



## Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo, Inc.

*Pascha 2009*

### **Life, Ministry and Death of Bishop Ivan Semedi**

*First Public Bishop of the Eparchy of Mukachevo since the Suppression in 1949*

On December 6, 2008, the feast of Saint Nicholas on the New Calendar, Bishop Ivan Semedi died at the age of 88, having served as a bishop for 31 years and a priest for 62 years. He was buried from the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on December 9, and buried in the village cemetery of Mala Kopanya, Vinohradiv raion, his hometown.

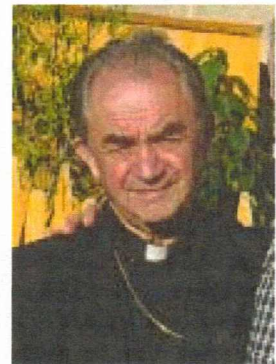
Bishop Ivan was born there on June 26, 1921. He grew up in the Czechoslovakian Republic but in 1938 that country was dismembered and Transcarpathia was re-annexed to Hungary. In 1942 he entered the Three Holy Hierarchs Seminary, in Uzhhorod (Ungvar). When the Red Army liberated Transcarpathia, in the autumn of 1944, he joined the volunteers of the Czechoslovakia Liberation Army. He returned to the seminary in 1945, when Transcarpathia, and thus the Eparchy of Mukachevo, had become part of the USSR.

On July 6, 1947, he received priestly ordination at the hands of our martyr, Blessed Theodore Romzha. He chose celibacy, as the times were so dangerous that he felt a celibate priest would have a better opportunity to serve the Greek Catholic Church. He was appointed prefect and teacher at the seminary, simultaneously serving as the notary for the eparchy. He joined the Administrator the Eparchy, Father Muranyi, in boldly demanding that the Office of Religious Affairs legalize the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church after Blessed Theodore was martyred in 1947.

After the eparchy was officially destroyed in 1949, he was one of forty-seven priests who withdrew from public ministry and took secular jobs. The Soviets believed that these men had given up their priesthood but, instead, they organized themselves and small groups of faithful into an underground Church. This Church expanded after 1955, when Father Muranyi returned from prison and Bishop Alexander Khira began annual visits to ordain priests secretly. Using his job as a truck driver, Bishop Semedi was able to travel around the Transcarpathian oblast ministering to believers illegally. On August 24, 1978, in the village of Onokivtsi, near Uzhhorod, he was secretly ordained a bishop by Bishop Khira, at the request of the Father Muranyi and the ruling Chapter of the underground Eparchy. At the time, they told him that he could not refuse, but even so he prayed for three days before accepting their request.

After Bishop Khira's death, he became the Ordinary for the Eparchy and led it during the remainder of Soviet rule. He had many encounters with the Soviet secret police (KGB), and was nearly killed in staged "accidents" when he felt their cars actually brush his body as they tried to run him down. He guided the eparchy into open life when the Greek Catholic Church was finally legalized at the end of 1989. He was confirmed as Bishop of Mukachevo on January 21, 1991, by the Holy See.

Bishop Ivan had a difficult time adjusting to open life, as was the case for many former religious and political dissidents of the old Soviet Union. The Eparchy faced immediate challenges, from trying to regain churches to starting up the seminary program again, to refuting years of false propaganda from the communists. He endured, trying to address many complex issues in a rapidly changing country, independent Ukraine. Transcarpathia remained under the rule of hard-liners, who were antagonistic to the Greek Catholic Church, and the bishop suffered



**Bishop Ivan Semedi**

**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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much. He resigned in 2003, and was succeeded by Bishop Milan Sasik, CM, the current Administrator. May his memory be eternal!

