THE POLISH AMERICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

# SPRING 2023 VOLUME 45 ISSUE 1 WWW.PACIM.ORG

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Learning Polish Language

- John Bieniek honored at Bal Karnawałowy
- News from Poland
- Farewell to Winter event on March 25th

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# **From the President**



Witam Wszystkich Serdecznie!

It was a snowy winter here in Minnesota. By the mid-March we received in Minneapolis over 80 inches of snow, which exceed

the average of 51 inches per winter. I hoped to escape the cold, when I traveled to Poland for a family event, but the snow followed me there! Though, I must admit that it added an extra touch of magic to the Old Town in Warsaw.

Our Polish language class coordinator, Iwona Srienc, ordered 60 "Hurra! Po Polsku" textbooks from the publisher in Krakow. I brought them back to Minneapolis in my luggage. In the past, many Polish Americans transported Polish books and textbooks across the ocean for their children and family members. Some of the books were donated to PACIM Library which now holds more than 5,000 copies.

This issue of Polam is dedicated to learning and preserving Polish language. You will find a brief history of the language, that is more than one thousand years old! You can also learn how John Bieniek, PACIM 2023 Honorary Award recipient, became one of the very few Polish descendants from the rural central Minnesota who can speak, understand and write in Polish.

We had a busy Holiday Season at PACIM! Both Wigilia on December 11th and Bal Karnawałowy on January 28th were well attended and are remembered by many as delightful events. With Spring around the corner, we are planning an ancient Polish Farewell to Winter event. On Saturday March 25th, we would like to invite everyone to the symbolic celebration of the Drowning of Marzanna in the Mississippi, accompanied by hearty food (bigos and grilled kiełbasa), beer, mulled wine, games, and other attractions.

> Thank you for your support! Edyta Dudek

PACIM President



# POLAM

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The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota is a non-profit organization offering a broad range of programs and events that provide opportunity to grow deeper in understanding and appreciation of Polish and Polish American traditions, culture, and history.

# SUPPORT PACIM:

**PACIM** grows through contributions from our member donors and organizations.

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### **Cover and Photo left:**

Replicas of Polish Language tablets used in St Joseph School in Panna Maria, Texas. Courtesy of the Polish Heritage Center. www.polishheritagecentertx.org

# >> CALENDAR <<

> MARCH 25, SATURDAY < Farewell to Winter, Marzanna event

> AUGUST 12, SATURDAY < **Annual Family Picnic** 

> OCTOBER 29, SUNDAY < Soup Festival

> DECEMBER 17, SUNDAY < Wigilia

# **PACIM Events**

# FAREWELL TO WINTER EVENT

Drowning of Marzanna (Topienie Marzanny) is an old tradition that usually takes place around the Spring Equinox. Marzanna is the Polish incarnation of the ancient Slavic goddess associated with the end of winter and the arrival of spring. Dating back to medieval times, the seasonal rite involved making a Marzanna effigy out of straw and sticks, which was then wrapped in rugs and decorated with ribbons and beads. The effigy was then burned and drowned to symbolize her demise and renewal of life in the coming spring.

WHEN: March 25, 2023, 1-4 PM

WHERE: Riverfront Regional Park, Riedel Farmhouse 5100 East River Rd, Fridley, MN, 55432

PACIM has rented a spacious Riedel House in Fridley on Mississippi river for this special event.

> We would like to invite you to the symbolic celebration of the Drowning of Marzanna, accompanied by hearty food and drink!

# PROGRAM:

- 1:00 pm The doors open, making Marzanna dolls. music and games. There will be even a bonfire for the outdoor enthusiasts!
- 2:30 pm Marzanna Parade to Mississippi
- 3:30 pm Take-home bigos sale. **Bigos in 32oz containers** will be available for sale for \$15/container.

will be available for purchase: bigos, kiełbasa, cake, soft drinks,

wine, and beer.

Food

You can also purchase bigos online at www.pacim.org or send a check to: PACIM, 93 Little Canada Rd W, unit 106, St Paul MN 55117.

Bigos will be available for pick-up at the event on Saturday or on Sundays March 26th and April 2nd at the Holy Cross Church

# POLISH G A N UΑ G Е

PACIM holds three Polish language learning sessions throughout the year:

• Fall session: September - December • Spring session: January - April Summer session: Julv

The classes are offered at several levels: Beginner 1, Beginner 2,

Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, and Advanced.

