an “ethnic enclave fulfills

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31 Ibid., 18-20.

32 For more information on immigration since 1920, read Barkan, And Still They Come.
the psychological need for security and satisfaction creating a comfort level which allows them to interact with the larger community.”

However, since the city did not allow for an individual or group of individuals to be isolated, it was not possible for these ethnic enclaves to be entirely European or American, but rather a blend of the two. As sociologist Robert E. Park points out, “In America, the peasant discards his [Old World] habits and acquires ‘ideas.’ In America, above all, the immigrant organizes. These organizations are the embodiment of his new needs and his new ideas.”

For immigrants in the United States then it became crucial for them to be in a community of individuals who shared their backgrounds and were able to assist in not only understanding these new ideas, but fully integrating these ideas into their everyday life.

This form of ethnic subsociety can be viewed from two different perspectives, one, how they are created within a city and two, what forms these ethnic communities take. On East Allegheny Avenue in Philadelphia, one could find three different ethnically affiliated Catholic Churches all within three blocks of each other. Golab provides for the city of Philadelphia a series of well laid-out maps which present the locations of these various ethnic enclaves and ethnic religious institutions that

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35 Ibid.

demonstrate the significant boundaries that denoted the various ethnic regions of Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{37} In New York, these enclaves were clearly seen through the German and Irish Catholics who lived segregated, though alongside each other in New York City, with Irish enclaves set up around twenty-three Catholic Churches built between 1785 and 1863 compared to ethnic enclaves setup around only eight German Catholic Churches.\textsuperscript{38} These enclaves, centered around the local Catholic Church, demonstrate how many of the enclaves developed not only for a specific ethnicity, but around a specific religion practiced by the enclave members.

Similarly, the Irish established colonies such as these in Boston, assembling in the area known as “The South End” where they eventually became the dominant immigrant group. Indeed these enclaves facilitated for them the process of entering into the mainstream of America, a process they undertook throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. For the Irish in Boston, creating such an area was central to their social and political rise within the city.\textsuperscript{39} Similar to the Irish enclave in Boston, the Italian enclaves began largely based upon the region from which they came in Italy, allowing the immigrant groups to speak the same language, often the same dialect, as well as share the same religious beliefs. Their enclaves were also heavily influenced by the traditional Italian family, where relatives or paesani live with or nearby each other in order to offer a

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 123-128.


\textsuperscript{39} Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors}, 23.
support network for all members of the family. For instance, Western Avenue in Chicago was made up of immigrants from the Tuscan village of Colle di Compito while on 112th Street from the East River to First Avenue was the Aviglianese Colony. For Italians then, “The immigrant community serves as a kind of staging area, a beachhead where Italian immigrants can remain until they absorb new ideas and habits that make possible their adjustment to an alien environment.” The ethnic enclave then assumed the role of a buffer between the old world and the new, easing the transition. For many of the other Eastern European immigrants such as the Poles who established themselves in many of the Midwestern cities, assembling around the Catholic Church in regions where employment was a strong possibility, the ethnic enclaves performed a similar function. The Polish enclave in Chicago formed around St. Stanislaus Kostka Church near Plank Road and North Avenue. The enclave served as the primary place for the exchange of ideas and a place for growth in the community. For immigrants to the United States, the ethnic enclave provided for their psychological need for old world

40 Luciano J. Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondello, The Italian Americans 3rd ed., (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2006), 102 and 111; Gallo, Ethnic Alienation, 62 and 71. Paesani can be defined as a person who hails from the same village or region in Italy.

41 Iorizzo and Mondello, The Italian Americans, 103

42 Gallo, Ethnic Alienation, 65.


relationships and lifestyles while at the same time opening them up to experience the ideas and practices that dominated life in their new world.

**Catholic Immigrants to the United States**

In almost all cases, the Catholic Immigrants did not come together as one Catholic conglomerate, but rather remained sectioned off in individual ethnic enclaves. This occurred as the result of the different ways in which Catholicism was practiced in their home towns and countries, where unique Catholic practices developed that were not shared by the larger world. In administering such anomalies within the American Catholic Church, it became necessary that each ethnic group have their own church or churches within a city or region allowing them to continue their cultural practices. As a result, it became necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to regulate these activities in order to ensure the continued success of Catholicism in the United States.

Early Catholic immigrants fought an uphill battle upon arrival in the United States as they had to fight a strong, anti-Catholic bias and nativist sentiment, despite the early influence of Catholicism on the United States. Some of the earliest Catholic immigrants were English Catholics who were unable to freely practice their religion in England thus immigrating to America in order to establish the freedom to practice Catholicism here, founding the colony of Maryland, while also settling in a wide array of other colonies.\(^{45}\) By 1815, there were approximately 100,000 Catholics residing in the United States who largely fit into society and played important roles in the founding

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of America. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, immigrants from Ireland and Germany had settled throughout the United States, and the Irish who arrived as a result of the potato famine, had emerged as the leaders of the Catholic Church, despite rampant nativism and anti-Irish sentiment. Higham notes that “Protestant hatred of Rome played so large a part in pre-Civil War nativist thinking that historians have sometimes regarded nativism and anti-Catholicism as more or less synonymous.” Subsequently, it was necessary that Catholic Church policy be one of unification in order to strengthen and protect themselves from exterior sources as opposed to accepting any internal turmoil.

With the immense number of Catholic immigrants who had arrived during the first wave of immigration already overwhelming the young country, American, anti-Catholicism came to the forefront in the form of Nativism. However, the practice of nativism had the opposite impact of what the perpetrators had hoped. In reality, “nativist sentiments drew all Catholics of the United States together in self-defense regardless of their national origins” in the mid-1800s, but by the end of the century, nativist sentiment had largely waned giving way to internal strife within the Catholic Church which continued to grow rapidly. In the 1880s, 604,000 new Catholics arrived


on the shores of the United States, a number which more than doubled in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{50} These immigrants were a diverse group, coming from both urban and rural environments in a vast number of European countries, creating problems between these different Catholic groups as they spoke different languages, came from different social backgrounds, and emphasized different aspects of their Catholic religion.\textsuperscript{51} Despite these different backgrounds for Catholic immigrants in the United States they found themselves largely under Irish Catholic control. As a result, Polish, Italian, Bohemian, and other recently immigrated Catholics began to complain of unfair treatment by the Irish Catholic Church in America. But at the forefront of this internal strife were the Germans, who had, since their arrival, given way to the Irish leadership, but with this new support provided by a number of Eastern European ethnicities, the Germans felt strengthened to attack the Irish Catholic hierarchy in an effort to gain acceptance of their own practices within the Catholic Church in America.

The accusations levied by German Catholics against the American Catholic hierarchy focused on the inherent prejudice created by the hierarchy’s assumption that their version of Catholicism was the correct version to be practiced in the United States. The German Catholics argued that based on the population numbers there ought to be a greater number of both German born priests and bishops, especially since the Germans chose to hold on to their mother tongue,\textsuperscript{52} a proposition that pushed some to wonder if it

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 331.

was necessary for the Germans to have their own German diocese within the United States.\textsuperscript{53} In general the American Catholic hierarchy opposed such changes as well as the continual use of German rather than English, as foreignism was a charge feared by Catholics and a reason to be against their fellow German Catholics who refused to adopt English.\textsuperscript{54} However, such fears did not concern the German Catholics who spawned similar responses from the Polish, Italian, and Slavic Catholic Churches, each of which thought their own priests, language, and traditions should be preserved in the American Catholic Church through the creation of their own hierarchy and diocese within the United States in order to eliminate what they believed to be discriminatory practices.\textsuperscript{55}

In some cases, they even went so far as to start their own schismatic Catholic Churches in the United States.\textsuperscript{56} These arguments were especially dominant in the Midwestern American Catholic Church, sparking a major controversy between the Catholic hierarchy and the immigrant minority within the Catholic Church.

In response to the claims of discriminatory treatment against non-Irish Catholic churches and immigrants, the American Catholic Church sought the opinion of their most important Archbishops, most of whom resided on the east coast, where such problems were not as prevalent. Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore was the primary

\textsuperscript{52} Ellis, \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons}, 332.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 350.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 333.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 345, 372-373.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 384.
respondent for all issues in the United States and he fiercely fought for the Americanization of all Catholic immigrants, citing first and foremost that the German attitude was selfish and would inspire a “harmful spirit of Nationalism.” Indeed, such a process did occur, as other nationalities, as previously noted, joined into this fight. Cardinal Gibbons saw this as a significant issue for the American Catholic Church as it lent credence to the nativist argument that Catholicism was a religion of foreigners and therefore opened up the church to the discrimination they had experienced in the earlier parts of the decade, an experience that Gibbons had not forgotten. This did not however mean that Cardinal Gibbons was unsympathetic to the immigrants and their issues as some scholars have argued, but rather he believed that the best way for the immigrants to achieve success was to become a part of American society, a viewpoint that was clear through the writings and policies of Cardinal Gibbons, especially within Baltimore. Rome largely supported Gibbon’s beliefs on American Catholicism, appointing Cardinal Simeoni to oversee the relationships between the hierarchy and the immigrants, with a special focus on the Italians, as Rome had offered a sympathetic view to the people of their country. However, change in relations between the American Catholic Church and the immigrants did occur, spawning Gibbons and the

57 Ibid., 345.

58 Ibid., 352-353.

59 For more information on the argument against Cardinal Gibbons support of immigrants, see Monzell, “The Catholic Church and the Americanization of the Polish Immigrant,” 1-15.

American hierarchy to establish greater means for the survival of the immigrant communities.

It was an initiative to build and strengthen National Parishes which became the method for creating a greater sense of equality within American Catholicism. While this practice had been long standing in some diocese and archdiocese, such as Baltimore, for many others it was a new process. The national parish then signified “a distinct status of parochial existence in certain diocese for Catholics whose membership in the Church somehow differed from the perceived ecclesiastical norm.” The purpose of these national parishes then was to serve a specific language family or ethnicity. This differed from the standard parish throughout the United States which was the territorial parish. The territorial parish was open to Catholics of all ethnicities and was based on where an individual lived in relation to the local Catholic Churches. In many cases, difficulty arose around many territorial parishes in determining which parish an individual was expected to attend.

61 A National Parish can be defined as a Catholic parish that was created originally based on language as opposed to either geography or ethnicity. As time progressed it became based on both language and ethnicity. The National Parish stands in contrast to the more traditional Territorial Parish which was setup around a geographic area within a diocese or archdiocese. Only the people within that geographic reason were permitted to attend the territorial parish whereas anyone who spoke the language or was a member of the ethnic group could attend the National Parish, despite where they lived. Dolan, The Immigrant Church, 5.


63 Dolan, The Immigrant Church, 5.
The national parishes allowed for ethnic groups to come together in an environment that would allow them to share their heritage with one another for their continued growth as an ethnic group while at the same time being exposed to American ideals and practices, further strengthening the pre-existing ethnic enclave. By fostering such churches, immigrant and ethnic Catholics were able to become integrated into American society slowly over time, rather than all at once, in order that they would become strong members of the American Catholic Church. Cardinal Gibbons encouraged this process in his statements to the immigrant church, saying “Ours is the American Church, and not Irish, German, Italian, or Polish—and we will keep it American.” Indeed, Gibbons desire was to ultimately bring about one, united church through this process whereby immigrants would have successfully become a part of the mainstream American society. This initiative was especially beneficial within the individual churches where it was up to the individual priest to shed influence on his practitioners.

Ultimately, these practices had the ability to offer immigrants an opportunity to become American. Within these national parishes they were offered a process by which they could, in the eyes of the American Catholic hierarchy, become part of the American mainstream. The process devised by the American hierarchy to help Americanize immigrants included the development of the church community, a social network of desirous immigrants, a physical building for the purpose of coming together as a like-

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64 Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, 386.
minded community, church organizations to help fellow immigrants adjust as well as offer them an understanding of the American political and social policies, Catholic schools to educate the immigrant youth, and a qualified clergy who sought to help instruct their parishioners in the American Catholic Church while at the same time providing them with a safe haven where their old world traditions could be practiced. All of these practices were distinct, well thought out policies that were put into place for the precise purpose of Americanizing immigrants.

These practices were clearly implemented with such intent in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, under the leadership of James Cardinal Gibbons and his successors who developed largely successful and healthy relationship with the immigrant church. Thus, it was the clergy, from the top down that implemented the archdiocesan policy within each national parish which led to the Americanization of the Catholic immigrants and ethnics in the city of Baltimore. This process was not one that was fast or forced, but rather a gradual process that created within the immigrants a desire to become a part of the mainstream, American society. While these policies were implemented in some cases over one hundred years ago, they still have a great deal of relevance in society today. By offering a process of Americanization that is gradual and based in the traditions of an immigrant’s or ethnic’s former culture, as seen in the national parishes of Baltimore, it is possible to create an environment in which modern immigrants would willingly go through a process of Americanization.
CHAPTER 1

IMMIGRATION IN MARYLAND

In order to understand the establishment of Catholic immigrants in the United States, the history of Catholicism in Baltimore is of great significance seeing how it was the first Catholic Archdiocese in the country. However, the city of Baltimore does not figure in the early history of Maryland Catholicism. Rather, this history begins with two ships, the “Ark” and the “Dove”, which sailed for Maryland in late 1633 and arrived in 1634. Based upon the goals of Lord Baltimore, his successors founded the city of St. Mary’s, with the help of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) establishing a haven where religious freedom was granted to all Christians, including Catholics.\(^1\) Many early Jesuits played a major role in the development of the Catholic Church in America, helping to establish the Catholic framework that would eventually have a heavy impact on the Catholic immigrants. Religious freedom was an important concept in the colony of Maryland, where the governor was required to take an oath to protect the freedom of religious choice. Laws of religious freedom, based upon Lord Baltimore’s stated demands, were enacted whereby a safe haven was provided to Christian immigrants irrespective of their denominations. This was further developed through what was known as the Act concerning Religion in 1649, the first legislative law on religious freedom.

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freedom in the thirteen colonies.\textsuperscript{2} Despite its foundations as a tolerant Catholic colony, Maryland remained under the control of Britain and therefore subject to the Penal laws which forbade the practice of Catholicism, laws that were once again enforced as a result of the Protestant Revolution of 1688. In 1702, the Church of England became the established church of Maryland as mandated by the King of England and a policy of religious persecution was enforced in the colony until the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{3} True freedom of religion would not come again in Maryland until the end of the American Revolution and the subsequent First Amendment to the Constitution.

Immigrant Baltimore

As for the city of Baltimore, its significance for Catholic America emerged shortly after the American Revolution with its unanimous selection as the location for the first Archdiocese in the United States in 1789. On May 18, 1789, John Carroll was subsequently elected the first bishop in the United States during a conference held at Whitemarsh, the present day home of Sacred Heart Parish in Bowie, Maryland, the same site that would serve as the meeting place for discussions on the creation of Georgetown University. Carroll was placed in charge of the archdiocese, which then covered the

\textsuperscript{2} Ives, \textit{The Ark and the Dove}, 144-153; Walsh and Fox, \textit{Maryland—A History}, 12; Spalding, \textit{The Premiere See}, 1-4.

\textsuperscript{3} Ives, \textit{The Ark and the Dove}, 248-259; Walsh and Fox, \textit{Maryland—A History}, 24-8; Spalding, \textit{The Premiere See}, 4-6.
entirety of the existing United States. It was not until 1808 that other dioceses were created in order to better care for the American Catholic Church. Despite the creation of these new dioceses, Baltimore would remain at the center of the American Catholic world well into the twentieth century with the Archbishop of Baltimore serving as the primary leader of American Catholicism to whom other American bishops and priests sought for guidance. Eventually, in the twentieth century, Baltimore relinquished its dominance to the Archdiocese of Washington, DC and the archdiocese of New York amongst others. Despite the change in the national significance of Baltimore, the Archdiocese would continue to serve faithfully in its intended capacity for the residents of Baltimore.

Baltimore’s significant role in early American Catholicism, was echoed subsequently by its important role in immigration. During the 19th and early 20th century, Baltimore was the second largest immigrant port in the United States, trailing only New York City. The immigrants coming to Baltimore were as mixed in religion as they were in ethnicity with a wide array of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish immigrants coming from Germany, Ireland, France, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Russia,

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5 In 1808, four new diocese were founded, the Diocese of Philadelphia, the Diocese of New York, the Diocese of Boston, and the Diocese of Bardstown, which covered most of the northwestern portion of the United States which existed that point. The Archdiocese of Baltimore (Maryland) then covered everything south of Maryland, with the exception of Tennessee and Kentucky. Spalding, The Premiere See, 27.

6 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 77.
Greece, Ukraine, and many other European countries. In fact, nearly two million immigrants entered Baltimore between the inception of the city in 1729 and World War I, the majority of whom entered through the docks at Locust Point.\textsuperscript{7} Dean Esslinger noted that the number of immigrants entering Maryland reached its peak between 1864 and 1914 while Alan M. Kraut noted that many of the immigrants entering through the ports did in fact remain in the city of Baltimore, refuting the conventional wisdom that Baltimore was just a stopping point along the way for immigrants headed to the Midwest.\textsuperscript{8} In addition to immigrants entering via the seaport, many also entered Baltimore by coming south from Philadelphia and other portions of Pennsylvania in search of jobs, relatives, or an opportunity to travel to the Midwest.\textsuperscript{9} Such was the attractive nature of the city of Baltimore.

The city of Baltimore offered many attractions and immigrants chose the city of Baltimore for a variety of reasons. One of the primary reasons was its location. Baltimore was situated further west than any of the other eastern ports, allowing the easiest path to the Midwest. This process was only made easier by the completion of the Cumberland Road which connected the Chesapeake Bay region with the Ohio River at Wheeling, WV.\textsuperscript{10} This passage was further simplified with the completion of the

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 70-71.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 71, 75.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. These enhancements made Baltimore the primary destination for anyone who desired to head west to cities such as Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and many others. Only a very small number of immigrants mostly German and Scotch Irish settled in the state of Maryland outside of Baltimore, mostly in the western part of the state, where they setup farms and small towns. Those headed west were in search of other major cities offering strong employment possibilities, rather than settling in small towns on the way out of Maryland.

However, not every immigrant chose or was able to head west and there were many things that made Baltimore an attractive final destination. As a city, Baltimore grew immensely in the 19th century, ballooning from 13,503 people in 1790 to 212,418 by 1860. Due to the growth of the city, there were many unskilled labor jobs available for those who were willing to work in the construction field. Due to the influx in residents, housing projects increased from 400 new houses a year in 1830 to 2,000 houses a year by 1851. Others went to work on the expanding transportation systems in the city, building roads, railways, and canals, while still others worked on the larger projects that originated in Baltimore and extended across the state of Maryland, and

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11 Ibid, 62.


13 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 63; Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”

14 Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”
continued out west such as work on the B&O Railroad.\textsuperscript{15} This increase in resources and people led to the rapid growth in demand for goods and services within the subdivisions of the city of Baltimore, necessitating hiring individuals to serve as barkeepers, shopkeepers, clerks, craftsmen, mill workers, and the like.\textsuperscript{16} Other immigrants chose Baltimore due to previously established trade relations between the ports in their home country and Baltimore. Such was the case with companies in both Liverpool and Bremen.\textsuperscript{17} All of these prospects on the job market made Baltimore a destination for those in search of an opportunity to thrive.

