Visual ART is not bound by spoken language, but it is connected to a universal language of an image. I have spent many years sorting through the complexities of recreating myself within a new cultural landscape. I was fortunate to study music as a child, so I had insight into creative expression without words. I was learning English at the same time I was learning about photography.

By now I have lived in Chicago longer than I have lived in Poland. Photography has helped me balance the dualities of a multicultural identity. In my work as a photographer, cultural memory is an important part of who I am, and it has given me a point of reference in bridging the gap between the familiar and unfamiliar.

Photography COMMUNICATES, REVEALS and CONNECTS, and in the process INTEGRATES my understanding of the world around me. Photography is not just about remembering, but also about finding meaning in the common human experience. It is the light, the mood, and the impression of the gestures and details that unite the frame to tell the story, while the world continues beyond the image.

The photographs I’m presenting to you today reflect my interest in documenting the rich spiritual communities in Chicago.
Beyond the Veil – Nuns at home - portrays the private moments in the lives of Catholic Nuns in Chicago.

The presented photographs are from three communities of religious women who choose an active - contemplative way of life, and balance their life of prayer with service to those in need. These are The Felician Sister, The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and The Sisters of the Resurrection. The more I learned about the history of Polish-American nuns, the more I was fascinated by it.
At the end of the XIX century, Polish Nuns arrived in small numbers to greet the growing wave of Polish immigrants and their families. The sisters provided much needed assistance to emigrants and played a major role in preserving the heritage of the Polish immigrant community in Chicago throughout the XX century. The Sisters opened schools, hospitals, orphanages, and retirement centers. Many of the Sisters in the photographs have known each other and lived together for the majority of their lives.

It was an experience of a lifetime getting to know the Sisters, and following the rhythm of their daily activities – from moments of contemplation, prayer or religious service, to moments of afternoon bingo or an evening card game. I’m thankful to all the Sisters for their kindness, sincerity, and trust in sharing their story.
COPTIC in Chicago

My immigrant experience intertwines with the multicultural experience of life in Chicago. The presented images document the baptismal ritual of Black Coptics on the shores of Lake Michigan, on Chicago’s south side.

Copts follow Early Christian tradition and this annual summer gathering brings together Copts from the surrounding region, each arriving at sunrise dressed in black tunics. The photographs document the beauty of this ancient Early Christian ritual, the ritual of spiritual regeneration.

Baptism through the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence gives the believer entry into new life out of water, and signifies birth into the divine life given by the Spirit.

Through time, I have gained trust of Coptic community, as well as a deeper understanding of what it means to carry our cultural history within us.
Warsaw & Chicago (Boże Ciało)
The next series of photographs I will share with you are from the celebration of Corpus Christi in Warsaw and in Chicago.

The Catholic Church has celebrated CORPUS CHRISI to honor the Eucharist since XIII century. Young girls scatter flower petals on the street to welcome Jesus, who is believed to walk the streets with the people during the Corpus Christi procession. The celebration is an official public holiday in Poland, and traffic is stopped for quite a long time. There are many similarities in the experience of this religious festival. Corpus Christi celebrated in Chicago is an example of how the polish immigrants bring and cultivate their religious and cultural traditions.
In Chicago there is not an official holiday on that Thursday, but many parishes that serve the polish community celebrate Corpus Christi on Sunday after the mass. The photographs are from the procession organized by Holy Trinity Church, which has become a Polish Mission in 1987. The church has served the community since 1872, and all services are still offered in the Polish language. During the procession, traffic is stopped on Division Street and Ashland Avenue, while girls scatter flower petals, and participants stop to pray at temporary shrines.
I continue to take pictures and capture the ties that bind communities, families and cultures. The dialog between art, life, and culture is still a work in progress ... to be in touch with something greater than oneself is the individual spiritual journey of every artist.

Photography is my teacher.

Every day I’m reminded to be present, open and ready to recognize the Divine Mystery of life, that connects us all.