



Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo

Autumn 2009

Mukachevo Mother of God Icon

The *Mukachevo Mother of God* icon dates from 1453, the year that Constantinople fell to the Turks and when the Eastern Roman Empire came to its final end. As one can see, the glorious traditions of the Byzantine iconography were still flourishing although the Empire was crumbling. Somehow, this beautiful image made its way to the treasury of the Holy See. In 1926, Pope Pius XI gave this icon to the Eparchy of Mukachevo, to atone for the new border situation created in 1919 which kept the faithful from making the traditional pilgrimages to Mariapocs. It was an instant success, and is in fact venerated as a miracle-working icon, i.e., God responds to the petitions of His people placed before Our Lady's image.

The following text is taken from the website of the Eparchy of Mukachevo, and edited by Father Christopher Zuger, the Chaplain of the Mission Society:

“In 1947, when the Communist Regime liquidated the Basilian monasteries, a copy was made of this miraculous icon and placed in the monastery church in Mukachevo [which was given over to Russian Orthodox use – editor] where it is even until the present day. The family of Brother Julian Migovich (Order of St. Basil the Great), in the town of Svaljava, hid the original icon. He himself also dwelled in Svaljava soon after the expulsion of all the monks from the Mukachevo monastery. After a short while this hiding place became insecure for Brother Julian because the residence was often checked by the KGB agents.

Thus, he decided to pass the icon to the Ljahovich family in order to keep it in Mukachevo.

“In 1998 the miraculous icon was found through the efforts of Basilian Fathers, but it was impossible to return to the Black Mountain, Chernecha Hora, since the former Basilian monas-



All support of the Mission Society's work is in addition to members' and donors' existing support of their local parish, their eparchy, and the Metropolia of Pittsburgh. Renewal of our Mother Church in Central Europe cannot mean a diminishment of our financial and spiritual dedication to the church in America.

**MISSION SOCIETY OF
THE MOTHER OF
GOD OF
BORONYAVO, INC.**

The Mission Society is an independent organization dedicated to the renewal and strengthening of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America and Central Europe.

***Mailing address:
1838 Palomas NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
Tel: (505) 265-5350
Web:
www.missionboronyavo.org***

**LOCAL
REPRESENTATIVES:**

Denver: Fr. Deacon Andrew
and Olga Bodnar -
(303) 932-1490
Phoenix: Diane Rabiej -
(480) 460-0902
Albuquerque: Phyllis Snider -
(505) 296-1173

NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Director: Diane Rabiej
Secretary: Cassandra Epstein
Treasurer: Fr. Deacon Gerald
Sondergaard
Attorney: Brian Escobedo
Chaplain-Moderator/Newsletter
Editor: Rev. Christopher Zuggger
Newsletter Layout: Stephanie
Block

tery is owned by the Orthodox Church. Thus, the icon was transferred to the Basilian monastery in Malij Bereznij where it is until the present time. Every year, during solemn feast –day celebrations and also on all Marian feasts, the icon is put out for public veneration.

“On November 1, 2004, on the feast of our Blessed Martyr Theodore Romzha, before the celebration of the solemn Holy Liturgy in the Cathedral in Uzhgorod, His Excellency Bishop Milan Sasik performed the rite of consecration of the copy of the icon of *Mukachevo Mother of God*. Thus, that officially started the pilgrimage of the *Mukachevo Mother of God* through all the parishes of Mukachevo Eparchy. This pilgrimage lasted till August 26, 2006 and ended on the feast of the Assumption of the Mother of God [August 28 on the Old Calendar, ed.] at the cathedral in Mukachevo, where it is exposed for veneration. On the same day, after the solemn Holy Liturgy, copies of the icon were consecrated for each parish of our Eparchy and thus respect was shown to our heavenly Protectress.

“The icon visited all parishes operating in Mukachevo Eparchy. In this way, the spiritual preparation of the faithful believers for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the gift of this icon from Pope Pius XI in 1926 to the Mukachevo Eparchy was accomplished.”

A NEW MONASTERY OF SAINT NICHOLAS

Realizing that the original Saint Nicholas Monastery will never be restored to its rightful owners, the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Basilian Fathers, a new foundation has been established in the town of Mukachevo. On July 16, 2009, Bishop Sasik led the celebrations for the consecration of the temporary church and the new monastic cells. A copy of the *Mukachevo Mother of God* icon was brought and set up in the temporary chapel. The original is kept at Maly Berezny, the only monastery that has been given back for Greek Catholic use. All the others have been destroyed, used for secular purposes, or taken over by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Basilian Fathers hope to restore the traditional Greek Catholic pilgrimages in Mukachevo with this move, which will both inspire vocations to the Order and strengthen the Greek Catholic Church in all of Transcarpathia.