Most of the lessons are conducted online using Zoom.

Our Head Teacher, Iwona Srienc, Ph.D., got her Masters of Arts in Russian Philology from the University of Warsaw. She completed her Ph.D. in Slavic Linguistics at UCLA in 1990. After arriving in MN, she taught Polish at the U of M, worked as a substitute teacher, interpreter, and translator, and for the past 15 years has been teaching Polish at PACIM.

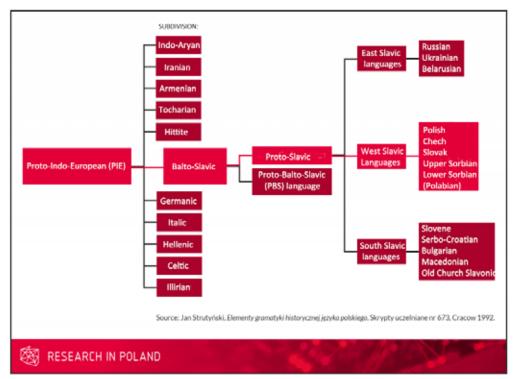
If you are interested in learning Polish with PACIM please email Iwona at isrienc@pacim.org

# Polish Language DOL

The Polish language belongs to the West-Slavic group of the Indo-European languages. Due to its structure, it is classified as an inflectional, synthetic language. As a separate language, Polish began to take shape in the 10th century, playing an important role in the establishment and development of the Polish state. The earliest surviving records of single words in Polish date back to the 12th century. Until the 14th century, Polish existed only in regional and folk spoken varieties.

A literary, superregional variety of the language developed in the 15th and 16th centuries, as evidenced by the abundant Renaissance literature written in Polish. Initially, the development of the Polish language was strongly influenced by the languages of Poland's neighbors: German, Czech, as well as Latin. In later centuries, the major influence of French was noticeable, and nowadays Polish, like other European languages, takes over a lot from English.

There are over 45 million Polish language users, and about 38 million of them live in Poland. Polish is spoken by numerous groups of Poles or people of Polish origin living outside Poland, including in the USA, the



From researchinpoland.org/polish-language/ A family tree of the Polish language

UK, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Ireland, Iceland, as well as Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, and Ukraine.

The most comprehensive dictionaries of the Polish language include over 130,000 entries, and about 20,000 are in everyday use. More and more people are learning Polish as a foreign language. There are nearly 10,000 Polish learners worldwide; about one third of them study Polish at universities and in language schools in Poland.

# POLISH LANGUAGE HISTORY IN A NUTSHELL

# Around 3000 BC

Proto-Indo-European language was spoken in the area of Europe and Asia.

# Between 300 BC and 300 AD

Proto-Slavic community emerged. Over the next several hundred years, numerous migrations of tribes led to the separation of smaller language groups.

# 966

Polish state was established, and Polish language began to take shape.

# 1136

The first tangible evidence of the existence of Polish language was issued called "Bull of Gniezno" (or "Papal Bull"). It is one of the most valuable artifacts of Polish historiography and source of information on the culture.

# Polish Language Certificate

The certificate in Polish as a foreign language is the only state document confirming the knowledge of Polish language. Currently there are 6 levels of Polish language proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 in a group adapted to the needs of adults.

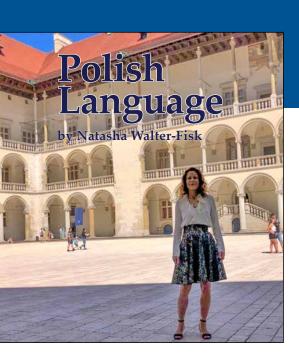
Depending on the type of studies, universities impose different requirements on foreigners concerning the knowledge of the Polish language. For artistic faculties and those that require physical fitness (studies in music, fine arts, physical education) knowledge of Polish at B1 level is required, while for other university courses it is usually required at the general high school level, i.e., B2.

Among those taking the certificate exam are employees of international corporations, civil servants, teachers, managers, employees of foreign banks and insurance companies. A positive result of the exam makes it easier for them to obtain a permanent work contract and settle down in Poland.

Data showing the number of people taking the certificate in 2019 (pre-pandemic)

On average 85% of takers passed the exam.