Unlike the immigrants who came into New York City, those coming into Baltimore had a very different experience. There was no Statue of Liberty nor an Ellis Island. Rather an immigrant arriving in Baltimore would have noticed Fort McHenry at about the time that the vessel would have been boarded by an immigration inspector. Each hopeful immigrant would be inspected on the ship before they were able to disembark at Locust Point on Pier 9.\textsuperscript{18} Once they disembarked, they would be largely on their own to figure out their next move. However, “as the numbers grew, immigrant communities made a strong effort to welcome new arrivals and help them adjust.”\textsuperscript{19} A number of private boarding houses were located on the pier such as the one run by a

\textsuperscript{15} Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors}, 63.

\textsuperscript{16} Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”

\textsuperscript{17} Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors}, 64.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 70.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 65.
German woman named Mrs. Koether or by private organizations such as relief societies, religious organizations, or other groups who provided guidance and direction for these new arrivals.\textsuperscript{20} In later years, the B&O Railroad constructed two terminals which served both the steamliners arriving with passengers and the railroad who would carry many of these immigrants to the Midwest.\textsuperscript{21} Due to the increase of immigrants in the second decade of the twentieth century, totaling nearly 40,000 immigrants per year, the U.S. government decided to build three large buildings to serve as a reception center for immigrants. These structures, however, were only used up until the start of World War I when immigration was shut down. This also served as the end of Baltimore’s role as a significant port for immigration.\textsuperscript{22} While there are still a large number of individuals of ethnic backgrounds in Baltimore today, it is no longer the hub of immigration that it once was.

Once the decision had been made to stay in Baltimore, immigrants routinely would move into areas where relatives, friends, or countrymen lived. These pockets of immigrants within Baltimore, as seen in other major American cities, were and can still be broken down by various immigrant groups and ethnic enclaves. Those immigrants who chose to stay and inhabit Baltimore formed these enclaves largely in areas near the harbor and ports, and later began to spread to areas throughout the city. The Irish and German immigrants originally settled in the area known as Highlandtown and Canton.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 70.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 72.
before subsequent generations moved out into Upper Fells Point. They were replaced by Poles, Lithuanians, and Italians in Highlandtown and Canton. The Italians also spread into areas closer to the harbor into what is today known as Little Italy. The area known as Jonestown was predominantly Jewish, as were the areas around High, Lombard, Exeter, Lloyd, Aisquith Streets, and Broadway. In the 1830s, some of the earliest Jewish immigrants moved to the more prosperous neighborhoods in the Hanover, Lexington, Fayette, and Saratoga streets and in the 1870s the area surrounding Madison Avenue and Eutaw Place. Modern day Greektown was home to the Greeks while Charles Village was broken down into a series of smaller, specific Asian enclaves. Edmonson Village and the area around Patterson Park were largely African American, although today Patterson Park and Broadway are home primarily to Hispanic and Latino enclaves.²³ Many of these districts continue today to be largely made up of these various ethnicities or to at least be representative of those who once resided there. Some, like Little Italy are flourishing while others such as Patterson Park remain poor and uncared for, fulfilling the stereotypical images and expectations that have plagued their ethnic group for years. Indeed, the Baltimore of today has been strongly impacted by its immigrant past, a clear lasting legacy of the immigrants who once called the city home.

Despite the formation of ethnically based neighborhoods, the immigrant experience in Baltimore was not free from racism or Nativism. While many immigrant groups made positive contributions to the city of Baltimore, there were many residents in the city of Baltimore who feared the immigrants and their activities. A push was made by business leaders with support from industrial, educational, and social welfare agencies to Americanize the immigrants as quickly as possible so as to eliminate many of those fears. In order that “the many thousands of foreign-born residents are to become citizens of the United States, able to speak and understand the English language, and place a proper value upon the ideals which have made the country great” it was necessary to provide them an opportunity. The organizations tabbed groups such as the YMCA with whom they worked with the Americanization Secretary to prepare a pamphlet to instruct immigrants on citizenship and also opened tuition free schools to teach English. They asserted that during interviews, it would be common for the interviewer to ask the interviewee if they were American and that being able to say yes would make a significant difference. In this vain, they encouraged foreign language

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
papers to cease to exist with a transition period during which the articles would be presented side by side in both languages.²⁸

This became an especially significant issue for one A.C. Hubbard, who wrote in response to a report that suggested turning the military reservation of Fort McHenry into a station for immigrants. Though he felt bad for these poor, homeless, friendless immigrants on the one hand on the other hand he noted that many did not bring anything with them except for a “spirit of unrest, rebellion, anarchism, and worse!”²⁹ The mere suggestion or rumor that they would be stationed at the American shrine known as Fort McHenry was enough to set him off. “Yet this unweeded crowd is proposed to be landed on one of the most sacred spots of American soil on no less a spot than that which holds the fort where floated the flag which inspired ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’”³⁰ He proposed that rather than such a travesty take place, that Maryland and more specifically, Baltimore needed to recognize that they were too patriotic to let this happen, suggesting that all schools should field trip there and have all the kids sing “The Star Spangled Banner” together at this great American shrine.³¹

Amongst some of the earliest immigrants to arrive in Baltimore were Germans of Protestant heritage who found it to be a relatively easy move to enter into Baltimore

²⁸ Ibid.
²⁹ A.C. Hubbard, “To the Editor of the American,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XIII Emigration/Immigration, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
³⁰ Ibid.
³¹ Ibid.
society. Germans began arriving during the colonial period and despite their varied ethnic backgrounds, as immigrants from Germany increased, they could utilize their mainstream religious belief system as well as the influence of their earlier countrymen in the process of becoming American. On the contrary, the strong contingent of Jewish immigrants who began calling the state of Maryland their home as early as 1773 did not fit into society so easily. Those who first arrived were met with discriminatory statements in the state constitution which read “It is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to Him: all persons professing the Christian religion are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty.” This law based form of discrimination ended in Maryland in 1826 but would not be the end of anti-Semitic practices. In the late 19th century some Catholic newspapers took a very strong stance against Judaism, although this slowed rapidly when James Gibbons was named the Archbishop of Baltimore. But anti-Semitism in Baltimore was further exacerbated in the neighborhoods where some communities sought to prohibit Jews from becoming residents of their neighborhood while others worked to keep Jews out of the private schools, where the education was generally better than in public schools.

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34 Ibid., 25.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 Ibid., 203-5.
is evident then that religion played a role in determining the experience of immigrants in the United States.

Also of significance in the study of Baltimore immigration are those who were there by force, what Higham refers to as the captives.\textsuperscript{37} These individuals were African or of African descent and were brought to Maryland to work on the tobacco farms and plantations that dominated the Maryland landscapes. African slaves made up approximately one quarter of Maryland’s population by 1755.\textsuperscript{38} While there were some freed slaves in Baltimore prior to the Civil War, Baltimore became a destination for many of the emancipated slaves after the war. These African Americans fell into similar patterns as those of other immigrant groups, sectioning off into their own regions of Baltimore and developing their own community based businesses and organizations, in some cases by choice, in others due to force.\textsuperscript{39}

The majority of the early Catholic immigrants who chose to remain in Maryland arrived from Ireland—15,536—and Germany—32,613—by the outbreak of the Civil War. In fact, by the end of 1865, foreign born residents made up twenty-five percent of the city’s population.\textsuperscript{40} With immigrants making up such a significant proportion of Baltimore’s population just after the Civil War, it was truly a city of immigrants. As

\textsuperscript{37} Higham, \textit{Strangers in the Land}, 62.

\textsuperscript{38} Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”

\textsuperscript{39} For more information on the development and implementation of African American enclaves in Baltimore, see W. Edward Orser, \textit{Blockbusting in Baltimore: The Edmondson Village Story} (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

\textsuperscript{40} Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors}, 65, 76.
such, the cultures, the practices, and the experiences of these individuals heavily influenced what was still a growing city. “As each ethnic community grew, it developed newspapers, schools, social clubs, beneficial societies, and other self-help organizations that made it attractive to newcomers” while at the same time influencing an ever changing city.⁴¹ Indeed, the Irish and German immigrants created, in Baltimore, what would become a desirable destination for immigrants from throughout Europe and the rest of the globe, to grow and seek success.

*The Irish in Baltimore*

The Irish came to Baltimore primarily to seek opportunities for success both socially and financially, things which they had difficulty achieving in Ireland. Many of the early Irish settlers in Baltimore found work in the railroad business.⁴² For these individuals, many of whom had been farmers in Ireland, the railroad provided an opportunity to learn a skill which in turn provided them with a comparatively reliable form of work compared to agriculture in Ireland. Additionally, Irish immigrants found work in other infrastructure-related fields helping to build and expand Baltimore. Matthew Arnold spoke favorably about what he saw as the very strong, capable Irish workers saying “Irish labourers are found uncommonly handy and active and for years have done a large portion of the work on canals and turnpikes.”⁴³ These Irish workers found it beneficial to form Irish enclaves based on their line of work, such as the railroad

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⁴¹ Ibid., 72.

⁴² Ibid., 66.

⁴³ Ibid.
workers establishing an enclave in an area of the city near their worksite. Like in other American cities, more often than not, Irish enclaves were developed around the Catholic Church which formed the “nexus of community” for the Irish.\textsuperscript{44} In Baltimore, one of these early Irish working communities was formed around the Catholic Parish of St. Patrick’s, in the Fell’s Point neighborhood of Baltimore.\textsuperscript{45} As Baltimore began to grow as a destination for Irish immigrants, more and more Irish churches were built across the city. Between 1850 and 1859, seven parishes were opened in the city of Baltimore, four of which were built in predominantly Irish neighborhoods. The Immaculate Conception was built in Madison Park and St. John’s the Evangelist was built in the Oliver neighborhood for the railroad workers employed near what today is known as Penn Station. St. Brigid’s was established for the Irish living in Canton working on the docks while St. Laurence O’Toole served in a similar capacity for the Irish near Locust Point.\textsuperscript{46} Other Irish workers were located near St. Peter’s the Apostle, the Catholic Church closest to the main hub of the B&O Railroad.\textsuperscript{47} With the church at the center of the community, it was possible for the Irish workers to maintain aspects of their old life, while still growing in knowledge of their new life and culture.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 76.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 66.

\textsuperscript{46} Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”

\textsuperscript{47} “History” The Irish Shrine at Lemon Street, http://www.irishshrine.org/history.htm [accessed 7/10/10].
As with their counterparts in New York and other cities, these Catholic Churches produced for the immigrants a reminder of how life had been in Ireland. In Ireland, the lifestyle of Catholicism was one centered around the parish, a practice that continued upon arrival to the United States providing for these immigrants a link to the old country.\textsuperscript{48} In fact, for the Irish, the ritual of mass was “ingrained in their life,” situated at the forefront of their religious duties, a sacrifice worth making.\textsuperscript{49} Subsequently, becoming a member of a parish was of the utmost importance. While many of these parishes were not national parishes because the Irish on the whole spoke English, thus making a national parish unnecessary, the parishes were predominantly, and in some cases entirely, Irish congregations. This was true not only in Baltimore, but across the country as seldom were national parishes created for the Irish, eliminating the typical need for the national parish which was primarily based on language. Many of the parishes that the Irish immigrants attended were actually territorial parishes that eventually became dominated by the Irish.\textsuperscript{50} These predominantly Irish parishes were staffed in the 1840s and 1850s by a rather young and energetic clergy, who worked hard to develop and strengthen these churches with the help of the parishioners.\textsuperscript{51} This extended as well to the Catholic schools which were eventually attached to many of the parishes. In the early parts of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of

\textsuperscript{48} Dolan, \textit{The Immigrant Church}, 46.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{50} Spalding, \textit{The Premiere See}, 136.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 139.
Baltimore were primarily “benevolent” schools for orphans with only two parochial schools in the archdiocese. By the end of the century, the Catholic parochial schools would become the primary way in which Catholic immigrants in the city were educated.

Like many other ethnic groups, the Irish also sought to take care of their own, establishing a number of Catholic-based organizations to care for their immigrant brethren. One of the first organizations established by the Irish was the Ancient Order of Hibernians which was established in 1803. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, or AOH, was established for the express purpose of making the transition to American society easier for Irish immigrants. By 1850, the AOH was helping nearly twenty five immigrants a month find employment in the railroad industry. The benevolent society went far beyond simply helping Irish immigrants to find jobs but also to educate and provide assistance to newly arrived Irish immigrants. In the late 1840s, the AOH took charge of forty orphans who arrived in the city, once again aiding those immigrants who were unable to care for themselves. Many other Irish benevolent societies served the immigrants as well, offering them the opportunity to enter into mainstream society with the Catholic Church serving as their spiritual and financial backing.

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52 Ibid., 141.
54 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 66.
55 Spalding, The Premiere See, 139.
The German in Baltimore

Many of the early German immigrants came to United States as indentured servants and were treated poorly by the larger American population. However, as German immigrants began to establish themselves in Maryland, more and more immigrants began to arrive from Germany. By the time of the Civil War, those of German heritage made up twenty-five percent of the city’s population. Subsequently, German immigrants, like the Irish, played a major role in the development of the city of Baltimore. German immigrants served in a wide array of jobs in Baltimore society, ranging from serving as grocers, butchers, furniture makers, cigar and piano makers, and brewers to some of the most skilled craftsmen in the city. For Germans, the plethora of employment opportunities in Baltimore made the city one of the most desirable destinations for immigrants of German heritage with the Catholic Church in Baltimore serving as the primary vehicle for Americanization.

Like the Irish, the German’s also had a wide array of benefit societies to help newly arrived immigrants find their way in America. The German Society of Maryland led the charge for equality and fair treatment of indentured servants and later poor immigrants, by pushing for the passage of many significant immigration laws through the Maryland legislature. While this group was not in itself religiously based, it did spur the development of Catholic benefit societies within the city. One such group was

56 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 65, 76.
57 Esslinger, “History of Immigration into Maryland.”
58 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 66-7.
the St. James Building Association which was founded by the St. James Catholic Parish for the purpose of helping German immigrants secure loans for the purchase of new homes in Baltimore. Many other benefit societies of German Catholic origins existed throughout the city of Baltimore and served to help establish a strong German enclave in Baltimore.

Not only were these benefit societies important for early German immigrants and ethnics, but so too was the Catholic Church which could be found at the center of German society. It was not an uncommon experience within the German Catholic Church to first see the establishment of a national parish, be followed quickly by the development of a parochial school. The first national parish in Baltimore was a German Parish established by Archbishop Samuel Eccelston, who, like many of his successors, placed a religious order in charge of the national parish. Archbishop Eccelston formed the first German national parish in order to provide a religious haven within the ethnic enclave in which the new immigrants were able to maintain the comfortable religious aspects steeped in their linguistic tradition. The primary religious community placed in charge of the German National Parishes was the Redemptorists. The Redemptorists also played a key role in the Catholic education of the German immigrant, as education, especially the preservation of the German language, was important to this ethnic

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60 Ibid., 136.
group.\textsuperscript{62} It is clear then that the German immigrants found great success at building a large, strong community in Baltimore, the focus of which was taking care of each other in order to secure the success of the community as a whole.

Both the German and Irish immigrant groups paved the way for those Catholic immigrants who would come after them. Their relationship with the American Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Baltimore more specifically, outlined a path for future immigrants through which each would be able to successfully enter into the mainstream of American life. The process they followed was not one of fast or forced Americanization. It was not a process which stripped them of their culture, heritage, or even collective memory of the old world, but rather focused on introducing them to American culture by way of the world which they understood and had lived in, with Catholicism at the forefront of this experience. In the case of both the Irish and the Germans, by allowing many of the old world traditions to be continued in a controlled environment—the Catholic Church—they were able to be oriented toward learning new traditions and culture, American traditions and culture, in a slow, deliberate process which would result in each subsequent generation embracing more aspects of American culture.

Subsequently, in the time period after the American Civil War, when new immigrant groups began to arrive during the second wave of immigration including Greeks, Czechs, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, and Catholics of Polish and Italian

descent, the Catholic Church knew how to help these ethnic groups achieve the success they desired. These groups, like their predecessors, established ethnic enclaves within the city, most of which were based around their religious organizations whose job it was to support new immigrant groups upon arrival. In 1886, there were seven national parishes in Baltimore, five of which were German, one Polish, and one Bohemian. Just ten years later that number had expanded to ten, six of them were German, and of the rest two were Polish, and the Bohemians and Lithuanians had one each. Once again, the Irish in Baltimore did not have official national parishes; however, they were the predominant ethnic groups in many Catholic Churches throughout Baltimore leaving non-Irish Catholics to often feel like outsiders in the Church. By the second decade of the 20th century, Baltimore was routinely receiving 40,000 immigrants a year, which paled in comparison to 600,000 a year in New York, but remained one of the largest in the United States. This influx continued to be largely Catholic, leading to an even greater expansion of Catholic immigrants and subsequently the establishment of even more national parishes in Baltimore, forming the foundation of the Archdiocese of Baltimore plan for the Americanization of Catholic immigrants.

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63 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 72.
66 Stolarik, Forgotten Doors, 77.
CHAPTER 2

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS IN BALTIMORE

There was the old time religion, made of simple prayers and colorful celebrations of faith in God and Human affections. Then the tidal wave of emigration threatened to drown it all. The world across the Atlantic glittered with a million promises of a better life, comfortable experiences, new ways to wealth and pleasures. By the thousands they came from those far away places, hypnotized by the flash of those promises and then...then they discovered the other side of the truth; they had to carry new crosses and climb new calvaries; many of their dreams were shattered, their visions ridiculed; they were met with disdain and prejudice and pressured into the maddening competition of the world of the working man. The promised land of affluence could not be reached without paying a frightful price; a staggering impoverishment of many of the vital elements so dearly cherished in those far away places back home: love, family, fantasy, and above all religion. The conditions were the cradle in which Our Lady of Pompeii were born.


The first immigrants to the United States from Italy arrived beginning in 1820. From that point until 1870, approximately 25,000 Italian immigrants arrived, most of them concentrated in the major cities such as New York. This number more than doubled during the next decade and then exploded between 1880 and 1920 when over four million Italian immigrants came to the United States, the majority of them from Southern Italy.¹ Most of these immigrants left Italy “to free themselves from the shackles of poverty.”² This was necessitated because life in nineteenth century Italy was grim for the unskilled laborer, the poorest of whom were found in the rural sections of Italy as over 80% of Italians relied on agriculture. These Italian workers suffered the

¹ Nelli, From Immigrants to Ethnics, 40-42.
² Iorizzo and Mondello, The Italian Americans, 56-58.
most as a wide array of agricultural issues faced the rural population causing the poor to become poorer and opening up the population to malnutrition. The government’s response to this agricultural crisis was to seek to industrialize the nation at the expense, at least in the short term, of their small farmers. There was then, in practice, little chance for individual improvement within Italy. Subsequently, the people of Italy came in droves to the United States in order to seek the success and prosperity they could not find in their home country. Some of them came with the plan to settle and remain in the United States, bringing their family with them, while others, nearly half of all Italian immigrants, returned to Italy.

