



# Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo

*Christmas 2009*

## Note from the Chaplain

We are in the Filipovka, or Fast of Saint Philip, the forty-day preparation for the Nativity of Our Lord. You will notice on the church calendar that there are some particular feasts which fall in this season: many of the Old Testament prophets who wrote about the promised Messiah; the Conception of Our Lady in the womb of St Anne; and the popular bishop St. Nicholas. In prayers, St. Nicholas, who was bishop of Myra in modern Turkey, is often called “special patron of our Byzantine Catholic Church.” Why is that? It is because the central stronghold of the Ruthenian Church was the Black Mountain, Chernecha Hora, a craggy hillside outside of Mukachevo which has been a place of prayer by monks – and now Orthodox nuns- following the Rule of Saint Basil for over 1,000 years. These monks, who originally lived in caves and then huts and finally in a stone monastery, prayed in the church of Saint Nicholas, and our bishops lived in that monastery until the Eparchy’s headquarters were moved to Uzhgorod in 1780. Most of the bishops were monks.

Nicholas himself is the saint of charity, of justice, and of orthodox faith, as he is hailed in legend as defeating the heretic Arius at the First Ecumenical Council. The Catholic monks left Chernecha Hora in the back of Red Army trucks in 1947, to be temporarily replaced by Orthodox monks, but in 1956 these monks were dispersed during the fierce anti-religious purge of Khrushchev, and the nuns from the four Orthodox convents in Transcarpathia were ordered to settle in Saint Nicholas’ walls as their houses were forcibly closed. Today the monastery remains, with about 70 Orthodox nuns, and a large pilgrimage church in Russian style soars above the cemetery and monastery alike. One wonders what Saint Nicholas, who was so charitable, makes of all of this shuffling around of monastics and properties? The ongoing division of Catholicism and Orthodoxy must surely come to an end someday, and the pain of the past must find healing in the balm of divine love. Saint Nicholas’ bones still give off myrrh at his tomb in Bari, Italy, and there are Catholic and Orthodox churches there to receive his blessings. Until the day of reunification comes, we turn to him asking for his continued heavenly intercession for our Ruthenian Church and our work for its restoration.



**St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra**

**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.*

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**UPDATE ON SOJMY** – The congregation has increased to forty-two families. The new church of Saint Basil the Great will be dedicated on January 10, by Bishop Sasik. As people see the Greek Catholic Church using permanent buildings, more return to our Church. It is very important that the Greek Catholic Church worships in its own structures, rather than outdoors, in rented space, or crowded parish houses. After 50 years of persecution, and 19 years of difficulties, people are still not certain that our Church will be allowed to flourish. Permanent churches and chapels change that perception.

**KOROLEVO PARISH** – Many of our readers know this town's name because of our long-standing support for the orphanage. However, this appeal is in regard to the parish church. While the Greek Catholic church was ordered to be returned to our use, the Russian Orthodox refused to surrender it and the local authorities have not enforced the court ruling. The old church actually stands empty, while the Orthodox have built a new church. In June of 2006 the Greek Catholic community started to build a new church. With the generous help of local supporters, and some from abroad, this church was dedicated on Ascension Thursday, 2008. Interior work continues on the iconostasis, some lighting, and heating. Exterior plaster work cost US\$4,500. With the opening of this church, the parish grew rapidly in size to 354 families. Catechism classes take place in three shifts because of the large number of children.

The pastor of Ascension Parish is Father Ivan Isaevich, who is also the director of the Orphanage. He sends this report to us about the Sisters of St Joseph and their work. For those who do not know, Father Isaevich took over an abandoned school in 1997 and has devoted himself to the parish and to rescuing orphaned and needy children. The buildings were in complete ruin, and since the economic situation is so poor, there is constant work to be done. But the interiors are brightly painted, the children have prospered, and the State has recognized the work as valuable (while not giving any support).

**ORPHANAGE** — In this house dwell twelve children who are orphans, and also 54 children from needy families.



**Korolevo Orphanage, managed by the Sisters of St. Joseph**

**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!

There are lots of ways you can spread the word about the Mission Society and the needs of our Greek-Catholic Church in Europe.

One of our donors takes the Newsletter and makes copies herself, passing them out to her relatives, friends, co-workers. We supply her with the small remittance envelopes. So, just write to us by email or snail mail, and we'll send out what you need!