B1 level – 5750 people B2 level – 842 people C1 level – 462 people C2 level – 40 people



Polish is a very difficult language. Język polski jest bardzo trudnym językiem.

One evening in Krakow, Poland, at an InterNations social, one of the regulars, a Dutch man married to a Polish woman, told us that he drove to the Netherlands often, at 90 miles / 150 km per hour. More than once, he was stopped by the police. He pretended to speak very limited Polish. He kept repeating, "Polski bar-zo trudno jesyk." Just so you know, that is terrible Polish. He made it so hard to communicate with him and he made the police laugh so hard at his dreadful grammar and horrible pronunciation that they usually let him go.

Polish is one of the hardest languages in the world. It's true! That was a real surprise to me. Before we moved to Poland, I hoped to reach university-level fluency (C2) in two years because I speak French, Spanish, and Italian pretty well. Since we moved to Poland in the middle of the semester in April, I decided to wait to enroll in classes until September. It would have been better to start studying at a private school right away and ask the two native Polish speakers I was living with to speak more Polish with me. Three semesters at Jagiellonian University and two courses at Varia in two years in Poland were not enough.

In Polish you change word endings depending on what kind of word it is. Polish nouns have case, gender, and number: There are 7 cases, 3 genders (feminine, masculine and neutral). Number is singular or plural. Nouns are animate (They have a heart.) or inanimate. In English, we only change word endings for singular or plural and instead of cases we use prepositions. To demonstrate how difficult it is to learn Polish, let's take apart the sentence in the title. *Język* and *językiem* are the same word, different cases. There are two meanings – either a language or a tongue (in the mouth or a shoe). To show you how challenging cases are, I'll list the different declinations of *język*. Singular: *język*, *języka*, *językowi*, *języki*, *językiem*, *języku*. Plural: *języki*, *języków*, *językom*, *języki*, *językami*, *językach*, *języki*.

*Polski* and *trudnym* are adjectives which agree with the gender and the case of the noun they describe. Since *jezyk* is masculine, the adjective is *trudny* not *trudna* (feminine) or *trudne* (neutral), and since its case has to agree with the noun (*językiem*), it is *trudnym* not just *trudny*. And adjectives related to a country are not capitalized, so it is *polski*, not *Polski*.

*Jest* is a conjugated verb. Imagine my dismay the first time I tried to look it up, only to learn the infinitive of jest is *być*, and the only way to find out what it means is to look under b in the dictionary and the only way to learn how to conjugate it is to look it up under *być*.

*Bardzo* is like the word "very" in English. Surprise! It only ever ends in o.

The bad news is that before we left, I only achieved Level B1. So, I plan to sign up for PACIM Polish classes.

The good news is that we spoke English at home all the time and my nephew's English improved tremendously. At the end of high school, Poland holds exams called "matura." His best score on his exams was English. That was a wonderful success.

# 1795 - 1918

Polish language was developing until the time of partitions, when it was suppressed. Although the nation suffered under the oppression of the enemy, in emigration the love for the native language flourished.

# Today

Many new words and phrases emerge, very often borrowed from the English language. The technological development has a huge impact on the changes in the Polish language.

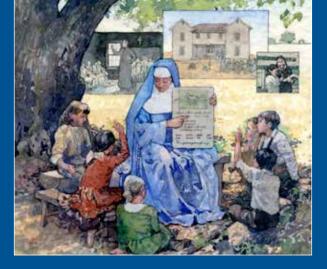
# Learning and Teaching Polish

by John Bieniek

When I started my elementary education in 1944, English was already the primary language in the schools. Any Polish was discouraged because it was considered not being useful for anyone's future employment. I could not find anyone who remembered Polish being taught in schools except, long ago by a priest, Father Bialka. Yet, there were older people who were more comfortable speaking Polish than English. Today, they are all 3rd-4th generation Poles living in Central Minnesota: Holdingford, Avon, St. Anna, Little Falls, Gilman, and Foley. To my knowledge there is not a one 3rd generation American-Polish person who can speak, read, and write in Polish in Central Minnesota.

I found that strange and I was determined that someday I would learn Polish. It didn't seem right that as an ethnic Polish culture we were hung with this deficiency. I had heard that Polish was being taught in Chicago and Detroit. And in my wish list someday I would drive to those cities to pick up language study books and bring them back home to learn that mysterious language. Why was I the only person, who was so quietly going to change this situation? I did not want to boast about my eventual endeavor. I could have been considered a nut case. I did not know if I would succeed. I can only explain it was in God's providence planning for me. Why? You have to ask God.