Seminary tuition is \$300 a year.

One-third of the 112 students cannot afford to pay \$25 a month for their studies.

Can you? Mark your donation Seminary and indicate if you will be contributing monthly. Or you can send one check in a particular amount for the support of a seminarian over the span of several months!

I wish I had more to give, but I can't afford much now. How else can I help?

PRAY – for vocations in America, and for the building up of our Church in the nations of Eastern Europe.

Organize a pancake breakfast at your parish after Divine Liturgy, with your pastor's permission, and round up volunteers for shopping, cooking, serving, and cleaning up. It doesn't take much work to raise enough to renovate a room or pay for a seminarian's tuition.

Hold a garage sale at your home. Get other people to donate items. Post a sign that all the income goes to help our struggling Church in Eastern Europe. Put notices about the sale in the regular newspaper notices, and in church bulletins around your area.

Please cut and insert into enclosed envelope with your donation(s).

Enclosed please find \$ for:

\$____ Construction of New Churches

\$____ Construction or Renovation of Parish Houses

\$____ Construction of the new Convent for Sisters of St Basil in Uzhorod

\$____ Construction of the new Monastery for the Basilian Fathers in Mukachevo

\$____ Divine Liturgy Intentions: _____

Pray for the full restoration of our Church in Transcarpathia and Slovakia!

RECOVERY OF THE EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE

Built in 1641, the Episcopal residence is one of the most prominent buildings in Uzhgorod, as it and the adjacent Cathedral are on a hill which overlooks most of the city, facing westward.

Originally the Jesuit College, this building and the church were given to the Greek Catholic Eparchy in 1775 by the Austrian government after the Jesuits had left. At the time, the town of Ungvar was in the center of the enormous eparchy, which covered territory from central Slovakia into northern Romania of our day. In 1945, Stalin drew his pencil mark along the land just west of the Uzh River, and thus sliced off the eparchy from Czechoslovakia and put it into the USSR. After 1991, the eparchy was thus in independent Ukraine.

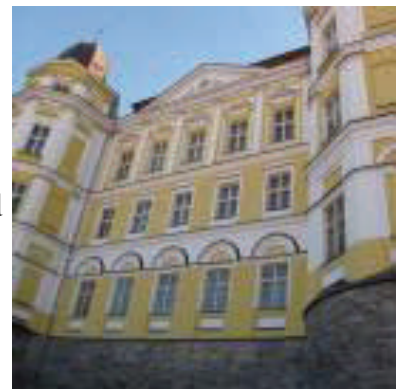


One of the towers before restoration work began

The Residence was confiscated on February 16, 1949, at the time when the Greek Catholic Church was finally liquidated by the Soviet State. It had served not only as the bishop's home, but as the seminary after 1945, and it had an enormous and valuable library on the upper floors, a soup kitchen for the poor, and a private chapel for the bishop's use. This was the building where Blessed Theodore Romzha paced uneasily as he worried about the future of our Church inside the USSR.

While it was given to the "Library of the State University of Uzhgorod," many of the historic and valuable manuscripts were destroyed by the communists and replaced with new books. The building was not kept up at all and has slowly decayed in the past nine years. The courts ruled that the Residence and Cathedral should be restored to the Greek Catholic Church in 1990, although the Cathedral was not returned until October 10, 1991. The Residence was returned in stages, beginning in 2004. No maintenance work was done on it under communist rule, and the Ukrainian government did not have the money to fix the building in 1992-2009. The exterior was in severe decay, but the Eparchy has already restored it to the glory it had during Austro-Hungarian rule.

With this act, the Ukrainian government has proven to all doubters that it stands behind the resurrection of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, and that the Greek Catholic Church is here to stay. It is a significant event in the history of the revived eparchy.



The Residence restored

PROGRESS, PROGRESS, PROGRESS!