Upon arriving in the United States, the Italian immigrants moved into the major cities, forming enclaves which consisted of others from the same regions and towns within Italy. Here, they attempted to recreate the village life they had been used to in Italy, which had been centered on the extended family. However, relying on family support was not always possible for immigrants in America, and urban American life required them to rely on those outside of the family structure. Thus there became within the larger Italian enclaves, three primary institutions which offered guidance and support for Italian Immigrants: mutual benefit societies, Italian language press, and the

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 104.
5 Nelli, *From Immigrants to Ethnics*, 115.
Catholic Church.⁶ The mutual benefit societies focused on providing insurance for the poor, the sick, the needy, and the dead, who were in need of burial. These societies also provided important social functions for the recently arrived immigrants as they helped to acclimate newcomers to American society. Often times these organizations were sponsored by a specific Catholic Church or a dioceses.⁷ The Italian language press also met a primary need of the immigrants, providing them an opportunity to read the news in their own language, in some cases providing them their only access to the news in their enclave and city.⁸ While the mutual benefit societies and the Italian language press declined in importance within the enclaves over time, the Catholic Church remained at the forefront of immigrant and ethnic society. The Catholic Church’s influence has lasted even to this day, despite what has been a contentious relationship between the Italian culture and the American Catholic Church.

This contentious relationship developed between the two on a national level for a wide array of reasons. The hierarchy of the American Catholic Church had a bleak view of Italian Catholics, especially in New York City, where few Italian immigrants were observed practicing the mainstream Catholic religion. “While Italians considered themselves Catholic, in the view of the American clergy these immigrants were not

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⁶ Ibid., 115.

⁷ Ibid., 115-116

‘real’ Catholics.” Italians “shunned traditional religious observances” preferring to practice their popular version of Catholicism that existed in their previous town or village, practices deemed ‘pagan’ by the Catholic hierarchy. Such practices caused major conflicts with the Catholic Church in New York and other cities around the United States. At the time when these conflicts first began, the American Catholic Church was predominantly Irish: 62% of Catholic bishops were Irish immigrants or of Irish descent. On the other hand, the Italians found Catholicism in the U.S. to be “a cold, remote, puritanical institution” that frequently quashed their traditions and festivals. The Irish bishops and priests associated with many of these parishes sought to prevent the image worship, processions, and simple superstitions of the early Italian immigrants which to the Irish seemed to be a bastardization of the Catholic faith bordering on and sometimes crossing into pagan worship. The clergy was even further appalled and embarrassed by the immigrants who paraded throughout the streets, carrying statues and pinning money to the robes that adorned the statues. This issue was especially problematic in New York where bishops and priests, feuded over

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9 Ibid., 206.
12 Nelli, *From Immigrants to Ethnics*, 127.
13 Ibid., 128.
funding, purpose, and direction.\textsuperscript{15} Although few of the early Italian churches actually had Italian priests, requests by the priests to fund such activities that came from the old country were quickly rejected. Indeed, in most instances, the Italian churches primarily had Irish priests who worked very hard to end what they saw as paganistic practices. Despite these inconvenience, changes to the American Catholic system were eventually made, at the beckoning of the Vatican, whereby Italian Catholics were provided with their own clergy who made allowances for the practices of the homeland to be continued.\textsuperscript{16} The reclamation of one’s faith from their homeland, appears to have offered these immigrants a safe way by which they could understand themselves within the greater American landscape.

The confrontations between the Irish dominated clergy and the Italian immigrants themselves were largely resolved through the development of national parishes. While there were still issues between the Church hierarchy and the Italian priests, fewer of these issues impacted the Italian parishioners. The Catholic Church established these national parishes for the Italian immigrants in hopes that they would provide them with an opportunity to adapt to the American way of life through something that was common to them in Italy, the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{17} By 1917, New York City had established 45 Italian Churches and twelve more churches had Italian

\textsuperscript{15} Dolan, \textit{The Immigrant Church}, 22-24.


\textsuperscript{17} Nelli, \textit{From Immigrants to Ethnics}, 129.
speaking assistants.18 These national parishes, in addition to the parochial schools which offered a wide array of additional benefits, taught “the religion and ideals of the Italian fatherland” and also offered “the standard mutual-benefit societies.”19 These of course included the standard Italian festivals for Mary and the saints that were held throughout the year. In some cases there were twenty or more major festivals celebrated by the people of a church in one year.20 At the same time that these traditional Italian beliefs were being practiced, they were also “beginning to conduct such things as sewing schools, music classes, athletic activities, English language classes, kindergartens, day schools for the boys and girls, and Boy Scout troops.”21 All of these opportunities provided the immigrants with an opportunity to enter into the American mainstream society within a comfortable environment, the Catholic Church.

The Catholic schools sponsored by many of these national parishes played a significant role in the process of bringing these immigrants into the mainstream. While many Italians saw these parish based Italian Catholic schools as a positive alternative to public schools, some, like Antonio Mangano, an Italian Protestant Pastor, did not approve of them. He believed that the purpose of these schools was “to retard assimilation and

18 M.J. Lavelle, V.G. to Fr. Connelly, June 20, 1917, 119L8.5, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.


20 Nelli, From Immigrants to Ethnics, 119.

21 Mangano, “Assimilating the Italian,” 152.
perpetuate foreign colonies in our cities…” whereas the public schools, even “with all its limitations and shortcomings it is still the bulwark in American life.” Despite such a positive view of the public schools, he still admitted that they lacked the ability to properly develop character, a position that left room for debate. Furthermore, the public schools had policies in place calling for a rapid assimilation of immigrant children, changing names such as Calogero to Charlie or Concetta to Connie while also teaching the primary patriotic lessons such as flag drills and stories about President Washington. Mangano’s views at the time were the minority perspective as many in the Italian enclave saw the Catholic schools as one of the strengths of the mainstreaming process. The more common perspective viewed the Catholic schools as a positive influence within society asserting that “The Catholic Church and its school systems have contributed to the cultural assimilation of Italians in New York City.” Indeed, the Catholic school system has been justly given a great deal of credit for the mainstreaming of American immigrants.

The ultimate goal of these Catholic institutions then was to bring these Catholic immigrants into mainstream American society. While this was being done in secular culture through the public schools and other Americanizing institutions, it was most

22 Ibid., 139.
23 Ibid., 140-142.
24 Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 221-222.
effectively accomplished by the Catholic Church. In New York City, the St. Raphael’s Society established Italian nurseries, evening schools, sewing classes, theater groups, reading rooms, hospitals, orphanages, and a residence for newly arrived immigrants, all in the name of helping to acclimate these new immigrants to American society. As time passed, the typical institutions within the Italian communities—mutual benefit societies, Italian language press, and the Catholic Church—had all fallen into disuse, with the exception of the Catholic Church which claimed large membership even if they were not all practicing Catholics. The degree to which this Catholic influence affected the Americanization process of Italian immigrants across the United States varied, but it was certainly prevalent in the city of Baltimore.

*The Catholic Church within the Baltimore Italian Ethnic Enclave*

The Italians of Baltimore found themselves in a place similar to that of Italians in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other American cities where they were entrenched in ethnic enclaves which held at their center the Roman Catholic Church. In the case of Baltimore, it was the national parish that was this central influence. In other areas of the United States, national parishes were created out of cahaleyism, a movement which sought to establish separate diocese for separate nationalities. In Baltimore, however, Archbishop Gibbons believed that “the Church could play a vital role in preparing new

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27 Nelli, *From Immigrants to Ethnic*, 178-179.

arrivals for life in America” sentiments that were supported by the work of the Catholic hierarchy in first creating German national parishes in Baltimore before later establishing a wide array of other national parishes including three Italian national parishes.29 When the first Italians arrived in 1827, establishing an Italian colony in the neighborhood of Exeter Street and Stiles Street, there was no pre-existing network in place to support them as a group. This area which eventually became known as Little Italy, would become fully Italian by the end of the 19th century, eliminating those nationalities which had formerly inhabited the region including German, Irish, and Jewish immigrants.30 These early Italians formed the first Italian ethnic enclave in Baltimore near St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Front Street which was their first church.31 In the first half of the 19th century, the number of Italians in Baltimore, as in the rest of the United States, was not very large. However, by the end of the American Civil War, Italian immigration began to grow in Baltimore with immigrants arriving primarily from Naples, Abruzzi, and Sicily.32

By 1879, there were 500 Italian immigrants residing in Baltimore with many more on their way. As the number of Italian parishioners attending St. Vincent’s increased, it became clear a new church was necessary in order to save the hundreds of

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29 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981: The Heart of Little Italy (Baltimore, MD: Church of St. Leo the Great Press, 1981), 5.

30 Angelo Pasqual Pente, How I Remember Little Italy: A Descriptive Rambling (Baltimore, MD: A.P. Pente), 2.

31 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 3.

32 Ibid.
Italian Catholic souls that would be arriving in the United States. While there was an Italian language Mass and opportunity for instruction being offered at St. Vincent’s under the direction of Fr. Andreis, it was not enough to satisfy the spiritual and religious needs of the community, especially those who did not or could not attend St. Vincent’s. In fact, the 500 Italians living in Baltimore were spread out between three churches—St. Vincent’s, St. Joseph’s, and St. Patrick’s at the corner of Broadway Street and Bank Street—further necessitating the need for the growth of the Catholic Church in Baltimore for Italians.

St. Leo the Great was the first Italian national parish established in the city of Baltimore and thus serves as the primary example of the historic impact of Italian national parishes within Baltimore. Even today, St. Leo’s continues to offer Italian language Mass while serving a predominantly Italian ethnic and immigrant church.

Two other Italian national parishes, St. John the Baptist and Our Lady of Pompeii, also served the Italian enclave. In this capacity, like St. Leo’s, they would faithfully serve

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33 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, September 11, 1879, 74R4, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

34 Fr. Andreis had been a priest came from Turin after twelve years there as a priest. He came to the United States as a missionary. Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, September 11, 1879, Abp. John Carroll Papers.

35 Ibid.

36 Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 297; Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, September 11, 1879, Abp. John Carroll Papers.

the Italian community for many years, providing for them a primary means for entering into American mainstream society. The process employed by the national parishes was developed by the Catholic hierarchy and implemented by the clergy who were ever present and willing to offer assistance to those in need.  

The national parish itself, under the direction of this clergy, offered a plethora of opportunities for these immigrants which met religious, social, physical, and psychological needs by offering an explanation of who they were as a person, why they were here, how they were to interact with others, and what their role ought be. Ultimately, these questions would be answered in a manner that helped them to both accept their Italian heritage and at the same time encourage the process of Americanization.

St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church

St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church was founded with the laying of the cornerstone by Archbishop Gibbons on September 12, 1880, a celebration which included an entire parade for the laying of the cornerstone and full feast to celebrate the new parish. One year later, on September 18, 1881 the church was dedicated with Archbishop Gibbons once again officiating the ceremony. Named after St. Leo the Great, the defender of Italy, the parish began with a mixed congregation in order to

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38 Pente, *How I Remember Little Italy*, 7.

39 *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 5.

40 “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives as St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD., 1.
support the needs of the church with approximately 900 Italians and 1500 non-Italians.\textsuperscript{41} Despite this number of Italian members, only about 100 Italians on average attended mass each week during the first year.\textsuperscript{42} However, by the mid-1890s, the Italians had become the majority group, not only at the church, but within the surrounding region.\textsuperscript{43} The change from a territorial parish open to all Catholics to a national parish specifically for Italian immigrants was a change ushered in by Archbishop Gibbons, an active supporter of national parishes as a means for the gradual adjustment of foreigners to American life which reflected his policy of ethnic tolerance.\textsuperscript{44} It becomes clear then that “the Baltimore diocese accepted ethnic pluralism as a strategy to ease the immigrant’s children into the mainstream of American life.”\textsuperscript{45} The acceptance of this strategy was evidenced by an enclave where “everything centered around the Church.”\textsuperscript{46} For Italians across the city of Baltimore then, St. Leo’s became their church for all things religious, spiritual, and social.

\textsuperscript{41} The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 5-7.

\textsuperscript{42} Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, July 28, 1882, 76S7, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

\textsuperscript{43} The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 9.

\textsuperscript{44} Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 297, 311.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 310.

\textsuperscript{46} Ida Ciplolloni Esposito, interview by Holly Gordon, Baltimore, MD, June 28, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 15-16.
Indeed, the job of the national parishes within ethnic enclaves in Baltimore was
to meet some of the unique needs of their immigrant parishioners, needs that could only
be met within an ethnic enclave which provided support to its members through its
central force, the Catholic Church. Early parishioners of St. Leo’s were laborers who
spoke a wide array of Italian dialects, based on their region of origin, which complicated
matters within the enclave because communication with neighbors or co-workers was
poor or non-existent. As the years went on, these issues with language would continue
to plague the enclave as it grew since many of the spouses and children did not speak or
understand Italian, creating more frequent language barriers within homes as well as
neighborhoods. In fact, the majority of youth born of Italian parents in Baltimore
could not communicate in the Italian language, occasionally being able to understand
and speak a specific dialect of Italian learned at home from parents or grandparents.

For the pastors in Baltimore Catholic Churches, this presented a major problem
as the majority of Italian immigrants did not speak the standardized form of Italian
adopted in the United States. First, as Fr. Andreis recognized, it was necessary to
appoint an Italian priest in all parishes frequented by Italian immigrants as he believed

47 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 7.
48 Ibid.
49 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, June 2, 1881, 75W1, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives
of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore,
MD.
they would never learn to speak English. On the other hand, the pastors found that there were many issues with speaking Italian as it was nearly impossible for the youth to be participants and active learners during Mass. Initially, Fr. Andreis tried to address this issue by reading the gospels in English so that the youth could comprehend, however Archbishop Gibbons did not accept the gospel being read in English and mandated that all sermons and announcements should be done in Italian. This decision was made based on the advice of Fr. McCllanus who argued that only the Italian language should be used during mass at St. Leo’s, otherwise it would cause problems with defining who was a parishioner of St. Leo’s versus who was a parishioner of the territorial parishes such as St. Vincent’s and St. Patrick’s. Fr. Mcllanus’s argument concluded by anointing the Catholic Schools as the institution responsible for educating the children of the enclave. Reluctantly, Fr. Andreis complied with the Archbishop’s order to speak Italian throughout the liturgy despite his contention that doing so resulted in missing the most important members of his congregation, the youth. This concern was based on what he saw as the Church’s view of Italian youth: “they are looked upon

50 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, April 15, 1901, 98U6.1, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

51 Archbishop Gibbons to Father Andreis, January 28, 1881, 75P13.5, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

52 Ibid.

53 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, September 6, 1881, 76D4, Abp. John Carroll Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.; Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, June 2, 1881, 75W1, Abp. John Carroll Papers.
as Italians, but they don’t know the Italian language.” His sincere concern for the plight of these young Italians extended to his subsequent inability to offer them a remedy that they could understand to help them counteract the negative issues they experienced throughout the week.55

Within the enclave, work was also an issue for many Italians, as their work schedule often prevented them from attending Mass. Consequently, Italian males were seldom in attendance at Church unless it was for a specific holy day or sacrament.56 Josephine Lancione Santoro’s husband fit the mold of this “typical Italian male” who went to Church only for marriages, baptisms, and other holy days of significance.57 Anthony Schiavo recalled a similar situation where his grandfather insisted that Anthony’s mother and siblings attend Church every week, even though his grandfather himself did not attend mass.58 The lack of adult male figures at mass was a cause for concern for many pastors for whom it called into question the significance of religion within the Italian family.

54 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, June 2, 1881, 75W1, Abp. John Carroll Papers.

55 Ibid.

56 Fr. Andreis to Archbishop Gibbons, April 15, 1901, 98U6.1, Abp. John Carroll Papers.

57 Josephine Lancione Santoro, interview by Jean Scarpaci, Baltimore, MD, July 30, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 24.

58 Anthony Schiavo, interview by Jean Scarpaci, Baltimore, MD, July 11, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 21.
The issue of work within the enclave was an issue not simply for the pastors, but more significantly, and not as quickly realized, was the religious impact it had on the Italian workers themselves. “Workers complained that they were nothing more than a number, serving the already wealthy while they were living without human dignity.”\textsuperscript{59} While in the modern Church, this concern may have been addressed rather quickly through the concept of Catholic Social Teaching, where human dignity is an issue of primary concern, it was not an issue that the clergy of this early immigrant church attempted to address. Catholic clergy maintained that their role was simply to take care of people’s spiritual well-being and “considered it inappropriate to enter public life or criticize unjust social conditions.”\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, neither the Catholic Church as a whole, nor the individual priest, seemed concerned about the immigrant experience at work, leaving many workers to feel as if they were nothing more than a number or position. “When I entered industry I found it a nightmare of time—recording clocks…which impressed upon me that my place in the universe was C702…but the more delicate mechanism of human nerves and sinews—not to speak of human souls—was ignored.”\textsuperscript{61} While the Catholic Church did not take a stand to defend these individuals publicly or to work for their rights, they did attempt to offer these individuals an explanation of who

\textsuperscript{59} Nunzio N. D’Alessio, “Our Lady of Pompeii Church: Celebrating our 75\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Jubilee, 1924-1999”, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives as St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD., 13.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 12-13.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 13.
they were and what role they played or ought to play within the universe and in many cases found success through the opportunities offered to them to achieve socially within the Italian enclave.

The Opportunities Available for Italians at St. Leo’s

Many Italian immigrants, like those of other nationalities, did not fit into American society upon arrival. This was certainly true of the Italians in Baltimore who initially felt neglected, but as time progressed in the enclave, “found status” in the Catholic Church.62 This became a primary attraction for Italians immigrating to America as the city of Baltimore, especially Little Italy, became a primary destination because of the parish of St. Leo’s and all of the opportunities they provided for immigrants.63 In general, the Church was the center of life with festivals, spaghetti dinners, and Italian dances which everyone attended.64 But it was not simply these social activities, but rather it was the wide range and style of activities that were offered for all members of the community as well as those offered based on gender and age. For the men there were a wide array of both social and religious organizations in which they could participate as well as helping to fulfill the needs of the physical church buildings by doing repairs and new building on the church grounds. The women too had a number of different social and religious groups with which they could participate as well as

62 Ibid., 14.

63 Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 311.

64 Esposito, interview, 20.
serving in different capacities in support of the nuns who prepared for many of the church festivals in celebration of holy days and the sacraments. For the youth of the parish, there were also a plethora of opportunities offered by the church itself, separate from the Catholic schools. All three of these groups, men, women, and children, took part in the fundraising efforts of St. Leo’s, regardless of their own personal financial situation. Each of these activities provided Italian immigrants an opportunity to come to know themselves within the context of their role within the Italian Community.

