

August 27, 2017

Fifth annual Polka Party and Mass celebrates God's gift of the harvest

REGIONAL

Story and photos by Carolee McGrath



Springfield Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski celebrated the traditional Dozynki Mass in Easthampton, Sunday, Aug. 27 at Our Lady of the Valley Parish Sacred Heart Campus.

EASTHAMPTON – In the warm summer sunshine, parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley in Easthampton gathered for a special outdoor Mass held on the grounds of Our Lady of the Valley Sacred Heart Campus on Franklin Street, at 10:30 a.m., Sunday Aug. 27.

Springfield Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski was the principal celebrant of the Dozynki Mass, which is a celebration of thanksgiving after a bountiful, summer harvest. The tradition dates back to the 16th century in Poland.

"It's beautiful to celebrate Polish heritage and to give thanksgiving to God for the harvest," said Bishop Rozanski, who addressed those in attendance in both English and Polish.

After the entrance song, youth and women dressed in traditional Polish costumes, presented the bishop with bread and salt, symbols of Polish hospitality. Children also presented wheat and placed pictures of St. Faustina and Our Lady of Czestochowa in front of the altar. The harvest date traditionally fell near the feast of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in August.

"Farmers know the workings of God. They're close to the creation God has made," Bishop Rozanski said in his homily. "We celebrate the Dozynki festival because we give thanks to God for the fruits of the earth, but also for his son, who feeds us with his body and blood," the bishop continued.

The Easthampton Knights of Columbus (K of C) Council 1116 organized the fifth annual Dozynki Mass and the Polka Party, which followed.



“We have a very strong Polish community in the parish, primarily from Sacred Heart. When it combined, they brought a very strong faith community to the parish,” explained Grand Knight Jonathan K. Oelrich. In 2010, Our Lady of the Valley was created from the merger of three Easthampton parishes: Sacred Heart, Notre Dame du Bon Conseil, and Immaculate Conception, where Our Lady of the Valley parishioners now worship.

The Polka Party, which ran from 12 to 6 p.m., helps raise money for Knights of Columbus Council 1116, which in turn supports the church and the surrounding community.

“It’s for the charitable works of the Knights, much of which is for the parish. We donate towards the utilities of the parish. We also donate to Bethlehem House. The Knights were the primary work horse in rehabbing Bethlehem House,” Oelrich added. Bethlehem House is a crisis pregnancy center, located in the former Sacred Heart Parish rectory on Knipfer Avenue in Easthampton.

“The Polish culture, spirituality and faith, you can’t disconnect them. So today we start the Polka Party with a Mass,” said Bozena Dabek, who helped organize the event. Her husband, Krzysztof, is a member of the Knights of Columbus, and her teenagers, Christine, 16, and Danny, 14, participated in the Mass.

“We have food, family, our friends are all coming from God. So we thank God. We work hard, play hard, and pray hard, But prayer is most important,” she said.

The Eddie Foreman Orchestra entertained the crowd for the afternoon.

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