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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

Roots Anchor Pride in Polonia

ORCHARD LAKE, Mich. (7-11-2016) – The Orchard Lake Schools made history on June 22, 2016 at *Anno Domini 966*, the U.S. celebration of 1,050 years of Christianity in Poland. When asked by a member of his Orchard Lake staff to explain the true significance of this historic event, here is what Monsignor Thomas C. Machalski, Jr., Chancellor-Rector, Orchard Lake Schools, had to say.

OLS: *Anno Domini 966* signified history in the making in the United States. Why was this campus selected as the location for the celebration?

MSGR: *The campus of the Orchard Lake Schools was chosen as the site of the celebration because Orchard Lake is the heart of Polonia. Since our founding in 1885, we have been and continue to be the place where all things Polish are honored, respected, preserved, cherished and held sacred.*

OLS: Based on the homilies, in English by Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami, Florida, and in Polish by Bishop Mroziowski of Brooklyn, New York, what were the most important messages taken away from Mass?

MSGR: *The most important message contained in the homilies of Archbishop Wenski and Bishop Mroziowski was that we should always remain connected to our roots and traditions. Even though we may be removed from Poland for a few generations, no matter where we are we will never stop being Polish nor, I may add, Catholic because our faith and culture are intimately connected. They are almost inseparable.*

OLS: Your guests came from all over the United States to celebrate 1,050 years of Christianity in Poland. What were their responses to both the invitation and attendance at the Mass?

MSGR: *The responses that I received were all very positive and complimentary. People really enjoyed the solemn celebration of Mass, Blessing and Dedication of the St. John Paul II*

Shrine by His Eminence Adam Cardinal Maida, and the decree read by Archbishop Vigneron naming us the Archdiocesan Shrine of St. John Paul II (in the Archdiocese of Detroit).

OLS: The procession into the Mass was very meaningful. Can you share your feedback on all those who came together for the procession into the Chapel?

MSGR: *The procession was magnificent! The young people in the colorful folk costumes of different regions of Poland, the Polish Scouts`, Polish Veterans -- all make one realize that although we are in the United States, we have never stopped being Polish and we are proud of it. It is also wonderful to see the next generations taking part in such celebrations because they will be the ones to keep alive our heritage.*

OLS: Tell us about the people who came to Mass and shared in the Grand Banquet with you and your guests – the Polish people, in particular. What kind of feedback did you hear, and how did it touch on the significance of the celebration?

MSGR: *People came from all over Michigan as well as from Ohio, Florida, New York, Texas, Illinois, South Carolina and even from across the border to our north -- from Canada for the celebration. People were genuinely grateful that they had an opportunity to mark such a momentous occasion. Of those who were born in Poland, many left there years ago, and others not that long ago, so this celebration allowed them to rejoice in the faith and culture even though far they were from their homeland. Both those born in Poland and those born here of Polish descent were filled with joy!*

OLS: How did this celebration mark the beginning of the next 50 to 1,050 years and beyond?

MSGR: *I believe that it instilled in the participants a renewed desire to do all that we can to share our beautiful customs, traditions and 1,050-year-old faith with the younger generation and with the larger community. Our beautiful faith, traditions, language, culture and customs will continue if each of us does his/her part to propagate them.*

OLS: What is the single most important thing you gained from planning and celebrating the 1,050th anniversary?

MSGR: *Like all things that are good, it took a lot of hard work on the part of many people to make this day memorable. However, I would say that, as a fourth generation Polish-American, whose great-grandparents left Poland before World War I and when Poland was partitioned and, therefore, not even on the map, it renewed my sense of pride in my roots and gives me the impetus to continue proclaiming to all the beauty of our 1,050-year-old faith and our heritage.*

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