Social and Religious Organizations of St. Leo’s

One of the strengths of St. Leo’s was the number of clubs and organizations that were open to their parishioners. Some of the earliest organizations were the Christian Mother’s Sodality, St. Leo’s Confraternity of Men, Children of Mary, and the St. Aloysius Society, each of which was setup to meet the needs of the different members of the Italian enclave. In 1928, the St. Gabriel Society was founded to further meet the needs of the enclave. The church also sponsored a number of patriotic organizations such as the Cadet Corps and a Fife and Drum Corps which promoted patriotism and perpetuated the memory of the parishioners of St. Leo’s and their contributions during World War I. Whenever there was a parade or a celebration, the Cadet Corps would

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65 *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 21; “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 2.

66 *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 25.

67 *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 2; “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 2.
arrive in full uniform with flags and in great numbers, ready to demonstrate their American patriotism along with their Italian pride.\textsuperscript{68} Finally, in the 1940s the Mother’s Club was founded for the purpose of providing an opportunity for socialization of the mothers and an opportunity to assist in the running of school affairs.\textsuperscript{69} For many mothers, like Catherine Lioi Mancuso, the Mother’s Club was the only vehicle by which they participated in the community of St. Leo’s aside from weekly Mass.\textsuperscript{70}

The Physical Buildings

The male parishioners found a way to participate within the church community by putting to use their skills in labor to help maintain the religious community. It was the male parishioner’s job to help fix up the church and the school, by putting their skills to use in repairing the roofs and stairs, paneling the basement, and any other tasks deemed necessary. Ida Cipolloni Esposito recalled the men installing “new flooring upstairs in the auditorium which was way up on the third floor…you had so many stairs to go up.”\textsuperscript{71} The men also installed the bells in the church, using horses to help raise the

\textsuperscript{68} Pente, \textit{How I Remember Little Italy}, 8.

\textsuperscript{69} Sister Ursula, interview by Doris Stern, Baltimore, MD, August 16, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 29; “40\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 2.

\textsuperscript{70} Catherine Lioi Mancuso, interview by Holly Gordon, Baltimore, MD, September 21, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 32.

\textsuperscript{71} Esposito, interview, 30.
bells up into place. By performing these tasks, men had an opportunity to achieve a sense of purpose within the church, a sentiment that had the potential to provide the immigrants with psychological benefits in addition to the religious and spiritual benefits. The work they accomplished was admired and appreciated by the entire community, providing them with a sense of self-satisfaction in the fact that they were able to help their community.

Festivals and Holy Days
Within the Italian enclave, there were a number of important holy days and sacraments that were a central part of the religious community. These occasions were extremely significant as Italian communities across the country celebrated these holy days and sacraments as they would have in their mother country. Italians from all across the city would send their children to St. Leo’s for their religious rites of passage such as Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and later on, many were married within the church. In Italian culture, these rites of passage were very important and it was not uncommon for family members to come from all around the region for the celebration. First Holy Communion was at the center of these important rituals. As was the case with many of the festivals, this celebration too had a procession, during which all first

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72 Ibid., 6.
73 Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 311.
communicants, clad in their white dresses and suits, processed through the streets of Little Italy while their families and fellow parishioners celebrated.\textsuperscript{74}

In order for the church to handle these celebrations, it was necessary for them to help supply the committees planning the celebration with the money and means to run a successful event. It was the nuns who were in charge of this and throughout the day-to-day process they had minimal interactions with the priests and nuns at St. Leo’s. The nuns never had to ask the priest for money when it came time to decorate the Church with flowers or decorations. The nuns simply took care of the whole process—the priests trusted them to do so, paying the bills and orchestrating all the necessary processes to make the church run smoothly.\textsuperscript{75} In many cases, the priests “were just considered the figureheads. And all the problems were the sisters’.”\textsuperscript{76}

At the center of the holy days in in the Italian community were the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. During Easter week, specifically Holy Thursday and Good Friday, and again at Christmas time many members of the Italian community would travel to the different churches in Baltimore such as St. Vincent’s, Holy Rosary, St. Stanislaus, St. Michael’s, Star of the Sea, and many others in order to see how the Churches had been decorated for the Holy Days.\textsuperscript{77} Easter, the Easter Tridium, and

\textsuperscript{74} Pente, \textit{How I Remember Little Italy}, 46.

\textsuperscript{75} Ursula, interview, 19.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 26.

\textsuperscript{77} Esposito, interview, 29-30.
Christmas themselves, were days for Mass and family. Whereas many Italians did not attend Sunday Mass, holidays were a different matter with church attendance and donations always higher than at any other time of the year.\textsuperscript{78}

St. Joseph’s Day and St. John’s Day were both significant days in Italian culture in the United States. Tony Giammona celebrated St. Joseph’s Day and St. John’s Day, like many others in the community, by taking the day off of work and attending Mass before the celebrations of the day would begin. Giammona, a very religious man who went to Mass every Sunday, was a baker who plied his trade in a way that made it a significant part of his ritual for St. Joseph’s Day. On St. Joseph’s Day every year, he would give away loaves of bread which he called St. Joseph’s Bread to friends, family, and patrons throughout Little Italy, to be shared with those who at dinner. Every year he gave away about 500 of these loaves and told those to whom he gave it not to waste any of it.\textsuperscript{79}

In Little Italy, St. Anthony’s Day and St. Gabriel’s Day were more than just feast days, they were festivals.\textsuperscript{80} The procession and feast of St. Gabriel was a ten day celebration that was practiced in Little Italy until the “projects were built.”\textsuperscript{81} The celebration would be marked by a procession which would include musical ensembles,

\textsuperscript{78} Ursula, interview, 19.

\textsuperscript{79} Mary Garafalo Pastore, interview by Jean Scarpaci, Baltimore, MD, August 21, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 63.

\textsuperscript{80} Scarpaci, \textit{Ambiente Italiano}, 316.

\textsuperscript{81} Ursula, interview, 20.
in later years the cadet corps, and many other groups and organizations that came together for the celebration. Louis Schwartz recalled that his father played French horn in the bands at Our Lady of Pompeii Church and St. Leo’s Church for the St. Gabriel’s pageant and procession each year as well as in other celebrations at these churches during festivals and processions. The ten-day celebration took place entirely outdoors, with booths and vendors stationed throughout the street serving food and offering games such as bingo for the enjoyment of the crowd.

The May Procession or Marian Procession was one of the most significant celebrations at St. Leo’s. The celebration occurred at the end of the school year and was an event that required a great amount of organization. Those who participated in the event in a primary role practiced for weeks ahead of time, establishing who would be carrying what and how the flowers would be situated so that there would be no problems when it came time for the procession. On the day of the procession, the girls wore their Sunday best and four girls at a time, usually eighth graders or members of the Sodality, would be lucky enough to get to carry the statue of Virgin Mary throughout the procession, switching off each block, as they went through the neighborhood of Little Italy. Sister Ursula recalled that the procession always occurred on the hottest day of the year. When they returned from the procession to the church, the statue of Virgin Mary

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82 Louis Schwartz, interview by Doris Stern, Baltimore, MD, July 21, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 14.

83 Ursula, interview, 30.
was crowned by one of the girls, usually one of the first communion children. The procession, like the ones in all of the other Baltimore parishes, eventually ended, in part due to the decline of the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{84}

Fundraising

The Italian community of St. Leo’s was expected to be strong participants in the development of the church, especially through fundraising. Traditionally fundraising occurred in many different ways, but the primary method through which funds were raised was pew rental fees, a fee charged to those parishioners who sat in the front rows of the church. Early on at St. Leo’s, when the church was a mixed congregation, these pews were primarily occupied by Irish parishioners. When the church became a national parish, questions arose about whether non-Italian speakers could rent these pews. This was a significant concern as the Irish who rented the front rows helped to support St. Leo’s Catholic Church despite the fact that they were predominantly parishioners of St. Patrick’s or St Vincent’s.\textsuperscript{85} The Catholic hierarchy in Baltimore determined that pews at the church may be rented by English speaking individuals but they may not receive the sacraments of baptism, marriage, or last rites at the parish; only confessions could be heard or performed in English.\textsuperscript{86} This resulted for a while in the continued financial support of the Irish, however this support would wane and eventually come to an end,

\textsuperscript{84} Ursula, interview, 33-36.

\textsuperscript{85} Pente, \textit{How I Remember Little Italy}, 7-11.

\textsuperscript{86} Archbishop Gibbons to Father Andreis, January 28, 1881, 75P13.5, Abp. John Carroll Papers.
leaving the Italians of Little Italy and St. Leo’s parish to find other ways in which to raise funds for the church.

As became common in most Italian parishes, and later Catholic parishes in general, the spaghetti dinner became one of the primary fundraisers. Early on, the spaghetti dinners held at St. Leo’s were prepared almost entirely by the nuns and served by the orphans of St. Leo’s feeding nearly 600 people in one evening, raising funds to support the orphan asylum.87 Later, the planning and implementation of the spaghetti dinners was taken on by the mothers in the parish who gathered together in committees, placing few expectations on the sisters aside from assisting when they were needed to provide plates or napkins or to keep the children on their best behavior.88 The nuns also went out and collected funds door to door from the parishioners, accepting whatever pledges a family could afford.89 As time passed, St. Leo’s began sponsoring shore parties where families could purchase tickets and then pile into trucks and head down to the water to picnic either with food they brought or food they bought at booths sponsored by St. Leo’s as a fundraiser for the church and a way for the parishioners to gather together for a day of enjoyment.90 They also used to have other dinners and picnics such as oyster suppers, and ravioli dinners, all of the proceeds from which went

87 Pente, How I Remember Little Italy, 13.
88 Ursula, interview, 36.
89 Ibid., 13.
to support St. Leo’s Catholic Church.\footnote{Ibid., 38.} These fundraisers were so successful that Fr. Reidel was able to pay off the church’s mortgage by 1921 through the funds raised during these dinners and events.\footnote{Pente, \textit{How I Remember Little Italy}, 7.} Fundraising was also necessary for the different activities that took place at St. Leo’s such as festivals, processions, and other similar practices. When it came time for the festivals, an envelope would be sent out to all the parishioners and the parish would request a small donation, at least fifty cents to help offset the cost of flowers and decorations for the occasions.\footnote{Ursula, interview, 19.}

**Opportunities for Italians to Learn and Grow at St. Leo’s**

The physical buildings which made up St. Leo’s Parish were significant places for gathering with other Italian immigrants and ethnics. Whether it was for a dance or a game of cards or for the purpose of receiving aid from one of the mutual benefit societies, the buildings provided for immigrants a centralized location to gather. The facilities also provided a place where English language courses could be offered and courses could be taken in order to gain a greater understanding of America. Furthermore, it provided a place for people to come together in times of need and tragedy, whether it be as a result of poverty or disaster. All of this in turn led to a growth in both the individuals and the community as the education they received and the
experiences they shared strengthened their resolve and oriented them on the path to mainstream America.

The Function of the Gym and Basement at St. Leo’s

St. Leo’s Gym, founded and built under the direction of Fr. Andreis in 1895, was a place set aside for the social needs of the community. For adult men, it was a place where they could participate in athletics, dances, and other group activities. This space, in addition to the basement of St. Leo’s, was used for meetings of different religious societies and sodalities as well as for card games and pool tables. It was not uncommon for male members of the community to spend their evenings after dinner at St. Leo’s participating in these activities. So too was this a significant place for the youth of St. Leo’s as it was the primary location for the meetings of the St. Leo’s Club organized and founded by Fr. Andreis in 1895 for neighborhood youths to provide them with a place off the streets to participate in a wide array of different activities.

St. Leo’s gym became a significant part of the community as it helped to keep Italian youths and males off the streets and out of trouble, something that could not be boasted by most immigrant and ethnic groups in Baltimore. In no year between 1883 and 1906 did the number of Italian immigrants or ethnics admitted to the alms house

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95 Julia Poggi, interview by Jean Scarpaci, Baltimore, MD, September 15, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 31-32.

96 Pente, *How I Remember Little Italy*, 8.

exceed 30 nor the number committed exceed five compared to numbers in triple digits for the Irish and German with more than 20 being committed to the alms house for extended stays in most years. The primary function of the gym was the development of athletics within the community. Sports, such as baseball and basketball, became important within the community by the beginning of 1920s as did boxing, one of the most popular sports for Italian immigrants across the United States. Serving in such a capacity, St. Leo’s gym produced a “world-champion” wrestler, Americus and the “world-champion” standing broad jumper, Dr. Eugene Pessagno. As time went on at St. Leo’s, it became more and more of a challenge to keep these activities going. By the 1950s and 1960s, Sister Ursula recalled the challenges faced by the church when they attempted to start a CYO program at St. Leo’s, an attempt that eventually failed, although Sister Ursula never fully understood why, since athletics had been so significant at St. Leo’s.

**Adult Education**

In addition to providing opportunities in athletics, they also provided a wide array of classes that members of the community could take. St. Leo’s Adult Education Center at Broadway Street and Bank Street provided community members an

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98 “Report of the Trustees of the Poor” Folder Poverty 1883-1906, Archives of Maryland Polonia, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

99 *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 23.

100 Pente, *How I Remember Little Italy*, 26.

101 Ursula, interview, 23.
opportunity to learn English and a number of different trade classes, such as sewing. Fr. Reidel also found it important to provide English reading classes, separate from simply the language classes, as it was a necessary way to help develop their ability to utilize the English language in American society. Classes such as these were relevant as late as 1928 and thereafter, as many families did not speak English at home. In other cases, it was the Italian language which the younger generations could not understand and the clergy saw this as a significant issue as well, offering courses in Italian or providing personal opportunities for tutoring, as in the case of pharmacist Julia Poggi who received help with her Italian in the pharmacy from Fr. Lulli. If it were not for the efforts of the church, many Italian immigrants would have found it nearly impossible to learn the English language as only a few community centers had the means to help the Italian community in Baltimore, and none of them were making efforts to educate the second and third generations to learn the Italian language of the neighborhood.

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102 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 11; Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 314-315.
103 Scarpaci, Ambiente Italiano, 314-315.
104 Ibid., 317.
105 Poggi, interview, 41.
106 Mancuso, interview, 19-20.
Unification of Little Italy

Programs such as those offered by St. Leo’s Adult Education Center played a major role in neighborhood unification.\footnote{107 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 11.} They encouraged the immigrants to forget some of their regional differences and, through the church, develop a unified, Italian American Community. But it was not simply these programs that helped to unify the immigrant community, but rather it was also the mutual experience of tragedy and the response to such adversity that helped to create a stronger Italian enclave. In 1904, the city of Baltimore was consumed in fire. The fire began at the John E. Hurst and Company building located between Hopkins Place and Liberty Street on the morning of February 7, 1904. The fire burned across Baltimore, from Fayette Street down to Pratt Street over a thirty hour period before it was finally extinguished along the Jones Falls, destroying much of the city.\footnote{108 “Great Baltimore Fire of 1904,” Enoch Pratt Free Library, http://www.mdch.org/fire/#, [accessed 9/1/10]. The digital map available on the website provides an extremely useful visual for how the fire spread across the city.} The Italian community of Little Italy gathered both on the east bank of Jones Falls and at St. Leo’s where they offered prayers to God that their community would be spared. As the fire continued to get closer, they began to cry out to St. Anthony, asking for his intercession. The crowds who were standing on the bank of the Jones Falls went to St. Leo’s where they picked up the statue of St. Anthony and
took it down to the harbor where they placed it on the wall. They vowed that if their homes and community were saved, they would hold an annual festival in honor of St. Anthony. As soon as the statue arrived, according to the legend, the fire came to an end, as firefighters used the Jones Falls as a natural boundary. This resulted in the formation of the St. Anthony’s Society with the first St. Anthony’s Festival being celebrated on June 13, 1904. As a result of this miracle, St. Leo’s became “the social and spiritual heart of Little Italy”

Taking Care of their Own

Another aspect of the unified community within Little Italy was the work of religious organizations in assisting the poor, sick, and dead through insurance organizations and mutual benefit societies. Within a community with limited means, it was necessary that St. Leo’s find a way to assist those families in need, either through their own organizations or through helping their parishioners to find the necessary resources within the community. The St. Gabriel’s Society was one of the organizations

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109 Michael J. DiCicco, interview by Holly Gordon, Baltimore, MD, May 29, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore; Esposito, interview, 6.

110 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 13.

111 DiCicco, interview, 6; Esposito, interview, 6.

112 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 14; DiCicco, interview, 6; Esposito, interview, 6.

113 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 14.
within the church that provided aid to the sick and dying.\textsuperscript{114} This was especially necessary for funerals which due to their inordinate cost were often funded by mutual benefit societies or organizations like the St. Gabriel’s Society.\textsuperscript{115} The church also served as the primary place where welfare stamps were handed out to those in need.\textsuperscript{116} Furthermore, St. Leo’s sought to help the Italian orphans within the community so in 1913, an orphan asylum was founded and opened as St. Leo’s Italian Orphan Asylum in 1915.\textsuperscript{117} Throughout the 1920s, there were 50-75 youths at the asylum at any given time.\textsuperscript{118}

Final Thoughts on St. Leo’s

The enclave known today as Little Italy grew to encompass the area between Eastern Avenue on the south and Lombard Street in the north, Jones Falls on the West, and Broadway Street on the East.\textsuperscript{119} While there are many arguments over where these boundaries were for Little Italy, it is clear that as we reached the 20th century, there were more small Italian enclaves forming throughout the city. Enclaves sprung up in Highlandtown, Lexington Market, and on the opposite side of Pratt Street, increasing

\textsuperscript{114} Esposito, interview, 23.

\textsuperscript{115} Schiavo, interview, 21.

\textsuperscript{116} Santoro, interview, 28.

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981}, 17.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 10.
once again the number of Italians attending St. Vincent’s.\textsuperscript{120} The influence of St. Leo’s spread and by 1928, St. Vincent’s had become primarily Italian, developing the St. Vincent’s Society and incorporating Italian style celebrations into their religious life, despite the fact that they were not a national parish, but rather a territorial parish in an area that was rich in the Italian ethnicity.\textsuperscript{121} Catholic Churches sprung up throughout the city with the national parishes of our Lady of Pompeii and St. John the Baptist arising to meet the needs of Italian immigrants in Highlandtown and Lexington Market respectively. Such growth, and the emphasis placed on national parishes by the Roman Catholic Church, especially Archbishop Gibbons, is evidence of how significant the local Catholic Church was in the growth of the Italian Immigrant community.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii Roman Catholic Church

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii was founded in 1923 by Fr. Luigi Scialdone, CM\textsuperscript{122} to serve the Italian community in Highlandtown.\textsuperscript{123} The church began with Masses held in the basement of Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church while work was started on their own church in January of 1923 leading to the celebration

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Esposito, interview, 29.
\item[121] Scarpaci, \textit{Ambienot Italiano}, 313.
\item[122] Father Scialdone spent 17 years as a missionary in China before coming to Baltimore and being assigned pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii. Nunzio N. D’Alessio, “Our Lady of Pompeii Church: Celebrating our 75\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Jubilee, 1924-1999”, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories, 12.
\item[123] “Parish History” for our Lady of Pompeii, Office of the Urban Vicar, February 2006, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.
\end{footnotes}
of the first Mass was celebrated in June of 1924. The parish was identified as an Italian national parish with Italians attending the parish from the area covered by the territorial parishes of St. Brigid’s and St. Elizabeth’s as well as Sacred Heart, a German national parish. It was specifically because of all of these surrounding parishes, that Our Lady of Pompeii was necessary as it “was forged as a direct result of being neglected.” For years, the Italian community in Highlandtown had either been making the journey around the harbor to attend St. Leo’s or was attending one of the local parishes, where the Italian language was not offered. Louis Schwartz recalled “that Pompei Church was originally a wooden building and they used to have carnivals for fundraising there and then they built a brick building, a large brick church there.” The physical facility of the church had its own grade school that, beginning in 1928, was run by the Filippinni Sisters and graduated their first graduating class of seven students on June 21, 1929.

