



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2121 HARRISON STREET, SUITE 100 • OAKLAND, CA 94612-3788
510.893.4711 • FAX: 510.893.0945 • www.oakdiocese.org

July 30, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For many years now the Catholic Polish Community has had the wonderful grace of gathering each Sunday for Mass in Martinez, thanks to your dedicated efforts to purchase and maintain your Polish Cultural Center there. This has, I am sure, born much fruit in cultural appreciation and spiritual growth for those who have participated there over the years.

Thus far Polish priests (in recent times Jesuits) have been able and willing to minister to you at the Center and regularly provide the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. I share in your gratitude to these priests, and pray that this relationship may continue into the future.

However, with regard to the preparation needed to receive the sacraments, the Church requires that the students' pastor see to it that they are properly prepared to receive them. For this reason, and also to insure a consistency in pastoral practice throughout the Diocese in keeping with diocesan policy, I ask that, as of September 1st of this year, all religious instruction of your children take place at a local parish, including preparation for First Confession, First Communion, and Confirmation. The celebration of these sacraments, moreover, is likewise to take place in the parish church, as is also in keeping with diocesan policy.

St. Catherine's Parish in Martinez has expressed a great willingness to welcome your children there, or you may enroll them in another parish if that would be more convenient. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of augmenting your children's religious instruction with further catechesis and faith experiences, especially regarding traditional devotional practices common in the Polish culture.

I also ask that all preparation for the sacrament of Marriage take place through the local parish as well, and that these marriages always take place in a parish church. Of course, a Polish priest can be delegated to perform the marriage if that is the couple's wish. This is easily worked out with the local pastor.

While I know that this change will require some adjustments for you, I ask you to embrace this decision with the grace and fidelity that is characteristic of Polish people's long and faithful relationship with the Church.

Your rich cultural heritage is a vital part of the colorful ethnic tapestry that is the Diocese of Oakland. Please know that I whole-heartedly support your efforts to transmit this heritage to your children and to inculcate its values in them. Your center offers many opportunities for this to happen. I pray it may continue to do so.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Rev. Salvatore Cordileone
Bishop of Oakland