

## Mass for Poland plane crash victims



1 of 6 

**From:** Archdiocese of San Francisco

Polish Catholics held a memorial Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco April 24 to honor Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife and 94 others who died in an April 10 plane crash in Russia. The photos are by Dennis Callahan, courtesy Cathedral pastor Father John Talesfore.

After the plane crash, Caria Tomczykowska, president of the Polish Arts and Culture Foundation, made arrangements with Cathedral staff and clergy to honor the victims at a special Mass.

The altar was adorned with fresh flowers near the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Protectress of Poland, and 96 candles and 96 tulips with Polish flags were arranged for the victims of the crash. Polish veterans of World War II and the Polish Home Army carried flags and standards from their units and were joined by schoolchildren and adults in colorful regional costumes of Poland and the Polish Boy and Girl Scouts carrying their troop standard in the procession before and after the Mass. Father Talesfore wore vestments embroidered with the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, and spoke kindly to the Polish community gathered there. A book of condolences was set up next to a memorial exhibit of the crash.

The Polish community in San Francisco has a long history with the Cathedral: Pope John Paul II visited twice before and during his papacy.

The Mass was attended by 300 people, including honorary consuls from Poland other European nations, the president and board of the Polish American Congress in Northern California and board members of the Polish Arts and Culture Foundation. The other organizations that took part were the East Bay Polish American Association, Polish American Engineers Club, The John Paul II School in Walnut Creek, Polish Club of San Francisco and Polonia Sf.org.

More than 155,000 Poles live in the Bay Area, and this Mass was one of the many commemorations of the national tragedy of April 10. The plane was carrying the president and first lady of Poland and 94 of Poland's elite on their way to honor the 22,000 Polish officers executed in the Katyn Forest in April 1940, on the orders of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.