124 “Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee, 1924-1949: Our Lady of Pompeii Church,” Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD; “Parish History” for our Lady of Pompeii, Office of the Urban Vicar, February 2006, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories.

125 “Our Lady of Pompeii Church” Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD; “Parish History” for our Lady of Pompeii, Office of the Urban Vicar, February 2006, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories.


127 Schwartz, interview, 7.

128 “Our Lady of Pompeii Church” Folder Our Lady of Pompeii, Parish Histories.; “Parish History” for our Lady of Pompeii, Office of the Urban Vicar, February 2006, Folder Our Lady of Pompeii,
In 1928, the Vincentian Fathers from the Neopolitan Province took charge of the parish. Over the first twenty-five years of the parish’s history, the church had anywhere from two to five priests serving the parish community in order to meet the needs of the enclave, especially those of the sick and the poor, while guiding and caring for the various parish societies. With such a focus on the community, it is no surprise that in the first twenty-five years, the Church clergy officiated at 3,168 Baptisms and 1,198 marriages while providing about 35,000 Holy Communions per year, and educating over 30 kids per grade at the school. These numbers clearly reflected the size of the community and the significance of Our Lady of Pompeii for the Italian people.

The church itself was developed in order to answer the needs the Catholic hierarchy saw growing in the Italian enclave in Highlandtown. “To a people yearning for security, comfort, and belonging, Pompeii—a parish forged out of ‘neglectedness’—responded.” Pastors throughout the parish history noted that “The happy smiles and the friendly hand waves, so beautifully typical of this neighborhood” and “the chit-chat

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130 Ibid.

on the front steps” demonstrated the community that existed around the church.\textsuperscript{132} Within the church, the community was equally as productive through “the parish carnival,” “the children playing and growing together in a family atmosphere,” and “the moral strength of the neighborhood, whose strongest motivating force is still the voice of the Church.”\textsuperscript{133} The physical facility was also significant with “the highly efficient and well-staffed school,” “the beautiful and functional gymnasium-auditorium,” “the convent and the rectory to house the servant of the Lord,” and “the church, the monument to God, and the symbol of our growth.”\textsuperscript{134} All of these descriptions of the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii demonstrated the church’s prominent position at the center of the community.

In this vain, it is clear that Our Lady of Pompeii played a central role in the enclave. Like St. Leo’s, one of the strengths of the church was the plethora of organizations available to parishioners. The church established a wide array of societies such as the Holy Rosary Society, Ladies of Charity, Sodality of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Holy Name Society, the Athletic Club, Altar Boys and the Junior and Senior Choir. The Children of Mary Sodality was founded for unmarried women with the aim “to honor the Blessed Mother in Her Immaculate Conception, and to imitate Her virtues,


\textsuperscript{133}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.
especially Her purity in their daily life.” The Saint Vincent de Paul Society cared for the needy in the parish while the Mother’s Club assisted the nuns in their work in both the parish and the school. The Our Lady of Grace Society was developed to spread the devotion to Our Lady of Grace and finally the Music Club was created to support both the musical needs of the church and to entertain the poor and elderly in city hospitals. 

The greatest contribution provided to the Italian community by Our Lady of Pompeii, however, was that the church, as a whole, “understood its self-identity to be rooted in their experience of ‘otherness.” Indeed, it was this experience that brought the Italians of Highlandtown together and allowed them to find their way into mainstream American society. In a letter to the parishioners dated April 7, 1934, the founding of the community was recalled in the following manner:

He [Fr. Scialdone] began his work under the most difficult circumstances. The Italian flock was scattered. Very little attention had been paid to them. Father Scialdone had no money to meet expenses, and yet with faith in God’s providence, he started a work for you and yours and your soul’s welfare which has flourished during the past years as a result of sacrifices on the part of the priests attached to your parish and your cooperation with your clergy.

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136 Ibid.


Indeed, it was the recognition of the Italian situation and the positive manner in which it was addressed by the Catholic Church that made entering into the mainstream of American Society an achievable opportunity.

St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was initially organized by The Society of St. John the Baptist in 1888.139 One year later, in February 1889, a Jewish synagogue was purchased and renovated to become the first church.140 Fr. Lietuvnikas, the first pastor, organized the purchase of the church property and established St. John the Baptist as a Lithuanian national parish.141 In 1907, the physical building for what would be the second home for the church was purchased from a Baptist community to better serve the Lithuanian community which later moved to St. Alphonsus in 1917.142 It was then that the church on the corner of Paca Street and Saratoga Street was turned over to

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139 “St. John the Baptist” in Baltimore Historical Book of America Catholic Societies, 1914, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives as St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

140 Ibid.

141 “Souvenir Program: St. John the Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee, 1917-1942,” Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives as St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.; “St. John the Baptist” in Baltimore Historical Book of America Catholic Societies, 1914, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories.

142 “St. John the Baptist Church,” 1967, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives as St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.; “Souvenir Program: St. John the Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee, 1917-1942,” Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories.
the Pallottine Fathers and became an Italian national parish. It was necessary that an Italian national parish be established in this area due to the large number of Italians who established residency in the Northwest Section of Baltimore, adjacent to the area known as Lexington Market. This Italian community in Lexington Market was largely comprised of immigrants from Sicily and Cefalu.

The first pastor of St. John the Baptist, upon becoming an Italian national parish, was Fr. Valentine Rumpel. Fr. Rumpel had served as a missionary to the Italian immigrants of Brazil for over twenty years before arriving in the United States where he served for a year at St. Leo’s. The third pastor was Rev. Armando D’Urgolo who founded the parish school, and the Holy Name Society, while further developing the parish buildings through the generous, donations from the hard-working members of the community. He also provided a convent for the Pallottine Sisters of Charity who were very active members in the Italian community. In 1935, Rev. Graziani, the fifth

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143 “St. John the Baptist” in Baltimore Historical Book of America Catholic Societies, 1914, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories.; “St. John the Baptist Church,” 1967, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories; Scarpaci, 318.

144 “Souvenir Program: St. John the Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee, 1917-1942,” Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.
pastor, used donations to put new pews in place and create a more unified church building by demolishing the balcony.\textsuperscript{148}

One of the most significant roles of St. John the Baptist for the Italian community was the shrine to St. Jude. “It is a source of great comfort for us to know that these Devotions are bringing consolation and help to a large number of clients of such a powerful saint, as letters sent in every week prove it.”\textsuperscript{149} It was this shrine that served to provide for Catholic immigrants, in this case both Lithuanian and Italian, a faith filled experience predicated on a place of spiritual and religious significance that provided a connection to a saint of great importance for the immigrant in the United States.

When one considers how many blessings have come to people who have prayed at the shrine with all sorts of hurts and problems and afflictions and also the efforts and sacrifices that the Catholic founders of this Church—Lithuanian and Sicilian alike, made in order to establish a Catholic presence in this neighborhood, then our celebration is one that reaches back into history, immediate and long past, and touches many lives.\textsuperscript{150}

Today, St. John the Baptist is known as St. Jude’s Shrine and is still run by the Pallotine Fathers although it is not a Catholic Parish. The shrine does, however, continue to represent the significance of saints and the subsequent devotion to them within the

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} “Rededication: St. John the Baptist—St. Jude Shrine,” 1984, Folder St. John the Baptist, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.
Italian culture. The Shrine to St. Jude then served to bring together the immigrants for the purpose of religious celebrations and created a significant collective memory within both the Italian enclave, and the larger immigrant population in Baltimore.

*The Catholic School within the Baltimore Italian Ethnic Enclave*

St. Leo’s Catholic School played a very significant role in Little Italy. The school began in 1882 to fulfill what was a clear need within the community, the building itself being constructed and ready to open by 1884.¹⁵¹ Fr. Andreis, along with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, took the school from a small upstart program with three lay teachers to an overcrowded school of 250 by 1909.¹⁵² It was in that year that the Pallotine Society was placed in charge of the parish with Fr. Riedl at the helm.¹⁵³ In 1914, the school, which existed in a series of row houses, was remodeled to provide for greater growth, and, by 1922, there were 252 boys and 229 girls for a total number of 481 students resulting in well over forty to fifty students per class, all of whom were taught by nuns.¹⁵⁴

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¹⁵¹ *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 9; Scarpaci, 312.

¹⁵² “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 2; *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 15.

¹⁵³ *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s,” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 2; *The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981*, 21; Ursula, interview, 4-5.
In 1930, Fr. Messina arrived at St. Leo’s and immediately began plans for a new school. Since they intended to use the same property to build the school, it was necessary to find a separate facility to hold classes in for the 1930-1931 school year. The original plan to deal with this issue was to send the majority of students to school at St. Vincent’s in the interim, but the parents nixed this idea because they had a fear of the children having to cross Pratt Street.

The remedy decided upon by Fr. Messina was to lease a portion of the Bageby Furniture Company to serve as the temporary school. The new school was built through a series of generous pledges and donations that exemplified a truly communal process with great support coming from the parents and Archbishop Curley. Josephine Lancione Santoro recalls that her husband pledged $500 which he paid off at a rate of $20 a month. Further fundraisers were carried out along with suppers in order to raise the necessary money. The new school was finally completed in 1931 and opened in time for the start of the new school year due to the “generous response of the

155 Ursula, interview, 4.

156 Ibid., 7-8

157 Santoro, interview, 37; Ursula, interview, 8.

158 Ursula, interview, 7-8.

159 Santoro, interview, 24.
poor people of dear old St. Leo’s.” The new school had eight classrooms, and an auditorium which was able to seat over 500 people. Later, a library was added to the school during the 1940s that was open during the school day and two days during the week over the summer.

The fundraising for the school, coupled with the nuns teaching all of the classes, played an important role in keeping down the cost for these immigrant students to attend classes. Since there were no teachers to pay, the tuition fee covered the necessary school supplies which kept the cost of education at St. Leo’s very low. Josephine Lancione Santoro recalled that “You had to pay a couple nickels or something” to go to St. Leo’s. This ten cent fee charged per week for students to attend St. Leo’s Catholic School resulted in the cost of about forty or fifty cents per month for school at St. Leo’s. This nominal fee was often supplemented by kids bringing food from home for the nuns. Julia Poggi recalled that her parents would have her deliver a basket of food to the nuns at the school each week as part of the tuition.

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160 The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 27; “40th Anniversary 1909-1949 of the Pallottine Fathers at St. Leo’s” September 25, 1949, Folder St. Leo’s Baltimore, Parish Histories, 3-4; Ursula, interview, 14.


162 Santoro, interview, 67.

163 Pente, How I Remember Little Italy, 12; Ursula, interview, 10.

164 Ursula, interview, 12.

165 Poggi, interview, 43.
This small weekly fee garnered a significant return for the students and their families, most importantly an experience that they would not have had in the public school system. Mabel Rifkin Scherbruk recalls that at St. Leo’s school, individuals received more attention than they did in the public schools despite the fact that there were more than forty students per class without any separation of boys and girls.¹⁶⁶ One reason they were able to offer such attention was because all classes at St. Leo’s were taught by nuns who enforced a strict discipline and enforced their expectations on the students.¹⁶⁷ A second reason would be the desire of the parents for their students to become educated. They were very interested in anything related to education and an opportunity to give their children the education they never had. This was so important to them that they would even find a second job or send their children to work before or after school, many of them finding work at the local restaurants.¹⁶⁸ However, despite the best efforts of many families, as Sister Ursula recalled, it was not uncommon for boys to be removed from school to begin working as soon as possible which was in 6th grade if they were 14 years old.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Mabel Rifkin Scherbruk, interview by Doris Stern, Baltimore, MD, September 25, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 27; Schiavo, interview, 22; Joseph Sergi, interview by Jean Scarpaci, Baltimore, MD, August 21, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 14.

¹⁶⁷ Sergi, interview, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Ursula, interview, 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 11.
The general education provided at St. Leo’s varied little from the education that was received in public schools. This was an important part of their education as it put them on equal footing knowledge wise with those who attended public schools. Indeed, St. Leo’s, like the public school system, provided immigrants with an environment to learn from classmates and teachers about American practices. The typical school day at St. Leo’s began with students arriving at school for 8:00 AM Mass before classes began at 9:00 AM. The school day lasted until 3:00 PM with the standard classes of reading, writing, history, penmanship, arithmetic, spelling, geography, and art. Added to these standard classes was a religion class, the lone unique course offered at St. Leo’s during the traditional school day. After 3:00 PM Italian lessons were offered. While Italian lessons were not offered at public schools in Baltimore, they did offer classes in English available to immigrants of all nationalities. From both school environments, a better grasp of English was gained by the second generation. Additionally, there were no vocational classes offered at St. Leo’s, such as sewing, despite the fact that these were a staple in the public schools.

During the three o’clock hour after school was also when play practice took place. For many years, the theater program was under the direction of Sister Marcene

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170 Esposito, interview, 31; Ursula, interview, 6.
171 Mancuso, interview, 7.
172 Santoro, interview, 36.
who put on two to three plays per year.\textsuperscript{173} In 1929, the students put on a play that “was sort of like a League of Nations play” that was attended by the Italian consul and many others within the Italian community.\textsuperscript{174} The performance was meant to pass on information about the blending of cultures and how the process was expected to take place in American society for these Catholic immigrants.\textsuperscript{175} In ways such as this, the school’s reputation grew due to its high academic standards and its provisions for opportunities which prepared youth for American citizenship in conjunction with their spiritual and moral traditions.\textsuperscript{176}

The strong influence of American culture exerted by the general education system at St. Leo’s was coupled with an opportunity to continue to learn and grow within one’s own Italian culture, which provided these immigrant youths an opportunity to slowly enter into American society. All of the Italian Catholic schools allowed their students to keep their cultural and language connections, something that seldom occurred in the public schools. After school Italian language classes were offered because many students had trouble with the Italian language. Two priests taught these Italian classes and the two older students with the highest grades could win trips to

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\textsuperscript{173} Esposito, interview, 31.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 15-16.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 9.
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Italy. These classes, coupled with the Italian spoken at home produced the primary background in Italian for most students. This meant that the language that they spoke at home and in class did not necessarily mesh, making the classes seemingly useless because often the dialect they spoke at home and throughout the neighborhood was different from what was learned in school.

Finally, discipline within the Catholic school system represented a blend of American and Italian culture. Students and parents alike welcomed the strict discipline of the nuns at St. Leo’s. Mabel Rifkin Scherbruk recalled that discipline at St. Leo’s was the first subject taught, a lesson that was incorporated into all Catholic schools. The discipline enforced by the nuns extended beyond just behavior. It was instilled in all class work as well with nuns providing very specific directions, directions that if not followed, would result in the paper being torn up and assigned the grade of zero. Sr. Pauline was one such nun who was revered, feared, and commanded respect at St. Leo’s Catholic School while Sr. Davidica was more laid back in her role as the mother.

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177 Ursula, interview, 5.
178 Esposito, interview, 26.
179 Ibid., 32.
180 Scarpaci, 318.
181 Scherbruk, interview, 27.
182 Ibid., 28.
superior.\textsuperscript{183} It was the blend of these personalities which made the system of discipline so beneficial to immigrant youths.

Sister Ursula did not attribute the fact that children did not have behavioral problems to the strict discipline imposed by herself and the other nuns, but rather to the parents who would not tolerate any sort of behavioral issues.\textsuperscript{184} Despite Sister Ursula’s willingness to pass the credit to the parents, it is clear that the strict discipline of the nuns did in fact play a significant role in the development of these children. Larry Marino recalls that being a lefthander was not approved of at St. Leo’s by the nuns. The nuns would tie down his left hand in order to force him to write with his right hand. If he freed his left arm up for the purpose of writing, it resulted in him getting “banged.”\textsuperscript{185} However, Larry Marino’s problems did not end with being left handed. As a student at St. Leo’s, he frequently skipped school and was subsequently sent to St. Mary’s Industrial School to be straightened out. St. Mary’s Industrial School was a free Catholic boarding school for delinquents where they were forced to learn a trade.\textsuperscript{186} This provided parents an easy threat to direct at their children to keep them in line and following the directions of the nuns.

\textsuperscript{183} Pente, \textit{How I Remember Little Italy}, 12.

\textsuperscript{184} Ursula, interview, 6.

\textsuperscript{185} Larry J. Marino, interview by Holly Gordon, Baltimore, MD, July 14, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Little Italy, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 12.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 8-9.
Final Thoughts on Italians and the Catholic Church

The Catholic schools within the various Italian communities also played a significant role in the process of Americanizing Italian immigrants in Baltimore. In many immigrant families, it was through the children that it was possible for a family to enter into or participate in the mainstream of American society. It was the children who most often were able to speak English and serve as translators for their parents. It was also the children who had an understanding of American society and culture through their courses and experiences at school. The learning process for these students was a gradual one, allowing them to develop and become aware of the American society around them while retaining aspects of their family’s culture. As a result of these experiences the “school was the pulse of the neighborhood” and a place where immigrants became Americans.187 The Catholic schools, whether it was St. Leo’s or one of the others, provided for these immigrant youths a lens through which American society could be viewed and understood. The school motto at Our Lady of Pompeii School, a co-ed school for kindergarten through eighth grade, stated that the school’s “purpose is to develop intelligence, spiritual vigor, and moral health of the students and to prepare them for their future life vocationally, socially, and culturally.”188 The Catholic schools also saw their mission “to educate and prepare young men and women

187 Ursula, interview, 28.
to be active Catholics in both the life of the Church and the Republic.” Such mottos demonstrate that their focus was not only on the Catholic education, but the greater education of these young immigrants, an education that was focused on preparing immigrant youths for life in America.

Each of these Catholic Churches served to empower the Italian community in order to enter them into the mainstream of American life in a way that allowed them to integrate their Italian heritage into mainstream America. They were offered the opportunity to enter into organizations and groups that mimicked the American governmental system that at the same time were based in traditional Italian culture such as the St. Gabriel Society and the Cadet Corps. These organizations served to acclimate not only those participating in the groups, but also those with whom the group members interacted at festivals and during mass. Athletics, card games, and other social activities sponsored by the Catholic Churches also provided an opportunity for ideas and understandings of America to be passed along in a relaxed environment. All of these opportunities were provided through national parishes within ethnic enclaves, parishes that were established by the Catholic hierarchy of Baltimore for the express purpose of Americanizing immigrants. If it were not for these national parishes, these immigrants would not have entered the mainstream American society as quickly or as easily.