**Our Byzantine Catholic Church in Eastern Europe on the Internet:**

- The official web page of the Mukachevo Eparchy [www.mgce.uz.ua](http://www.mgce.uz.ua). (in Ukrainian)
- The Metropolia of Presov, Slovakia: <http://www.grkatpo.sk> (in Slovak)
- Eparchy of Kosice: <http://www.grkatke.sk/> (in Slovak)
- Eparchy of Bratislava: <http://www.grkat.nfo.sk/Bratislava> (in Slovak and English)

**A Note from Father Ivan Isaevich, in Korolevo Parish and Orphanage.** "We greet you and thank you for remembering us. The twelve orphans, the Sisters, and I pray for you". The Orphanage also gives classes to single fathers and single mothers, providing them with help in raising their children. There are single parents due to not only divorce, but ongoing alcohol and drug addictions. Not even the eastern villages of Transcarpathia are immune from these scourges of family life! The Orphanage has separate wings for boys and girls, with Sisters of Saint Josaphat caring for the children.



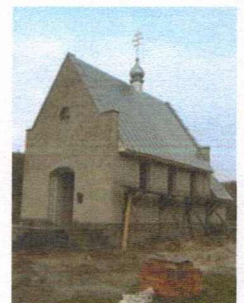
**The Korolevo Parish Orphanage**



**Outdoor Divine Liturgy** on January 8 for Old Calendar Christmas, celebrated by Bishop Sasik, in front of former Greek Catholic Church, parish of St. Michael, in Bedykivtsi village, Moroz raion, Transcarpathia. The local Orthodox refuse to share the church—originally built in 1859—with the Catholics, and there is no other building big enough to hold the worshippers. This is why we ask for help for building new churches! Villagers' funds are limited, and American dollars help tremendously in constructing new chapels and parish houses. With these buildings, the faithful can come indoors, and those who are wavering in their commitment to our Church will hopefully come forward.



**This is another village, Veliki Lazakh: Christmas Day, January 7, 2009**



**New Church of Saint John Chrysostom, built between two villages in Mukachevo Raion (County) to serve Greek Catholic faithful, with your donations.**

**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 seminarians in Uzhhorod, Ukraine. 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).*

I am enclosing a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Divine Liturgies to be offered in Eastern Europe.

*Please print or type your intentions.*

Yes, please send me Liturgy Intention Cards with envelopes which I can give to people benefiting spiritually. How many? \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing support for (check those that apply):

- Church Construction in Transcarpathia
- Orphanage in Korolevo
- Sisters of Saint Basil
- Seminary in Uzhhorod
- Seminary in Presov
- Greatest Need



**Bishop Peter Rusnak, first Bishop of the Eparchy of Bratislava, Slovakia.**



**Otpust (Pilgrimage) in honor of SS. Cyril and Methodius, Secovce, Slovakia.**

**The World Economy and Eastern Europe:** *The Wall Street Journal* and *Radio Free Europe* have both been reporting that the economic crisis threatens economic growth and reform in much of Eastern Europe. This is the situation in lands which we serve: a) the situation in Slovakia is fairly stable, but she is vulnerable b) Hungary is having serious problems c) Ukraine, outside the euro zone, faces major threats. Your donations are sent in US dollars and the money is received in Slovakia and Ukraine in dollars. Dollars are the preferred currency in Eastern Europe, are received gratefully by contractors, and help seminarians, priests' families, and schools greatly. Thus, your donations go far. Whatever you can set aside during Great Lent as a sacrifice in these hard times will help greatly.

Father Vasyl Blyashyn of the Mukachevo Eparchy offers the Divine Liturgy for all benefactors of the Society on March 25, July 20, and August 15. In addition, Molebens are sung for the intentions of benefactors at the Blessed Theodore Romzha Theological Academy in Uzhhorod by the seminarians. The seminarians in Slovakia also remember benefactors in their prayers, as do the Sisters of Saint Basil and the orphans in Korolevo. Thank you for your continued faithfulness in helping our Byzantine Catholic Church triumph over the physical, moral, and spiritual damage left by communism.

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By Father Stephen Bendasz. This is an English translation of the Hungarian letters that Father Bendasz wrote home during five years in the Gulag Labor Camps, including a few illustrations. Father Bendasz's son, Father Daniel, is pastor in St Basil Church, Mala Kopanya, Transcarpathia, and teaches Church History at the Seminary in Uzhhorod. 200+ pages. \$20

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