In the fall of 1983 I signed up for the Chester Rog's eight-week Polish Community Education class in Minneapolis. Two weeks later I was informed that the University of Minnesota was offering a Polish class through Continuing Education. I was



Opened on May 15th, 1868, Saint Joseph School in Panna Maria, Texas, was the first Polish Catholic school in the United States. Father Zwiardowski, the parish priest, and school administrator, concluded that nuns would be best suited as teachers. At his request, the bishop in San Antonio authorized the formation of a new community of sisters, the Order of the Immaculate Conception. Five Polish and two Alsatian women took their vows in Panna Maria. The school is now a part of the Polish Heritage Center, a modern museum founded by the Polish ancestors of the first settlers in Panna Maria area.

You can read more about this outstanding museum from **www.polishheritagecentertx.org** 

dumbfounded and elated to hear that. I immediately signed up for that class. I was very fortunate to have taken the course taught by an excellent Professor Leonard Polakiewicz, who was heavy into grammar. It was perfect for me. I thrived in Leonard's class. After the first lesson in a collegiate class setting, I was wondering if I belonged. Prof Leonard threw around terminology I never had heard of in my lifetime! I can't adequately express my feelings that overcame me in this class. It was awesome. It was a joy. It was bliss! I was learning the impossible Polish language! I was learning the Polish language not only for me, but for all the Polish people that never had the opportunity. I translated their old letters, cards, pictures that were pulled out of storage, never were translated before. After decades secret contents in Polish were revealed.

When I completed my three-year long program at the University of Minnesota, plus a six- week study at the Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin Poland, I felt confident that I could teach Beginners Polish as a Community Education course at the Holdingford High school. I did it for 4-5 years, including teaching on interactive TV, fiber optically connecting 3 schools.

My influences to get started in Polish came from my parents and my aunt Annie, who was the only person I knew that could adequately read and write in Polish. I remember watching as a boy, my mother, Victoria, and my aunt preparing a wedding package to be sent to my cousin in Poland. It included fabric for the dress, headpiece, shoes, and other items. This was after WWII, when not much was available in the stores. I was eager to do the same as my mother and aunt did. But first I had to learn Polish.

I will finish with the accolade I heard from my Polish language teacher, Professor Leonard Polakiewicz, "John, I wish that I could bottle up your enthusiasm for learning Polish. I would give it to all my students."



# **Polish Saturday School in Minneapolis**

Adam Mickiewicz Polish Saturday School in Minneapolis was established in 1991 at the Holy Cross Church. It operates continuously to this day, creating a unique community of people who, with passion and enthusiasm, devote their time to teaching children Polish language.

The accomplishments of over 30 years of existence of our institution include hundreds of graduates, proud of their roots and knowledge about the country of their ancestors. Many of them came back as teachers, others actively participated in the activities of Polish diaspora and organizations at universities where they undertook further education.

Students who have been studying at the Polish Saturday School for several years appreciate the friendly environment of people with common goals, establish lasting friendships that they maintain for many years after graduation. They fondly remember the time spent on Saturday mornings, grateful to their parents for creating conditions for them to learn where they came from.

We asked our students two questions :

# "Why are you learning Polish language?"

- Nicolas 19: I study Polish language to learn history of Poland. Those that don't know their own history don't know themselves. If they don't know themselves, they don't know who they could become.
- Adam 17: So I can visit and communicate with my family in Poland.
- Max 14: Because my parents make me study it.
- Anna 12: Because I 've been learning it ever since I was a child.

# "What is the most difficult part of learning Polish?":

- Nicolas 19: Writing and carrying conversations in Polish without reverting to English.
- Adam 17: The most difficult for me is reading.
- Max 14: The pronunciation of the words.
- Anna 12: I think the hardest thing for me is pronunciation and writing.

Please visit our website **pssminneapolis.com** to learn more about the school.



# Teaching My Daughter Polish

I moved to the United States when I was five years old, and from fourth through twelfth grade I had to go to Polish school every Saturday morning. I did not like it. However, looking back, I am extremely grateful to my parents for making me do this. Even though I have lived in the United States for over 40 years, I still feel just as Polish as I do American, and much of this has to do with the fact that I speak the language. I always knew that I wanted to share my Polish culture with my child, and the most meaningful way I believe that can be done is by teaching her the Polish language I was lucky enough to hang onto.