The summer of 2009 was very busy in the Eparchy of Mukachevo. Foundations have been laid, or work resumed for new churches and chapels, after the planting of crops, in all of these villages and towns:

Construction of the churches:

Berezninj county: Zahorb and Velilij

Irshava county: Brid

Khust county: Rokosovo

Mukachevo county: Kljucharky

Perechin county: Symer, Turja Polyana, and Zarychevo

Pisareva county: Mukachevo Lord's Transfiguration Church

Rakhiv county: Verkhnje Vodjane,

Svalyava county: Nelipyno, Rodnikyvka, and Solochyn

Uzhgorod county: Chop, Kamyanska, Maly Heyivcy, and Kholmok—Lord's Transfiguration Church (Tseholnya neighborhood); Uzhgorod Holy Trinity church (Bogomoltsa neighborhood)

Vinogradovo county: Sasovo and Cherna

The estimated cost for most of these churches is only \$45-50,000 US dollars. Each of these communities needs at least \$10,000 to finish the construction.

Fifteen parish houses are being built. The cost of a completed parish house is \$56-60,000 and each parish needs at least \$15,000. The parish house provides a residence for the priest and his family, offices, parish library, religious education classrooms, and meeting rooms. In addition, old parish houses, many of them dating from the 1870s, are undergoing renovation work as these were usually returned in poor condition. One priest arrived with his pregnant wife to find that only the kitchen, parlor and one room were habitable in the parish house: he has since spent most of this year trying to fix up both public and private areas while trying to rejuvenate the faith among the parishioners of the town, many of whom thought that there would never be a resident priest living there again. The priest and his wife are young and enthusiastic missionaries: your donations will help them or other priests to live better and work more efficiently.

2009 STATISTICS FOR THE MUKACHEVO EPARCHY

- ~ 139 seminarians at the Romzha Theological Academy
- ~ There are 205 eparchial priests, 20 religious priests and 10 retired priests (one of whom decided to retire only at the age of 93).
- ~ There are 400 parishes but only 246 churches and chapels. There are still three villages where worship must be conducted outdoors due to local opposition; 115 where a room is rented or the parish house is used for worship; and about 30 places where the parish rotates with an Orthodox community in an old church or shares a Roman Catholic church.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Glory to Jesus Christ! We are in the month of October, which starts with such a wonderful feast-day, the Protection of the Holy Mother of God. Under Mary's protecting veil, we find security as we put our trust in her. Our Lady, "the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary" prays for us perpetually, always willing to place our petitions before the Throne of God in eternal glory.

This Mission Society is under patronage as well, under the title of the miraculous icon of Boronyavo. Our Lady was pleased with the Basilian monks who took refuge in caves after they were evicted from their humble monastery by Emperor Joseph II, who thought that houses of prayer were useless to his Austrian Empire. Our Lady showed otherwise with her apparition there.

This month we present to you many needs from the mother diocese for all Byzantine Catholics. The big word, though, is Progress. So much is happening over there. Despite the recession, we have continued to receive donations for our Church, and Liturgy intentions for the priests. Archbishop Babjak (Presov) and Bishop Sasik (Mukachevo) send their thanks to all the donors. We are all remembered in many prayers in the seminaries in Uzhorod and Presov, as well as in places where we have helped. We are especially remembered on March 25, July 20, and August 15 in the Sacrifice of the Divine Liturgies offered by Father Vasyl Blyashyn.

This year, I was able to finally publish my second book, *Finding a Hidden Church*. It is the full history of the Soviet persecution of our Byzantine Catholic Church in the Eparchy of Mukachevo from 1945- 1990, and the ongoing challenges during its resurrection since 1991. Copies are available from your parish bookstore, or online at Eastern Catholic Publications <http://www.ecpubs.com/> or by calling their office at 703- 691-8862. If you want an autographed copy, contact the bookstore at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Albuquerque, either online at www.olphnm.org or by phone at 505-256-1539 during business hours (the parish is on Mountain Time, office opens at 10:15 am after morning services are concluded).

One of the priests in Transcarpathia told me that reading my book was like watching his life in a movie: "You have told our story very well." That is what I wanted above all else, as a foreigner but as a fellow Byzantine Catholic, to tell their story well. There is a lot of material here for classes, discussion, and personal reflection as you read what has been called a "gripping narrative". Please, order it in order to know this history of the people whom you help with your generosity, and to understand what they have come out of, and where they hope to go in building a living Church. Thank you to everyone for prayers, donations, and encouragement. May Our Lady obtain many blessings from her Divine Son for us! – Fr Christopher Zegger