Mark your donation please using this box or the remittance envelope provided. If you are using this box, be sure to put your mailing information at the bottom.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for construction of new churches in Mukachevo Eparchy

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for construction of new St Nicholas Monastery

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for tuition assistance for seminarians in Ukraine or Slovakia

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Korolevo Orphanage

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Caritas Svidnik in Slovakia

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Divine Liturgy intentions: Please print out the names and intentions you wish to be remembered. The suggested offering is \$5.

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, I AM INTERESTED IN MAKING THE OTPUST IN 2010 TO CENTRAL EUROPE.

**DIVINE LITURGY CARDS:** full-color icon cover with an inside page to write out the intention, and information on the Mission Society on the back; matching envelope provided. Minimum offering of \$5 per Liturgy is requested. The Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist is surely the greatest gift anyone can give, or receive! Please let us know how many you would like: \_\_\_\_\_

**SEND ME HOLY CARDS** of the Miraculous Icon of the Boronyavo Mother of God. How many?

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

We have five lay workers (2 teachers, 2 nurses and 1 cook) and five Sisters (2 teachers, 1 cook and 1 nurse) from the Congregation of Saint Joseph the Holy spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary to work with the children. We began in 1997. With every year we improve our work for the benefit of children and their future. There have graduated already 17 children-orphan who have started their own families and received proper education and work.

At present we face the problem of the provision of heating for the winter season. In order to improve the warm insulation of the building we changed windows and doors and also heating system was replaced by the new more economic one. But most of our worries are connected with nourishment, medical support and improvement of health of children.

Lately political and economic crisis in Ukraine caused a number of difficulties maintaining the building of the orphanage and kindergarten. Since we are a church organization we cannot get any support from the State, but only from the donations of the faithful, our own support or our little household.

Therefore we kindly ask you to help us to continue our work and mission. We have to reduce our debt for the accomplished reconstruction works: for

the purchase of the new windows and doors – 1.500,00 €; new heating system – 450,00 €. Altogether it is 1950,00 € , or US \$2,919,370.



*The Sisters of Saint Joseph, Betrothed of the Most Holy Virgin Mary were founded in 1898. They dedicated themselves to catechizing children and visiting the abandoned sick. After the occupation of western Ukraine, they continued in the underground. Two victims of Soviet persecution were, beatified by the Pope in 2001: Olympia and Lavrentia, both of whom died in Siberian exile. Today the Sisters serve both children and the elderly in Ukraine, Poland, Canada and Brazil. They wear a traditional Eastern-style monastic habit, as seen in the photographs.*



The capital of Transcarpathia is the city of Uzhgorod. Of its 130,000 inhabitants, 50,000 are Greek Catholics, 12,500 are Roman Catholics, and 45,000 Russian Orthodox. The rest of the people belong to other confessions, are religiously indifferent or atheist. The city has eleven Greek Catholic parishes but only some working Greek Catholic churches. Since 1991, three have been returned, one is shared, two churches are under construction, and two new churches have been completed. Realizing that the court orders regarding return of the old

churches or at least joint use of the old churches will never be accepted by the Russian Orthodox eparchy, the decision has been made to lay the foundations of three new churches for the remaining parishes.

**TSEHOLNYAYA CHURCH** – The Church of the Transfiguration is one of the oldest in Uzhgorod. The parish is known to have existed in 1691, when Pope Gregory XVI designated this church as an “indulgence church” or Otpust Church, with a plenary indulgence given to those who worship there on the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord (August 6). The present church dates from 1802. It was given to Orthodox use by the USSR in 1949. In 1990, the city council voted to return the church to Greek-Catholic use because of its spiritual significance as an Otpust Church, and indeed Bishop Semedi offered a Divine Liturgy in this church in 1989 at the request of the government. However, the Orthodox parish refuses to either share the church or move it. The Catholic congregation worships outside in the churchyard. The pastor writes to us:

In the period of Soviet persecutions we suffered much from godless regime and propaganda, which tried to kill our church traditions and the faith of our fathers and we continue our sufferings in the years of independence and religious freedom in the Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union because of the political reasons and the powerful influence of Moscow its not possible to get back our church building.

In July 2008 Uzhgorod city council rent us without payment a part of our former parish house (100 square meters in size). We organized there a temporary chapel. Since 19 August 2008 and till present we celebrate everyday Holy Liturgies in the temporary chapel, as also Saturday evening vespers. On Sundays and feast days there are 2 Liturgies with matins and vespers. At present community numbers 280 faithful. We have two shifts of catechism classes for children on Saturdays. Please help us to build church and serve our people, and preach Gospel to new people.