Certainly, teaching a child another language is not an easy thing to do. However, children are blessed with a sponge-like mind. So, with consistency, effort, a very supportive American father, and a Polish community, my now 16-year-old daughter is practically fluent in Polish and can easily communicate with her Polish relatives (and translate for her father when they are left in Warsaw alone together!).

My daughter has also attended the Polish Saturday School in Minneapolis since she was five years old. Not only has this helped her learn the Polish language, but it has also helped her develop an appreciation for Polish culture and helped her realize that she is not the only one with a mother that makes her speak another language. More importantly, by learning Polish and being part of the Polish community in Minnesota, my daughter has developed intercultural competency – she has learned that the values and attitudes of cultures other than the one in which she exists should be understood and appreciated. So, while teaching my daughter Polish has taken time and work, I know from personal experience that this will benefit her in many ways throughout her life.

> Magdalena Stolarska, Polish Saturday School Teacher

Associate Professor in Mathematics at the University of St Thomas

# Young refugee woman's story - PART III

Swietlana (not her real name), her sister and their two young children arrived in Warsaw in March 2022. We featured the story about her experiences as a young refugee woman in the summer and fall issues of Polam. In May her husband was injured at the front and was hospitalized, but had to return to the East to defend their country. Swietlana missed her family and in October 2022 she decided to return to Ukraine. She experiences shortage of energy almost every week and the constant fear of shelling. I keep in touch with her and check in on a regular basis. I would like to congratulate Swietlana on her new job as an English teacher at the local college in the Zhytomyr Oblast! She recently wrote this letter for Polam.

"More than a year has passed since the war started. More than a year ago I believed World War II was the last big war on the planet.

I still remember clearly the last day of our normal life, February 23rd 2022. That winter we didn't feel safe, we understood something bad might happen, but we couldn't even imagine the scale of the disaster.

This winter again there was lots of information about a new Russian invasion at the end of February. We all were nervous. Some people in my small town told me they have packed their luggage to run away at any time. I was afraid but I didn't prepare the suitcases.

I tried to believe everything would be OK. I just put my bed away from the window... I realize it was silly because in a case of mass shelling it wouldn't help much, but I needed to do something to calm down.

Fortunately the new invasion from the North hasn't happened this winter and I don't know why but I'm not afraid of



it any more. Spring is coming. Though it often snows, snowdrops flowers are blooming in our garden. Spring wins and Ukraine will win.

Almost all of my plants died when I left home with my daughter, so after coming back from Poland I bought some new ones. Plants help me feel better, happier. I like watching how new leaves and flowers are appearing and growing. Plants are symbols of life. I want to live, and I want all my family members to be alive. Every time looking at the flowers I imagine how happy we all will be after the war finishes and my husband comes back home. And we'll live long lives in our house full of colorful flowers." **Bal Karnawałowy** 

PACIM's traditional Bal Karnawałowy (Carnival Ball) was held at Midland Hills Country Club in Roseville, MN, on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

Close to 80 people attended it, enjoying a three-course dinner, performances by Dolina Dancers and the Bieniek family, dancing until midnight to Polish and American tunes, and socializing with other members of the Polish-American community of the Twin Cities.

During the event, John Bieniek, the past PACIM President and Director, received an honorary award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Polish-American community of Minnesota.

A silent auction accompanied the ball. Proceeds from the auction will support various PACIM initiatives in 2023.









# **News from Poland**

# By Mietek Konczyk

# War in Ukraine

## **PRESIDENT BIDEN'S VISIT**

After returning from a surprise trip to Kyiv, in an address in Warsaw, the American President asserted the unity of the free world in the face of the war unleashed by Russia in Ukraine. "We are strong and united. The world is not looking away. After a year, we know the answer to many questions: we will defend sovereignty and democracy. Russia will pay the price for its crimes. It will never invade Poland or any other country. Those who committed crimes should be punished," Joe Biden said during a speech at the Kubicki Arcades at the Royal Castle in the Polish capital.

## **LEOPARD TANKS**

After an intense political debate within NATO, Poland received permission from the government of Germany to transfer a battalion of Leopard tanks in Polish possession to Ukraine. Following Poland's example, other NATO countries agreed to deliver a number of Leopard tanks to Ukraine.