CHAPTER 3

POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN BALTIMORE

With afflicted heart and tears in his eye our emigrant left his native land, left everything he had learned to love in his youth, his thatched cottage and those dearest to him, his father and mother, his whole family, because inimical forces have fettered his whole people in bondage, seized his land and his means of support, deprived him of bread, and dispossessed him of rights, freedom, and happiness. He went into unknown places, to a foreign land, to which Polish heroes and exiles had shown the way. He followed in their steps, seeking bread. The merciful swaying waves of the enormous Ocean brought the Polish emigrant by good fortune to a country of love and brotherhood – and there he settled. Then this son of Poland, with a pure and ardent heart and with love of all that was holy and native, turned his thoughts to establishing a parish which would be a mainstay, where his ideals religious, moral, and ethnic, might shine on for him and his children with unextinguishable ardor.

-Fr. Wachowiak

The first Polish immigrants were glassblowers and skilled workers who arrived in the United States with Captain John Smith in Jamestown, VA. They, like those to follow, would be seeking “personal and religious freedom,” freedoms that would be lost by all Poles between 1772 and 1918. Officially, Poland lost its sovereignty in 1797 and its territory was divided up between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. In addition to having been deprived of their liberty and persecuted for many reasons, they also faced a series of economic crises within Poland which played a secondary role in the decision to

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2 One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 17.

emigrate.\textsuperscript{4} As a result of these circumstances, immigration to the United States began to grow only after the partition of Poland in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and the subsequent uprisings of 1830 and 1863, both of which were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{5} It was under such challenging circumstances that the Poles left their homeland and arrived in the United States.

As a part of the second major influx of immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Polish immigrants were a significant part of the American social landscape. Polish immigration as a topic, however, has received little academic treatment, as Poland was not an independent country, but rather was broken into three parts. This produced a small number of early Polish immigrants who came over with the German migration in the early 1800s. While many of these early Polish immigrants were Jewish, Polish immigrants were predominantly Catholic. These immigrants sought to find work and environments where they could enjoy the freedom that they did not have in their own country. They spread out around the country, seeking employment in the textile and garment industries and manual labor.\textsuperscript{6} East coast cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York all provided accommodating arenas for the earliest immigrants, but they soon began to make their way to the hinterland seeking work in the central and western areas of the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. However, for many of them their eventual goal became the Mid-western

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\item \textsuperscript{4} One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Golab, Immigrant Destinations, 107.
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industrial cities of Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and a number of other smaller cities within the mid-West.\textsuperscript{7}

Once they had arrived in these destinations in the mid-West, it was necessary that these Polish immigrants establish their own ethnic enclaves within the cities. These enclaves were developed so that the Polish immigrant could offer each other assistance in the process of adjusting to American life. “Love of their homeland and respect for her age-old tradition accounted for the formation of little Polish colonies wherever the Poles settled in tightly-knitted groups” throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{8} In Chicago especially, the purpose for the formation of these enclaves was to battle against the cultural struggles they forced as new immigrants.\textsuperscript{9} Such enclaves recreated for them both psychologically and socially a semblance of their lives in Poland while at the same time creating an environment from which they could benefit from the knowledge, skills, and faith of people around them and of the American lifestyle.

Despite the formation of these enclaves, many of the Polish immigrants and immigrant communities did not feel as if they were welcomed into the American Catholic church or into the wider American mainstream. Just as the Italian immigrants before them, the Poles also suffered from the intense scrutiny of the Irish church hierarchy which created a sense of alienation from the Catholic Church. Subsequently,

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\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 110.

\textsuperscript{8} “Zloty Jubileuss Parafii SW. Kamzimierza,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 29.

\textsuperscript{9} Parot, \textit{Polish Catholics in Chicago}, 28.
the Poles, specifically in the Midwest, found grounds to launch the only major Catholic schism to occur in the United States. After having been denied a Polish Bishop by the hierarchy, a group of Mid-Western Poles split off from the Catholic Church and founded a new Polish Independent Catholic Church which they then spread across the United States. While the schismatic church was largely unsuccessful, it did draw a number of Poles away from the Catholic Church, some just briefly, but others for the extent of their life time. In regards to the Poles who stayed, it was the relationships between the Catholic clergy, both Polish and non-Polish, with the working-class, Polish practitioners that exerted strong influence in the lives of the Polish immigrants and Polish ethnics. The Catholic clergy both inside and outside of these national parishes certainly figured significantly into the development of these religious adherents and affected how they perceived both the Roman Catholic Church and the United States.

As a result of such internal fissures within the Catholic Church, it largely became necessary within the Polish enclaves to create national parishes that would cater specifically to the needs of the Polish people, most especially through the use of the Polish language. “In Poland the role of the Roman Catholic Church was pervasive as the church was the major formulator of the culture, the vehicle by which the language

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10 Ibid., 59-95.
11 Ibid.
acquired literary form."\textsuperscript{12} It was clearly a sensible decision by the church policymakers to found national parishes which could serve as the central locations within the Polish enclave. By utilizing these cultural practices from the Polish homeland, the Catholic hierarchy under Cardinal Gibbons, and later under Archbishop Curley, eased the process of immigration by providing the immigrants with “part of their old way of life.”\textsuperscript{13} The creation of these national parishes increased the need for Polish-speaking priests, necessitating the formation of a seminary within the United States to train them. A Polish seminary was therefore established in the city of Detroit in 1884.\textsuperscript{14}

The Catholic Church itself then truly was the center of Polish immigrant life in America. The Church united people with social and sacred bonds and fostered some of their primary sociological needs.\textsuperscript{15} It served as a hotbed for activity within the community and extended its reaches even further, connecting Polish communities throughout the United States. The Polish churches were especially well known for their confraternities which acted in a manner similar to the political governing bodies of the United States and the churches became locations for problem solving and the resolution of social and cultural maladies.\textsuperscript{16} The school system within the Catholic Church also

\textsuperscript{12} “St. Stanislaus Kostka 100 Years,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 147.

\textsuperscript{13} Monzell, “The Catholic Church and the Americanization of the Polish Immigrant,” 8.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 9.
played a crucial role in the process of helping immigrants to adjust. In 1910, there were approximately 330 Catholic schools serving Polish immigrants in the United States, a number which jumped by over 200 by 1933. Unlike the Italian Catholic schools where they occasionally had the opportunity to learn Italian, in the Polish Catholic schools, one-quarter to one-half of the classes in these schools were taught in Polish. Religion, Polish Language, Reading, Grammar, Polish History, and Polish Literature were the subjects taught in Polish while United States history, geography, English grammar and composition, reading, arithmetic, and spelling were the subjects offered in the English language.

Indeed it was a combination of these national parishes along with the Catholic school system that resulted in the Americanization of the Polish immigrants. The national parishes themselves were considered valuable because they were both culture-preserving as well as Americanizing agents. The schools served a similar function offering at the same time an opportunity to continue to learn about one’s heritage while seeking to grow in the American way of life. Indeed, some members of the Polish community argued that the goals of these two coincided:

You want to study the Polish language and the culture of Poland because you want to be a useful citizen of the United States. You are an American citizen.

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17 Ibid., 9-10.
18 Ibid., 11.
19 Ibid., 1.
20 Ibid., 7.
This privilege, from the point of view of the Decalogue, imposes upon you a responsibility… You don’t want to be a parasite; you must, therefore, enrich America’s culture in some way. You have much to give her. Your heritage is rich with a thousand years of Polish culture. You may draw from that treasure plentifully… Is one, I ask, a useful American citizen who has such gigantic treasures, but who does not want to share them with America? How can one who does not know the treasure of Polish culture himself, because he does not care to study them, enrich America with them?21

It was the insight of the Catholic Church that made possible such opportunities for Polish immigrants. Through the conglomeration of the Catholic Church itself, the organizations and activities that it offered, as well as the educational opportunities, it was hoped that the immigrants might find themselves in a setting where they would become desirous to enter the American mainstream.

_The Catholic Church within the Baltimore Polish Ethnic Enclave_

Polish immigrants first began arriving in Baltimore in the early seventeenth century and established an ethnic enclave known as “Little Poland” in 1868, peopled by political exiles who emigrated from Bremen, Germany.22 While many of these early Poles continued on to the Midwest, others chose to stay in Baltimore, helping to establish this enclave.23 This first, cohesive, and identifiable Baltimore Polonia was established by Ignacy Wolinski for whom the process occurred with great urgency after arrival in order to encourage the Polish community to assist each other in the

21 Ibid., 10.


23 Stolarik, _Forgotten Doors_, 72.
establishment of a strong Polish community within the city.\textsuperscript{24} This was very important for these early Polish immigrants, as they faced many challenges upon arrival, not the least of which was their lack of education and their inability to speak the English language.\textsuperscript{25} In order to battle against these issues, it was necessary for these Polish immigrants to enter into ethnic enclaves within the city of Baltimore.

These early Polish immigrants to Baltimore lived in and around the ports, working in the packing houses and attending the nearby German and Bohemian parishes as there was no church where the Polish language was used for Mass.\textsuperscript{26} For the Poles, being a very religious people, not attending Mass was out of the question. Unlike the Italians, Sunday Mass was an extremely significant part of the Polish life. Polish communities were established across the city, in areas such as Fells Point, Canton, and Locust Point which also consisted of Polish and German immigrants.\textsuperscript{27} These Polish enclaves clustered around three primary Polish national parishes in East Baltimore—St. Stanislaus, Holy Rosary, and St. Casimir.\textsuperscript{28} Those who lived near Locust Point would take the ferry to Fells Point every Sunday in order to attend Mass at either Holy Rosary

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\textsuperscript{24}Chokochwost, “Baltimore Polish Pioneers,” 3.
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\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 1 & 14.
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\textsuperscript{27}Josephine R. Borowski, interview by Michael Tiranoff, Baltimore, MD, June 14, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Highlandtown, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 34.
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\textsuperscript{28}Stolarik, \textit{Forgotten Doors}, 72.
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or St. Stanislaus, until parishes in the Locust Point area began providing Polish Masses.\textsuperscript{29} In the Polish community, it was costumary that the entire family would attend Mass together on Sunday.\textsuperscript{30}

Similar to St. Vincent’s for the Italians, the parishes which sprang up around Locust Point—St. Athanasius, in Curtis Bay, and St. Adalbert, in Wagner’s Point—were not national parishes. They did, however have large Polish congregations which led to separate services held in English and Polish with each of these parishes sponsoring a Polish Catholic school.\textsuperscript{31} Both of these churches, while not national parishes, did play an integral role in their respective Polish communities. However, they were not as effective in providing for the needs of their immigrant congregations as the national parishes were for theirs. The discontent felt by some of the Polish faithful resulted in the emergence of the Polish ―Independent Church‖ in the city as a result of the initial movement in Chicago. Established in 1892, the Polish ―Independent Church‖ of Baltimore, known as Holy Cross Polish National Catholic Church, was founded as a result of many Poles being unhappy with their experiences at Holy Rosary, especially with how the pastor Fr. Barabasz was running the parish. When Cardinal Gibbons

\textsuperscript{29} Joseph Louis Podles, interview by Michael Tiranoiff, Baltimore, MD, August 9, 1979, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Highlandtown, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 29.

\textsuperscript{30} Anonymous 019, interview by Linda Shopes, Baltimore, MD, August 17, 1978, transcript, Oral Histories: Baltimore Neighborhood Project, Highlandtown, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore, 56.

\textsuperscript{31} “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
refused to remove him from power, over 200 families left Holy Rosary to form an independent church leaving only about 100 families at Holy Rosary.\textsuperscript{32} While this move was not permanent for many of the Polish families, it does demonstrate that the Polish immigrants were desirous of finding a community that would meet their needs and provide for them a haven within the city of Baltimore.

St. Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic Church

St. Stanislaus Kostka was founded in 1880 by Reverend Fr. Koncz at the behest of the St. Stanislaus Society.\textsuperscript{33} The society itself was formed in 1877 by approximately fifty Polish families for the purpose of fundraising in order to found a Polish church.\textsuperscript{34} The very first church was opened in the room of a house rented with some of the money raised by the St. Stanislaus Society shortly after their formation.\textsuperscript{35} They moved into the first church building under Fr. Koncz and were able to pay it off within the first year through door to door campaigns and collections from every ethnic group in the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{36} The church housed an original population of approximately 400

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{36} “St. Stanislaus 100 Years,” 147.
Catholic families and over 600 Catholic souls. Fr. Koncz helped to bring in these families through his missionary work and proficiency in Polish, Lithuanian, and English as he administered to the indigent and sick. For these parishioners, a school was provided that at its peak accommodated up to 1000 children. The job of running the school was given to the Felician Sisters.

Fr. Rodowicz became the pastor at St. Stanislaus after the death of Fr. Koncz. During his ten year tenure as the pastor of St. Stanislaus, he tore down the old church and replaced it with a new, larger church to meet the needs of the growing community. In 1905, Franciscan Minors Conventuals were placed in charge of the parish by Cardinal Gibbons. The first pastor from the Franciscan Minors Conventual was Fr. Pyznar who built a parish hall, established an immigrant office at Locust Point, created a lower church in the basement of the main church, and an orphanage, all of which became significant institutions of the parish. His successors would continue to enlarge the church and the surrounding grounds, making St. Stanislaus the pillar of the community.

Social Organizations

37 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.
38 “St. Stanislaus Kostka 100 Years,” 147.
39 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.
From the beginning, St. Stanislaus had a very active community. Between 1880 and 1903, the parish established a wide range of confraternities for men, women, and children. Some of these organizations included Children of Mary, Holy Family, Holy Guardian Angels, Holy Infant of Jesus Society, Holy Rosary Women’s Altar Society, Immaculate Conception for children, Sacred Heart of Jesus Society, St. Adalbert Society, St. Agnes Girl’s Society, St. Casimir Society, St. Cecilia, St. Cyril and Methody, St. Francis (Third Order), St. Joseph’s Society, St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Stanislaus Kostka Boy’s Altar Society, and the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society whose purpose was to offer support for the school. Each of these organizations offered something different to the Polish people in terms of benefits or activities, but all of them provided an opportunity for an immigrant to be a part of something that was at the same time both Polish and American. This opportunity was beneficial as it was truly a way for the immigrant to fit into the society around them.

St. Stanislaus Offers Assistance

The Polish Orphanage was founded by Reverend Pyznar, the Pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka. Members from around the community and indeed all across the country were asked to participate in the endeavor as it was asserted that they “should

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44 “St. Stanislaus Confraternities,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

45 “Dziennik Chicagoski, July 12, 1912,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VII Charity/Poverty, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
find support among all compatriots and Catholics.”

Funding such an orphanage was necessary as “daily, dozens of orphans are created due to the imperfect system prevailing in the United States.” An issue such as this within the larger American society had to be addressed as it was both visible and troublesome.

The orphanage started by Rev. Pyznar was only the beginnings of his work to help the Polish community in Baltimore. Starting in the early 1900s, St. Stanislaus sponsored “an immigrant aid station at Locust Point,” an organization established for the express purpose of helping immigrants enter American society. This organization would eventually join forces with the Catholic Society for Care of Emigrants in Baltimore which was established by Cardinal Gibbons to provide assistance to Catholic emigrants arriving in the port of Baltimore. By the year 1913, the Catholic Society for Care of Emigrants in Baltimore served 39 ships, took 372 new arrivals to Emigration House, provided assistance to 483 new arrivals, and served over 892 dinners. In that year, the society paid out $1,468.68 while only bringing in $1,230.01. The need for these types of organizations was quite apparent as they were heavily utilized by the

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 “St. Stanislaus R.C. Church,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XIII Emigration/Immigration, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
49 “Dziennik Chicagoski, February 12, 1913,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XIII Emigration/Immigration, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
50 Ibid.
recent immigrants and provided the church with the first opportunity to demonstrate for them some of the many things America could offer them.

Due to this clear societal need, a new organization, the Immigrants and Sailor’s Protective Association (ISPA) was established in Baltimore. Located at 1635 Cuba Street in Locust Point, it was based on another initiative of Cardinal Gibbons and offered assistance to all immigrant groups, but focused primarily on the newly arrived Poles. As with the Catholic Society for Care of Emigrants, this relief organization was run by the Pastor at St. Stanislaus Kostka and offered many different types of assistance to immigrants who had just arrived in Baltimore including translation and directions to their scheduled destinations, whether that be somewhere within the city of Baltimore or another city such as Chicago or Milwaukee.

While many of these new arrivals preplanned their intended destination and were given passage without any difficulty, an average of 50 people were detained per ship, due to sickness, a lack of a complete address, or violations of landing laws. It was the mission of the ISPA to try to get the detained immigrants out of the “Detention House” which some described as a “Purgatory on Earth.” The specific job of the ISPA agent then was to do the leg work for the detained immigrants to help them get medical clearance, a complete address for their destination, or to help them take care of whatever

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51 “Care for Emigrants in Baltimore,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XIII Emigration/Immigration, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.
difficult situation they might have created for themselves. By many accounts, this task was apparently easier in Baltimore as authorities there were more considerate than those in New York and other port cities. The program itself was maintained through donations from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the parishioners at many of the local national parishes. While these funds were enough to meet the day to day needs of the ISPA, they were not enough to help meet the organizations long-term goals which included the construction of a building for long term immigrant housing and an ability to serve an even larger number of immigrants. Despite making an energetic appeal for support of this initiative and acquiring the backing of Pope Pius X who wrote a “Motu Proprio” on the importance of such programs, the Polish Catholics, and indeed, Catholics in general, could not fully support this mission.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church

While St. Stanislaus was the original Polish national parish in Baltimore, it was the second national parish founded which became the linchpin of the Polish community. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1888 by Rev. Peter Chowaniec for the purpose of taking the strain off of St. Stanislaus due to the rapidly expanding Polish community in Baltimore. As was the case with St.

54 Ibid.

55 “Dziennik Chicagoski, December 5, 1912,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XIII Emigration/Immigration, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

56 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.
Stanislaus, Holy Rosary was established through funds raised by the St. Stanislaus Society, which maintained many of the same members that founded St. Stanislaus. The group, with the support of Fr. Chowaniec, raised enough money between 1886 and 1888 to purchase a Methodist Episcopal church which they renovated in order to produce the national parish of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Fr. Chowaniec celebrated the first Mass on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Thursday, December 8, 1887. The initial population of this new national parish was 300 families. However, the community would grow rapidly to 1300 Catholic families and 7000 individual Catholic souls by the mid-twentieth century. In order to sustain such a community, the parish, within the first year of being founded, established a school and found housing for the Felician Sisters who were going to run the school.

57 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion; “Holy Rosary Parish History,” Office of the Urban Vicar Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.


59 Reverend Piotr (Peter) Chowaniec was born and raised in Poland where he received his minor orders before coming to the United States in 1881 and being ordained in Buffalo, New York in 1882. He served in seven parishes in Wisconsin and six in Minnesota before coming to Baltimore in 1887. “A Concise History of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Baltimore,” 2; One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 14.