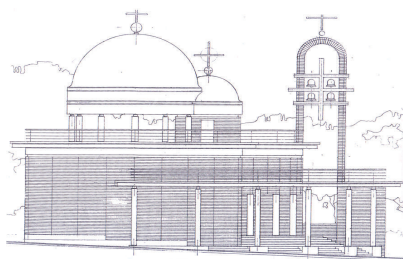
**Pilgrimage 2010** — Plans are tentative now for a late summer pilgrimage that would cover eastern Slovakia, most of Transcarpathia (Ukraine), and perhaps a visit to the Weeping Mother of God in Mariapocs (Hungary). The trip would last about ten days, flying out of New York City. In Europe, we will use modern coach-buses, but this would not be a trip for the physically-challenged as there will be serious walking in villages and hillsides. We will try to schedule this to coincide with at the Otpust on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, which is the feast of St Elijah the Prophet on Old Calendar, at Boronyavo itself. Pilgrims will thus be able to ven-



**Outdoor services at the Tsehólnaya church have taken place since the spring of 1991. The Orthodox parish refuses to share the church, or to honor the city decree and return it.**



**Tsehólnaya parish children waiting for Saint Nicholas in 2008. In 2010, they hope to greet the Saint in their own church.**



**Projected new church of the Transfiguration (Tsehólnaya district), Uzhgorod.**

erate the original miraculous icon and worship in the new church built by the Basilian Fathers. In Ukraine, pilgrims will also be taken to the tomb of Blessed Theodore Romzha, the Theological Academy in Uzhgorod, the monastery-under-construction in Mukachevo and to venerate its icon of the Mother of God, the historic churches, and worship with communities we are helping who do not have their own church. In Slovakia, pilgrims will pray at the tombs of Blessed Paul Peter Gojdich and Basil Hopko in the Presov Cathedral, and Blessed Dominik Methodius Trcka at the Redemptorist Monastery. In both countries, we will visit with our Sisters. While the cost will be high since August is prime tourist season, we hope to make it a meaningful pilgrimage in every way possible. Please let us know if you are interested.

**CARITAS — Svidnik** remains an ongoing project. The building renovations are completed, which has allowed Caritas to expand its work among the Greek Catholic population, and among non-Catholics as well. Caritas provides employment counseling, which is very important as the change in Slovakia to the Euro has created economic difficulties; soup kitchen for the elderly who have no families to help them; and psychological counseling center for anyone in distress. Some seminarians serve their pastoral year working at Caritas and living in the renovated attic.

### **Board Meeting Report**

1. We are expanding our mailing to every Byzantine Catholic parish in hopes that pastors will post notices about the mission society in their bulletins, and pass out copies.
2. We will sponsor a pilgrimage in 2010 – see separate article.
3. We did a review of the situation of the Ruthenian Greek-Catholic Church in Europe. In Slovakia, that country now uses the Euro, which has pushed up the cost of everything dramatically. The Bratislava eparchy has only a few parish churches, and otherwise rents space in Latin churches.
4. Fr. Zuger reported that he can not be counted to make annual visiting trips to central Europe due to his health issues. Also, Father either paid for all those trips out of his pocket, or got help from benefactors. An official visit should be made once a year to visit with the four bishops in Slovakia and Ukraine, to look at projects, and be able to bring back news and reports. Deacon Brian Escobedo volunteered to take this on. He has made several trips, either with Fr. Zuger or by himself. We will have to find funding however. All housing in for those visits to Central Europe has been provided by the bishops, seminaries, or parish priests, and that would probably continue.
5. The Board voted to set aside 50% of donations made to “greatest need” regularly, so as to build up a travel fund and to provide for printing and mailing of newsletters, holy cards, and remittance envelopes.
6. The Board voted to meet quarterly in Albuquerque and using phone conference to speak to those not able to attend. This will be necessary in light of the Otpust 2010 and in order to keep up with the information now coming out of the Eparchy of Mukachevo on a weekly basis, thanks to Artur Bubnevich, Projects Director, and the Curia Office. We also will try to get such regular contacts in the Archeparchy of Presov and Eparchies of Kosice and Bratislava.
7. The Website will have PayPal installed in order to make online donations possible. This should help increase donations, however the site can not be used for Liturgy intentions as PayPal takes a small fee on each donation. Liturgy stipends will have to be mailed to the Mission office.