### PATRIOT MISSILES

According to an agreement between Poland and Germany, three batteries of German Patriot missile defense systems operated by German soldiers were placed in central Poland. American forces operate additional Patriot missiles in Poland to protect transportation routes and American military facilities. The Polish army ordered several Patriot missile batteries, and it is installing them and training the operators.

### **ARMING UP FOR DEFENSE**

This year, Poland's defense spending as a percentage of GDP could be the highest in all of NATO, including more than the U.S., Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland, told the New York Times. According to Morawiecki's assessment, if all the arms purchases made by the government were completed this year, they would account for 4% of Poland's GDP. The purchases include HIMARS missiles, Abrams tanks, F-35 fighter planes from the US, and light attack aircraft, tanks, howitzers, and rocket launchers from South Korea.

### REFUGEES

Ukrainian refugees living in Poland in 2022 received 6 billion PLN (\$1.4 billion)) in various forms of financial aid from the Polish government. This does not include assistance from private citizens, local governments, and NGOs, estimated at over 20 billion PLN (\$4.5 billion). To lower the assistance costs, the recent law stipulates, among other things, that refugees staying in collective accommodation centers will cover part of the costs related to accommodation and food. Around 60%-70% of working-age Ukrainian refugees have jobs and pay taxes, contributing to the Polish economy.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

According to a recent poll, almost half of the Polish population does not know what they would do if the war moved to their country; 31% say they would escape West.

# **Economy**

### GDP

Activity in the Polish economy declined by 2.4% in the fourth quarter of 2022 compared to the previous three months. GDP grew in 2022 by 4.9%, primarily due to the good results in the year's first quarter. It is expected that in 2023 Polish economy will grow by only 0.4%.

### INFLATION

Inflation in January reached 17.2%, and it is expected to grow even higher in February before it gradually drops in the following months. The European Commission estimates inflation in Poland for 2023 at 11.7%. For the EU, inflation is projected at 6.4%.

### POPULATION

In 2022, 305,000 children were born in Poland, including 14,570 kids born to foreigners, mainly Ukrainians. In the same period, 448,000 people died, causing another decline in the population of Poland to 37.767 million people. According to the most recent census, there are also changes in the population's social structure—between the years 2011 and 2021, the number of formal families dropped by 7.4%, but informal grew by 75%.

### ORLEN

The biggest state-owned oil refining corporation, Orlen, merged with another national oil company Lotos, and Polish Oil and Gas Company (PGNiG). After absorbing PGNiG and Lotos, Orlen Group became Europe's third-largest refining group, with a more than 40 million tons refining capacity. However, the company could lose that position to Shell and BP since Saudi Aramco took over part of the Gdansk refinery due to EU-mandated monopoly countermeasures. The Saudi Aramco transaction conditions have been controversial and prompted an investigation by the Supreme Audit Chamber (NIK).

Orlen is run by a former small-town mayor who rapidly advanced through the management of state-owned companies when PiS became the governing party. In the last few years, Orlen purchased several local newspapers and replaced their editors, which prompted questions about their objectivity.

# **Sport**

Polish player **Iga Świątek** dominates world women's tennis.

After the widely criticized performance of the Polish national team in the last World Cup, Portuguese coach **Fernando Santos** became the new manager of the team.

**Piotr Żyła** becomes the World Champion in ski jumping.

Join us for a **Bike Ride!** - April 29th 2023 "CONSTITUTIONAL BIKE RALLY UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF MARY QUEEN OF POLAND"

Sign-up form on the PSS website: pssminneapolis.com

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April 5th @ 4:30 CST Online Zoom Event Join artist John Rajtar for stories about the intricate and ancient designs of Pisanki - Polish Easter Egg

register at http://www.storytablefoundation.org/events



Polish Masses celebrated Friday evenings at 7 pm and Sundays at 11:30 am

# Researching Your Polish Roots May 1, 2023 • 7-8 PM

Jay Biedny, long-time member of PACIM and past president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota will present a review of records in America and Europe that can help you search for your Polish American roots. You may attend by Zoom or in person.

> Contact Natasha Walter-Fisk for details: natwalterfisk@aol.com

Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota (PACIM) is a membership driven non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

PACIM is grateful for the many gifts, endowments, and donations that make its mission a reality in the programs, events, publications and library collection under its guidance.

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