60 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.
cemetery had also been founded by 1889. This further expended and developed the property of Holy Rosary strengthening the facility and the enclave around it.

In 1892, Fr. Chowaniec passed away and was replaced as pastor by Fr. Mieczysław Barabasz under whose leadership the church was enlarged due to the continued growth of the Polish immigrant community. “Fr. Barabasz was a generous and industrious man, compassionate and zealous priest, as well as a great patriot, skilled public speaker, and well-known writer equally successful in verse and prose.” Fr. Barabasz, a fluent speaker of Polish, French, Italian, English, Russian, and other Slavic Languages served as Consistory Advisor to Archbishop Gibbons. Fr. Barabasz was therefore active in the community serving as a defender for the poor in courts and choosing to become a United States citizen serving as an example to his congregation and the larger enclave on how to become a participant in mainstream American society.

Fr. Barabasz would travel throughout the city visiting the hospitalized and the poor in alms houses to offer to them hope for a better future within the American society.

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61 One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 15; “St. Casimir: Parish History,” Office of the Urban Vicar Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

62 Mieczysław Barabasz was born in 1863 and attended Lublin Seminary before attending the Gregorian University in Rome. He was ordained a priest in 1886 and came to the United States in 1890, spending his first two years in Detroit before arriving in Baltimore in 1892. “A Concise History of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Baltimore,” 2; “Barabasz, Mieczyslaw,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

63 One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 16.

64 “Barabasz, Mieczyslaw,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.

65 “Letter to Tom” November 4, 1993, Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.
When Fr. Barabsaz died rather unexpectedly, he was succeeded by Fr. Gerbert who served in this capacity for two years before relinquishing control to Reverend Stanislaw Wachowiak.

Under Reverend Stanislaw Wachowiak, who was to serve as pastor at Holy Rosary for 52 years, many changes occurred. The cornerstone for the new church building was laid in 1927 and the new church constructed during the same year had a capacity to hold a massive number of participants making it the largest church in Baltimore at the time. Archbishop Curley, having reviewed the plans, offered his sincerest congratulations to Msgr. Wachowiak on the plans for the new church, rectory, and school as “one of the finest Church plans in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.”

Under Msgr. Wachowiak, Holy Rosary became the largest parish in the entire archdiocese serving more than 2500 families. Archbishop Curley attributed this growth, in part, to the recognition that “The people of Holy Rosary Parish have never failed to give tangible evidence of their devotion to the church of God, of a deep love for their faith

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66 Ibid.


69 Archbishop Curley to Msgr. S.A. Wachowiak, December 14, 1925, W8, Abp. Michael J. Curley Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

70 “St. Casimir: Parish History.”
and a profound respect for their priests.”⁷¹ Indeed, the community formed at Holy Rosary was one of the strongest and most committed in all of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Through his endeavors at Holy Rosary, Msgr. Wachowiak became one of the most influential figures in the Polish enclave. He was born on November 10, 1885 in Baltimore near Holy Rosary Parish as one of ten children. His only brother also entered the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.⁷² As a boy he attended the original Holy Rosary School and served as an altar boy at the former church building where he received his First Holy Communion and Confirmation.⁷³ He went from there to attend Loyola High School before enrolling in St. Mary’s Seminary.⁷⁴ After ordination, he was sent to study at Catholic University of America in Washington D.C., but had to return early in 1924 after the death of Fr. Barabasz. He was appointed Curate to Holy Rosary and Papal Chamberlain with the title Very Reverend.⁷⁵ He spent only two years as the vicar at Holy Rosary under Fr. Gerbert after ordination before being named pastor and

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⁷² Stanislaus A. Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 1955, Parish Histories, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD, 10.

⁷³ Ibid, 10; “Dziennik Chicagoski, October 3, 1924,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

⁷⁴ Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 10.

administrator of Holy Rosary at the age of thirty-one.\textsuperscript{76} In 1925, he was appointed Consultor to His Excellency Most Reverend Archbishop Curley, the beginnings of what would be a long and positive relationship.\textsuperscript{77} At the age of thirty-nine, he was invested as the youngest and first Polish prelate in America and given the title Right Reverend Monsignor.\textsuperscript{78} During Rev. Wachowiak’s investiture as a monsignor, Archbishop Curley called for Poles to remember their history and tradition.\textsuperscript{79} This indeed was the ministry of Fr. Wachowiak, the “devout Priest before the Altar of God and a competent advocate of our ‘Polonia.’”\textsuperscript{80} In 1959, he once again was elevated in status to Prothonotary Apostolic.\textsuperscript{81} Through his work in the city of Baltimore he fostered the enrichment of Polish culture not only in Baltimore, but throughout the United States such was the significance of the pastor.\textsuperscript{82}

Education at Holy Rosary

The first school established at Holy Rosary was in 1887 and had fifty kids enrolled. Under Fr. Barabasz, the school was enlarged in order to accommodate nearly

\textsuperscript{76} “Dziennik Chicagoski, October 3, 1924”; Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 12.

\textsuperscript{77} Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 14.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} “Dziennik Chicagoski, October 3, 1924.”

\textsuperscript{80} Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 10.

\textsuperscript{81} “St. Casimir: Parish History.”

\textsuperscript{82} Wachowiak, “Forty Years Priesthood, Thirty Years Monsignorhood,” 18.
900 students due to the influx of children into the enclave. In 1922, Fr. Wachowiak built a four story school that could hold up to 1700 students, with twenty-two classrooms for eight grades. Fr. Wachowiak placed a great emphasis on the school system because it “trains future members of the Church and Society.” Indeed, the job of the school system was to teach good principles and behaviors to all youths, so that they would become exemplary Catholics and American citizens.

From its inception, the school was expected to be large, serving nearly 1200 pupils at Holy Rosary Catholic School with 40 to 50 kids per class. Despite the fact that it was a Polish school, the classes were, in most years, taught primarily in English, although some work was done in Polish. Archbishop Curley articulated the reasons for this practice saying “the medium of teaching in all the ordinary subjects must be the English language.” However, “the Polish language or any language may be taught in the school.” It was indeed the case that the students were taught all of the subjects that existed in the public school system plus a number of Polish subjects, including Polish

84 Ibid., 7.
85 Ibid., 6.
86 Joseph Louis Podles, interview, 64.
87 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.
88 Archbishop Curley to Rev. S.A. Wachowiak, September 22, 1923, W4A, Abp. Michael J. Curley Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.
history and Polish language classes. Religion class was also a part of this curriculum and could “be taught in the Polish tongue or any other language” if that is what the parents desire. While this was perfectly acceptable in the eyes of Archbishop Curley, he did suggest that it may not always be the best things for the Poles. “Whilst our Polish people study their catechism and prayers in the Polish language, it would be an excellent thing if at the same time, they would be able to defend that religion in the language of the country.” Knowledge of their religion in English then would be quite useful in defense of the Faith as they would most often be participating in religious debates with English speakers.

When objections against our Faith are made to our Polish children, or young boys and girls, they are made by American free thinkers and enemies of the Faith in the language of the country. Some might think that when we study our religion in another language, we might not be able to defend it well in the English tongue. However, I have no worry along this line.

Subsequently, in many of the Polish schools in Baltimore, like Holy Rosary, religion was often taught in English in order to pass along the significant information necessary to survive in mainstream society in Baltimore.

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92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.
The central figures within the Polish Catholic Schools were the nuns who ran the day-to-day business of the school and taught all of the classes. One Holy Rosary graduate recalled that “the sisters were very, very strict with us you know, and any kid that would get caught talking they make you put your hand out and they’d take a ruler out and slap your hand a few times and man, you didn’t forget it.”

Joseph Podles used to like to play hooky on Fridays hoping the sisters would not remember come Monday, but they always remembered and would grab him by the ear when he returned. The nuns “wouldn’t take no hanky-panky.” If you got out of line “they would whip you a little bit.” The strict nature of the school was important in maintaining an atmosphere of Polish-American learning.

Social Organizations

There was also a wide array of social activities available for the youth of the parish. The Catholic Youth Organization, more commonly known as CYO, provided opportunities for males and females to participate in athletics throughout the mid-twentieth century. Sports such as soccer and basketball were extremely popular within the community and the teams provided a chance for youth to travel around the city for their games with many of the basketball games being played at St. Leo’s Gym. CYO

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94 Joseph Louis Podles, interview, 64.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 26.
97 Ibid.
also provided opportunities for dances, films, and dart tournaments amongst other activities that they sponsored. The Holy Rosary Social Club magazine for youth, the *Rosarian*, also offered the young Polish Catholics a great source of English reading materials which included stories, sporting info from around the Baltimore youth leagues and CYO, riddles, opinion articles, and many more exciting reads which helped to encourage both the reading of the English language as well as developing an understanding of American culture. The social club also served as a way to increase youth pride in their community. One opinion article in an issue of the *Rosarian* opined on the size of the club membership stating that Sacred Heart’s Social Club was better due to the greater number of participants for all activities there and that Holy Rosary’s club could be better if more people would simply participate. These sorts of clubs provided the younger members of the enclave with a group in which they could belong and opportunities to not only intermingle with other Polish immigrant children, but also with different youth throughout the city of Baltimore.

There were many other organizations sponsored by Holy Rosary that offered opportunities for growth within the Polish community. Organizations such as Holy Trinity Society, St. Dominic Society, St. Adalbert Society, St. Martin’s Cadets, Knights

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98 “Pamphlet of CYO Events,” February 1949, Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

99 *Rosarian*, Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

100 Ibid.
of St, Adalberts, Pulaski Brigade, Society of St. Stanislaus Kostka also known as the Polish Roman Catholic Alliance, St. Casimir’s Society, St. Hedwig Society, Children of our Lady of Czestochowa, Heart of Mary Society, Altar Society, Girl’s Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, and Rosary Society gave members of the parish a place within the church and offered them a role which they could claim as theirs. The Society of the Ulans of St. Marcin also played an active role in the society around them, offering activities for a wide array of different participants such as a circus they presented at the Labor Lyceum Hall on East Baltimore Street as a fundraiser. The church also sponsored arts and cultural organizations including a Drama Club, which in part fulfilled the cultural need of the Polish for theater, and three choirs, the Maiden’s Chorus, St. Cecilia’s Choir, and the Children’s Choir. The primary purpose of these choirs was “to evoke a religious or patriotic atmosphere.” Indeed, “nothing is quite as effective as a hymn or a song” in bringing people together in a way that stimulates their culture and offers them an opportunity to connect their polish heritage with their new found American culture.


102 “Dziennik Chicagoski, February 4, 1907,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VII Charity/Poverty, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.


104 Ibid.
Celebration of Holy Days

As has been the case with most Catholic cultural traditions, Christmas and Easter were two of the most important holy days with both Advent and Lent serving as important seasons for the Poles. One Polish immigrant to Baltimore recalls a very strong family presence during these two holy seasons. Christmas was a time for big family dinners, complete with roasted chicken and a raisin bread served at holiday meals known as babka. Polish relatives would also send to each other “holy waffles” at Christmas and Easter—a very common polish tradition. To begin the season of Lent they celebrated Punchkie Sunday, a celebration in preparation for Shrove Tuesday. Once again, raisin dough would be made, although this time it was fried. On the Saturday before, they would have dances at the church in preparation for the upcoming season of Lent when the faithful were to abstain from such pleasures. At the end of Lent, Easter provided an opportunity once again for a family celebration. The biggest meal was eaten on Holy Saturday as Easter Sunday was a day of religious celebration. The meal on Holy Saturday, like every holiday meal, included the babka and sauerkraut with sausage. The following morning, there was a procession around the church, and a

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105 Anonymous 019, interview, 26.

106 Ibid., 27.

107 Ibid., 29-30.

108 Ibid., 27.

109 Ibid.
group similar to the Knights of Columbus, most likely the Knights of St. Adalbert’s, would lead the procession around the Church.\footnote{Ibid., 57.}

At the conclusion of both the Easter and Christmas season every year, the priest would go around and bless the houses of those who requested such a service.\footnote{Ibid., 57-59.} Additionally, there were a few saint days which were of significance to the Poles, though, they were of far less consequence than in the Italian community. Maryland Day or the feast of Mary was celebrated on March 25 while St. Joseph’s Day was celebrated the week before on March 19. Both of these days were celebrated primarily by attendance at Mass.\footnote{Ibid., 30-31.}

Holy Rosary Offers Assistance

Like St. Stanislaus, Holy Rosary played a very active role in the community around them. In addition to the church sponsored organizations listed earlier, there were also a number of benefit societies that existed at Holy Rosary. St. Adalbert Beneficial Society, Holy Trinity Beneficial Society, The Knight of St. Ladislaus Beneficial Society, St. Dominic Beneficial Society also known as St. Dominic’s Brotherhood, Holy Rosary Female Beneficial Society, Holy Rosary Sacred Heart of Mary Beneficial Society, and Blessed Sacrament Female Beneficial Society all played significant roles in the Polish
enclave offering assistance to those members in need. 113  The Knights of St. Ladislaus Beneficial Society was an organization that had existed within the city for about forty years, and like its counterparts derived funds through dues, contributions, member fines, assessments, and through general donations.114  One of the other beneficial societies, the St. Dominic’s Brotherhood, served as a religious, social, and moral benevolent and beneficial society which paid sickness and death benefits to its members through funds that were raised through dues, fines, and assessments.115  Each of these organizations offered their members an opportunity to receive benefits in challenging times so that they would not be caught unable to care for their family.

The Charity Organization Society of Baltimore, in their 1906 Annual Report, called for members of the organization and community to seek out the “more intelligent Poles” in the community in order to develop and strengthen the Polish societies.116  In part as a response to such admonition, the Polish Relief Society was established at Holy Rosary Catholic Church under the direction of Rev. Gebert in 1909.117  The purpose of

113 “Directory of the Charitable and Beneficient Organizations of Baltimore together with Legal Suggestions, Etc.,” Charity Organization Society, 1901, Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VII Charity/Poverty, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

114 “The Knights of St. Ladislaus,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

115 “St. Dominic’s Brotherhood,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

this society was “to assist children of the parish parochial school in need of books, clothing, and other requisites.” The organization would add other parish and Polish needs to their repertoire, meeting the needs of their community. Such opportunities were made possible through the support provided by the annual membership dues.

When Fr. Wachowiak arrived as pastor of Holy Rosary, he recognized many of the needs of the Polish people both in the United States and abroad. Having grown up in the area around Holy Rosary, he understood how committed his parishioners were to such endeavors and he continued many of the programs which predated him. After World War I, he helped to organize “Help” an operation which sought to assist the people of Poland procure their freedom sending manpower, food, clothing, and cash to Poland, all of which came from the parishioners of Holy Rosary. It was not simply abroad that these needs existed, but also within the city of Baltimore. At the behest of Archbishop Curley, Fr. Wachowiak met with the pastors at St. Stanislaus and St. Casimir to discuss the development of a Polish Relief Society to address the needs of the impoverished Poles in the “Polish Colony of Baltimore” as not enough was being done

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117 “Excerpt from Directory of Social Work,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VII Charity/Poverty, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 17.
During the Great Depression in the United States, Holy Rosary sponsored a Charitable Society that, while unable to reach all of those in need, was able to provide hot meals and food for the poor amongst them along with clothing, money, and fuel.  

He further buoyed this community-wide support with assistance from the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, who came from Poland in the 1930s. These Polish nuns cared for pre-school aged children and the elderly through the Day Nursery and St. Joseph’s Nursing Home both of which were founded with the support of Holy Rosary. The community-wide support by the parishioners at Holy Rosary for their Polish brethren was instrumental in the process of providing an opportunity for immigrants to enter the mainstream.

St. Casimir’s Roman Catholic Church

St. Casimir’s Roman Catholic Church was founded in the early 1900s for Polish Catholics living in the Canton and Highlandtown neighborhoods of Baltimore. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this area around the church was “bustling” as it was the home to Irish, Polish, and many other immigrant groups that made the Canton area

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121 Archbishop Curley to Rev. S.A. Wachowiak, April 7, 1924, W5, Abp. Michael J. Curley Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.


123 One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 17.
their home. The purpose for the creation of a third national Polish parish in Baltimore was to provide a closer Polish national parish for residents of Canton and Highlandtown than St. Stanislaus. “In fact, both of these centers, civic and religious, needed each other and depended on each other for economic and spiritual expansion.” The church was dedicated by Archbishop Gibbons in November of 1902, but would run as an extension of St. Stanislaus until 1904. In this capacity, St. Casimir’s would be known as the “Daughter of St. Stanislaus.” The parish was founded and peopled by many families who had been attending either of the other two national parishes or one of the territorial parishes within their community. The first pastor to lead St. Casimir’s was Fr. Morys. A couple of years after having become a national parish of their own, the church was placed under the control of the Franciscans in 1906 and by 1908 the parish

124 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion; “St. Casimir: Parish History.”


127 Przemielewski, “SREBRNY JUBILEUSZ PARAFII Sw. KAZIMIERZA,” 1; “St. Casimir: Parish History.”

128 “St. Casimir: Parish History.”

129 “Poles in Baltimore, MD,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series XXXII Religion.

130 Przemielewski, “SREBRNY JUBILEUSZ PARAFII Sw. KAZIMIERZA,” 1.
supported 280 families who were members of the church.\textsuperscript{131} The original parish building had the school on the first floor and the church on the second floor.\textsuperscript{132}

Fr. Jozafat Bok was appointed as pastor in 1907 and served in such a capacity for 13 years during which time he paid off the $35,000 debt on the church, purchased a house to serve as the rectory along with three other houses which would eventually become the school, and left his successor $50,000 in cash.\textsuperscript{133} By 1921, there were 900 Catholic families, 5000 individual Catholic souls, and 933 Catholic students enrolled in the school.\textsuperscript{134} Clearly, a new church was necessary to keep up with the continual growth of the parish community. Such a church was constructed and the first Mass in the new church building being celebrated at the Christmas Midnight Mass in 1926. Four months later in April of 1927 the church was officially consecrated.\textsuperscript{135} The Franciscans would continue to run the parish with a great deal of zeal and success, expanding both the physical facility and the church community through the remainder of the century.

Social Organizations

As was the case with the other Polish national parishes, St. Casimir’s was also a very active parish, providing for its parishioners a wide range of activities. One of the primary fundraisers to benefit both the parish and the school was the bingo games

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{132} “St. Casimir: Parish History.”

\textsuperscript{133} Przemielewski, “SREBRNY JUBILEUSZ PARAFII Sw. KAZIMIERZ,” 4.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 8-9.
offered on a weekly basis which were truly social affairs.\footnote{Borowski, interview, 30.} But the activities within the community extended well beyond these sorts of fundraisers to a wide array of confraternities which provided the immigrants access into not only the church community, but the larger community around them. Organizations such as the Precious Blood Society, Cadets of St. Casimir, Children of Blessed Virgin Mary, Holy Family Society, Holy Rosary Society, Knights of St. Michael, Sacred Heart of Jesus Society, St. Cecilia Choir Society, St. Cecylia Society, and Young Ladies of St. Cecilia Society all fostered a feeling of involvement and commitment within the community.\footnote{“St. Casimir’s Confraternities,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VIII Clubs, Fraternals, and Organizations, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.} The St. Hyacinth Society, another group sponsored by the parish, provided benefits in sickness and death for its members through funds raised through membership fees, fines, dues, contributions, and assessments.\footnote{“St. Hyacinth Society,” Archives of Maryland Polonia, Series VII Charity/Poverty, Special Collections Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.} Membership in all of these organizations fostered a feeling of commitment to the community and provided them with an active role to play in the parish life and the life of the enclave.

Education at St. Casimir

The school at St. Casimir’s was established in 1903 for the purpose of providing the youth of the parish with a learning environment that blended both their Polish
heritage and the American curriculum. The original school at St. Casimir’s was located in the same building as the church and only went up to the 5th grade. The school was first entrusted to the Felician Sisters and would later be passed along to the Franciscan sisters. By 1908, there were 280 students enrolled at St. Casimir’s—130 boys and 150 girls. By 1913, as the school continued to grow, they sought to build a new school, but this effort did not come to fruition. In 1921, there were 744 children in the school. Borowski recalls attending the old school at St. Casimir’s Church through 4th grade with the church upstairs and the school downstairs. Eventually, the building was that housed both the school and the church became too small for the community, thus a new school had to be built. This new school was designed by Fr. Benidict to be retrofit into a factory that made pajamas. The original school was then replaced by the new church while the old church became the church hall.

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139 Przemielewski, “SREBRNY JUBILEUSZ PARAFII Sw. KAZIMIERZA,” 1.
140 Borowski, interview, 29.
141 “St. Casimir: Parish History”; “Poles in Baltimore, MD.”
142 Przemielewski, “SREBRNY JUBILEUSZ PARAFII Sw. KAZIMIERZA,” 2.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid., 5.
145 Borowski, interview, 29.
146 Ibid., 28.
147 Anonymous 019, interview, 49; Borowski, interview, 29.
of the community at St. Casimir’s bears witness to the success of the national parishes in Baltimore for the Poles.

As was the case at Holy Rosary, they learned both Polish and English at St. Casimir’s. In the first grade, children learned the Polish vowels.148 One student recalled, “in Polish school we only had two American books and the rest was Polish books.”149 Despite this, she learned her English in school well enough to be a translator at Isaac’s, a sewing company where she worked after she left school.150 Another Polish student recalled that math would be taught in English although they would have reading class in Polish.151 Another similarity to Holy Rosary was the strict discipline. The nuns were tough as men recounted stories about being hit on the knuckles as youths in school. Another punishment enforced by the nuns was to have students kneel on peas for an extended period of time.152 The nuns were also the primary teachers and administrators within the school were one of the most significant Americanizing agents in the school.153

148 Anonymous 019, interview, 52.
149 Borowski, interview, 39.
150 Ibid., 39.
151 Anonymous, interview, 53.
152 Ibid., 51.
153 Borowski, interview, 30.
Final Thoughts on Poles and the Catholic Church in Baltimore

Each of the three Polish national parishes, St. Stanislaus Kostka, Holy Rosary, and St. Casimir all played an instrumental role in helping to lead the members of Maryland’s Polonia into full and active membership in American mainstream society. The church facilities and the priests in charge of them offered an opportunity for the blending of old world traditions into the new world environment. They provided a gradual transition through Polish language Mass and religious education and catechism so as to maintain something that was familiar in what was truly an unfamiliar world. But it went beyond simple linguistic familiarity. They inserted the traditional celebrations and practices into the everyday mainstream of the American life to which they had chosen to adapt. Integration of such cultural habits and experiences such as holiday meals and the importance of Sunday Mass, demonstrated to the immigrant that they were indeed in a new land with their different traditions. The ability to recognize and accept the situations these immigrants found themselves in and their process of adjusting to the mainstream American lifestyle, can in many ways be attributed to the clergy. Individuals who meant so much to their parishioners, such as Msgr. Wachowiak, Fr. Barabasz, and Fr. Bok were the leaders of their flock and offered guidance and direction to help their immigrant and ethnic brethren to find a spiritual anchor and to achieve social and secular success within the United States.

It was also through such individuals that programs and organizations were created so that these immigrants would have the necessary opportunity to experience the
American lifestyle in an environment that would be accepting of their language and social mistakes. This became the role of the various religious organizations in the church, to orient these practitioners in the ways of the American Catholicism and America itself. The organizations were able to achieve such missions as the members accounted for the varying experiences that Polish immigrants had in America, some being brand new, and others being seasoned veterans, having gone through Catholic education and achieved some level of integration into American society. Groups such as the CYO provided youths with a place to fit in and a group with which to experience American culture. Other groups such as the ISPA, led by parish priests, brought together Polish immigrants and ethnics for a shared cause of helping the new immigrants find their place in Baltimore and the culture around them.

Finally, the schools that existed at each of these three parishes were massive arms of the church, at their peak accounting for a combined student body of nearly four thousand students at any given time. Once again, they provided an opportunity to look backwards at where these young immigrants and ethnics had been and look ahead at what it meant to be a part of this new environment. Indeed, it was with these students in their schools that the groundwork was laid for the concept of Polish-Americans which so proudly exist within American culture today. Through a solid curriculum taught in both Polish and English, and a firm grounding in discipline many of the Polish immigrants were able to develop a balance between Polish and American lifestyles. These accomplishments came about through the hard work and education provided by the nuns
who daily implored their students to succeed and who worked tirelessly for their successful ascent to adulthood. These young Poles found themselves connected to a strong community within their specific enclave in Baltimore, enclaves that in most cases still exist in some capacity within the city even to this day.
Chapter 4

Baltimore’s National Parishes: An Americanizing Institution

Immigrants arriving to the United States between 1850 and 1950 discovered that the process of entering into mainstream society was not easy. This was especially true for Catholic immigrants. Due to the anti-Catholic bias that shaped the Nativism (anti-foreign sentiments) prevalent in the United States, Catholic immigrants were often subjected to a more difficult process for becoming acclimated to their new home than was experienced by Protestant immigrants. Even in a state such as Maryland that was steeped in the Catholic tradition from its inception, Catholic immigrants faced a Nativism that was pervasive throughout American society. Subsequently, the approach typically taken by Protestant immigrants for entering the mainstream was not available to Catholic immigrants, necessitating that a new approach be developed for Catholic immigrants in order for them to find their way into mainstream society. But this process was not rapid. Rather it was a deliberate and gradual approach that allowed the immigrant to incorporate themselves in an orderly manner into the American mainstream society.

Americanization was possible only after immigrants had lived in the United States for an extended period of time; during this phase, the individuals resided within an ethnic enclave. At this point, immigrants came to integrate the collective memories of the society into their own consciousness. As this process proceeds, it became possible for their experiences to influence those around them, creating a new collective memory within the ethnic enclave. It is the development of this collective memory that
helped to transform someone from an immigrant to an ethnic and ultimately an American. For example, an Italian immigrant became an Italian ethnic on his or her way to becoming an Italian American. The final phase of this Americanization process occurred when they branched out from their ethnic enclaves and physically crossed the threshold into mainstream American society. Clearly then, the process for becoming American was initiated in both the Polish and Italian enclaves in Baltimore and came to fruition for these groups after the enclaves became largely obsolete as the second, third, and fourth generations moved out of the enclaves into mainstream America. This was a process that was shared by all individuals as they embraced the collective memories of their forefathers incorporation onto the American soil.

At the center of this collective memory stood the Catholic Church for those ethnic groups that were Catholic. Whether they were the early Catholic immigrants from Ireland or Germany or those who would come later such as the Italians, Poles, Bohemians, or Lithuanians, they all shared the Catholic Church as the central Americanizing organization. While the exact process varied from city to city, and from diocese to archdiocese, it fell to the Catholic Church to offer assistance to the immigrants. In some cases, for example, the Irish Americanization process happened relatively quickly, while in others it was a more gradual process. Either way, the Catholic Church provided an opportunity for Catholic immigrants to find their path into American mainstream life.

It was the gradual process of Americanization that allowed immigrants to keep both their traditional culture intact and to open themselves to absorbing many aspects of
the mainstream lifestyle into their own. The city of Baltimore served as one of the primary places where this process occurred. This opportunity was possible in Baltimore, because of the development of distinct ethnic enclaves and a Catholic hierarchy that embraced these immigrants as important members of their church. Facing enormous diversity among their Catholic immigrant parishioners, the Church leadership, beginning with Archbishop Eccelston and more significantly under Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Curley, developed a policy for the creation of national parishes that served the faithful on the basis of language groups and ethnicity. Within these national parishes, the clergy who served the parish spoke the language of the people and utilized this language during Mass for the homily and announcements. It also proved to be crucial that the priests who served in these parishes were multilingual as they were called upon to assist in the growth of the community outside of the church setting by visiting the homes of their parishioners and meeting with school aged children in order to help them adjust to the culture of their new country.

The language of the people utilized within the parish is just one form of evidence supporting the significance of the Catholic Church and its clergy in assisting immigrants to enter the American mainstream. The clergy in Baltimore, from the top down, led the charge to Americanize Catholic immigrants. While the national parishes were instituted by the church hierarchy, the pastors and associate priests within each parish launched a number of programs. Organizations and confraternities such as the Mother’s Club for the Italians and the CYO for the Poles, paved a way for immigrant groups, new and old, to come together and meet, offering significant opportunities to share valuable
information. The pastors in Baltimore also supported the traditional festivals and celebrations that were central to their traditional cultures, perpetuating these practices here in America. For the Italians, it was the Marian Procession and spaghetti dinners while for the Poles it was their celebrations of Christmas and Easter which involved a number of their traditional practices including house visits by priests. Such activities offered these immigrants and ethnics, within the enclave, an opportunity to retain their culture in the process of mainstreaming, while their practices became part of the collective experience across American churches. Fundraising and shared experiences, served to further strengthen the community by bringing together immigrants and ethnics at different levels of the Americanization process as active participants working for a common cause. These created a community that was even more open then to finding a way to Americanize. They also found methods of taking care of their own—the new immigrant, the poor, the sick, and the dying—by creating beneficial societies and immigration organizations whose job it was to provide aid for the less fortunate members of society. These were opportunities and benefits that Catholic immigrants may not have received if it were not for the support of these Catholic Church founded institutions run by the clergy. Finally, the school systems sponsored by the national parishes and the nuns who taught in the schools provided for immigrant youth an environment in which they could learn from their teachers and classmates, not only about their own culture, but of American culture, as the parish schools sought to create strong Catholic and American citizens.
The success of this approach and the array of programs is being borne out by the continued significance of the national parishes to the people from the ethnic enclaves even today. The commonality of the Italian experience in Little Italy along with the centrality of St. Leo’s for the Italian community today, offers evidence of the significance of the Catholic Church for Italian immigrants in Baltimore. For the Poles, the national parishes of Holy Rosary and St. Stanislaus also demonstrate the significance of the Catholic Church for immigrants, albeit in very different ways, the former continuing to serve the Polish community, while the latter has a group of Polish descendants fighting to save the building as a historical landmark.

The commonality in the experiences of Italian immigrants in Little Italy serves to exemplify the significant role of the Catholic Church. As expressed in the parish histories of the Italian national parishes and from oral histories of those who lived in the enclave, the Catholic Church was a central unifying figure. As noted earlier, the Great Fire served as a primary unifying event for the Italian enclave who rallied around the Church. The stories told by members of the enclave, while different as a result of their personal perspective, all mentioned the significance it played for the community. Members from throughout Little Italy came together in prayer and defense of their enclave. This one singular event was responsible for the establishment of new societies within the parish as well as new holy days to be celebrated by the entire Italian enclave.1

1 DiCicco, interview, 6; Esposito, interview, 6; The Church of St. Leo the Great, 1881-1981, 13-14.

2 Ibid.
The centrality of St. Leo’s Catholic Church to immigrants today, also serves to demonstrate the significance of the Catholic Church for the Italians. The church continues to operate a wide array of different confraternities and programs ranging from the Knights of Columbus to Hands and Hearts, a community outreach program, to the Pandola Adult Learning Center, which provides classes in both Italian and Spanish. The church also continues to run the St. Anthony Society to which they have been dedicated since 1904.\(^3\) The church continues to sponsor Spaghetti and Ravioli dinners for the community which brings Italians back into Little Italy in order to support their familial church.\(^4\) Indeed, the primary support for St. Leo’s comes from those who used to live in Little Italy but have moved outside of the city while still remaining a part of the parish.

Holy Rosary remains equally central to the Polish community today. As expressed in the Diamond Jubilee celebratory program, “This jubilee gives credit to the vitality and organizational skill of people who were able to develop national parishes at the time when they were most urgently needed and which magnificently fulfilled their purpose.”\(^5\) Indeed, the parish fulfilled the needs of the people throughout the twentieth century, a policy they continue even today. The parish continues to sponsor Polish language Mass three days a week plus once on Sunday and even has the option for their

\(^3\) “Parish Ministries,” The Church of St. Leo the Great, http://www.stleothegreatrcc.org/ Pages_htm/ Parish_ministries.htm [accessed 10/22/10].

\(^4\) “Calendar of Parish Events,” The Church of St. Leo the Great, http://www.stleothegreatrcc.org/ Pages_htm/Parish_Calendar.htm [accessed 10/25/10].

\(^5\) One Hundred Years of Faith and Love, 14.
website to be viewed in Polish. At the center of this parish’s importance remains the pastor, who provides tireless work and service to the church in the same way that Msgr. Wachowiak did as the leader of the community for over fifty years. It is in such a capacity that so many programs are offered still today for the benefit of those of Polish heritage.

The closing of St. Stanislaus parish and the resulting outcry from the community demonstrate in a very different way the significance of the Catholic Church for the people. While the community of parishioners was continually growing smaller, the parish remained of great significance to the community. When the church was closed in 2000, the community suffered a great loss. People came out in droves in attempts to save the parish, but while they could not prevent the sale of the parish, they were able to get the church onto the historic preservation list, an important step in the process of preserving this cherished historical and cultural building.

One resident of the neighborhood pined that St. Stanislaus was an important “part of our neighborhood. That’s the original Polish Catholic church in Baltimore.” As of October, 2010, St. Stanislaus was for sale by the developer who recently bought it from the Franciscan

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7 Ibid.


9 Laing, “Holy Mess.”
Friars, with plans to develop the interior as either apartment or office space, though the exterior could not be altered.¹⁰

These stalwarts of the Baltimore immigrant Catholic Church fostered a desire in the immigrants to join American society. They provided examples of the expectations that American society had for immigrants by showing them how to act and interact with others. It is as a result of this important role that the Catholic churches and communities remain at the forefront of the immigrant’s or ethnic’s heart as the helped to provide a better life for these individuals and their families. It is indeed this specific memory which seems to stand out as being so significant for the Catholic immigrant in Baltimore. It is for that reason that individuals of Italian descent continue to return to Little Italy and St. Leo’s to celebrate the major feasts and participate in fundraisers. It is the reason why Holy Rosary remains a flourishing community for Poles despite the continual decline in Polish speaking people in Baltimore. And it is for that reason that members of the community of St. Stanislaus Kostka have fought and continue to fight for the parish that meant so much to them and their families. Indeed, it is because of the success of these immigrants in assimilating into American society that recognition can be paid to these institutions for their role in helping hundreds of thousands of immigrants to enter into mainstream Baltimore life.

For immigrants to America even today, these approaches are useful in helping in the process of entering mainstream society. In a United States culture that seeks instant gratification, this gradual process of mainstreaming immigrants is not generally appreciated in American society. Too often, American citizens expect immigrants to give up their language and their culture immediately upon arrival, a process that many often support by saying “well my immigrant relatives did.” Often times their personal experience has been a friend or a relative who was a second or third generation immigrant although there are some exceptions. In general, this Americanization did not happen according to historical records. As demonstrated throughout this paper, a more gradual process, seeking to incorporate the ethnic culture into American culture was utilized in an effort to provide a comfortable transition for the immigrant. Based even from the perspective of those who believe in a fast mainstreaming process, the programs executed by the Catholic Church proved to be successful at mainstreaming Catholic immigrants in Baltimore as today many of these immigrants and their descendants are mainstream Americans who speak English, have moved out of their enclaves, participate fully in American society with their traditions and practices, and have penetrated the American collective memory with some of their shared experiences of finding success for themselves and their families in the United States.

This method of creating national parishes for the purpose of helping immigrants to enter the mainstream of American life could be quite useful for European, Asian, and Latino Catholic immigrants in the United States even today. The implications today of such historical practices provide hope for a smoother incorporation for Catholic
immigrants, of varying backgrounds, into American society today. The city of Baltimore has been the home to over 20 national parishes some of which continue to function to this day for European and Asian immigrant and ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{11} These parishes, like the national parishes of the early twentieth century, focus on the language aspect centrally while at the same time addressing the cultural issues within the parishes as well.

However, Baltimore also serves as a prime example where these national parishes are not being utilized for some immigrant groups. There are not, nor have there been, national parishes set aside for Spanish speaking immigrants who call Baltimore their home. The Catholic Hispanic and Latino populations of Baltimore have received bilingual churches, but there are no official national parishes in Baltimore.\textsuperscript{12} Subsequently, it also means that there are no schools specifically designed for Spanish speaking students. However, similar to the bilingual churches, for the first time the Archdiocese of Baltimore will be sponsoring an English-Spanish immersion program at Archbishop Borders School located in Highlandtown in 2010.\textsuperscript{13} The program "will be a side-by-side program, a real 50-50 blend" as the school has "been gradually implementing English as a Second Language and reading strategies into the curriculum"

\textsuperscript{11} "Archdiocese of Baltimore’s National Parishes," Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD, http://www.stmarys.edu/archives/natl_parishes.pdf [accessed 8/10/10].


over the past few years. While both of these bilingual options are certainly beneficial and positive steps forward for the Hispanic and Latino communities in Baltimore, they do not go as far as to provide a complete safe haven for gradual Americanization of immigrants. It would indeed be a worthwhile endeavor for the Archdiocese of Baltimore to look into the development of national parishes for the purpose of assisting the multitude of Spanish speaking immigrants in Baltimore by providing them with the opportunity and means to integrate themselves into the American mainstream.

Ultimately, then, there is much to gain from the history of national parishes in the city of Baltimore. Their rich history of providing immigrants with a safe haven in which to grow and a support network by which they could successfully enter mainstream American life, makes the Catholic Church a critical piece to the modern puzzle of Americanization. Through the use of language, traditional celebrations, and benefit societies aimed at caring for the poor, the immigrants were provided with familiar experiences from their old life, the acceptance of which by the Catholic hierarchy of Baltimore, made them open to experiences of America. Their American experiences then manifested themselves in the confraternities and organizations in the churches and the opportunity to learn United States history and culture, whereby they began to enter into mainstream American society. Modern reflection then demonstrates that the Italian and Polish immigrants, who resided in Baltimore, are in varying stages of

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Americanization, with many immigrants and ethnics having achieved full access to mainstream America.
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