



Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo

Pascha 2014

New Parish House for Drotyntsi Parish of the Nativity of the Theotokos

We have been asked to focus on this one project. **A parish house is very important** in the Eparchy of Mukachevo: it provides a residence for the priest and his family, and classrooms, library, and meeting room. By providing a residence, it means that the priest no longer has to commute from another location; commuting in Transcarpathia means driving over poorly paved roads which are shared with other drivers, bicyclists, and horse-drawn wagons, all trying to avoid the same pot-holes. When the priest finally reaches his family or the church, he is a bit worn out. Commuting means that the family is living away from the parish, which puts another burden on the priest. He has to be available to the parishioners, but if his family lives a good distance away, that availability is strained. So, having a parish house is an important improvement for the priest and family, in addition to the parish.

For parishioners, a parish house provides a location for education, study, and gatherings.

All the catechetical work is done in a parish house: religious education classes are held for all ages in the house, the parish library is here, and parish meetings take place here. Usually the priest and family live upstairs, but in this case, the house is a long one with family at one side and parish occupying the rest.

Here is the request and some history:

Drotyntsi was an entirely Greek Catholic village in 1945. In 1949, the communists suppressed the Greek Catholic Church and ordered that the parish church be given to the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow. A Russian Orthodox priest was installed as pastor. Immediately the parish split between those who saw themselves as Greek Catholics who attended their old church, regardless of who the priest was, and those who were Greek Catholics who refused to attend Orthodox worship and entered an underground existence “behind closed windows” to pray and attend secret Divine Liturgies or prayer meetings.

With legalization of the Greek Catholic Church in 1991, the Greek Catholic parishioners registered their parish on August 27. In these years, people attending Orthodox churches had to decide if they were still Greek Catholic, and so unite with those who had been underground Greek Catholics, or if they were Russian Orthodox. Even if a majority voted to return to the Greek Catholic Church and had support from the courts, usually the church was kept by the Orthodox minority, and only some churches are shared-use. This is what happened in Drotyntsi, as the parishioners relate:

In the period of Soviet persecutions we suffered much from the 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



The Drotyntsi church was the first major project funded by Mission Society supporters! Many donors attended the Divine Liturgy of consecration of the church and ordination of the second priest from the parish while making a pilgrimage to Slovakia and Transcarpathian Oblast of Ukraine.

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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Block

of independence and religious freedom in the Ukraine after the fall of Soviet Union because of political reasons and the powerful influence of (the) Moscow (Patriarchate) it was not possible to get our church building back.

When Greek Catholic priests entered our church, they were driven out. Faithful who prayed the Rosary on the territory of the church were beaten with tree branches and driven out of the church yard. In 1992-93 a lot of Greek Catholic families left the church and started to pray in the former school. But soon the building was declared unsafe and we were moved into the elementary school. Soon our parish council decided to start the construction of a new church.

Begun in 1996 on the initiative of parish son Father Taras Lovska and his brother Josef, the parishioners enlisted the aid of Jaroslav Ple-skatch as architect and Michael Hymynets as the foreman. The parishioners donated a total of 6,000 work days erecting the church. It was dedicated on September 19, 1999, two days before the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Old Calendar), by Bishop Ivan Semedi, who also ordained Josef Lovska as a priest at the same Divine Liturgy.

Now, in 2013-2014, the parishioners write to us:

At present, religious education of the future generation is the most important problem of modern society and especially in post-communist countries. We would like to finish the construction of the parish house as quickly as possible, because it would be a place where we can work with young Christian families, with their children, to give them all kinds of spiritual assistance and decide their living problems with good advice.

In order to improve a community's youth and children's spiritual upbringing, we need a place to live for our serving priest as well as some rooms for catechetical purposes and youth gatherings. We have numerous youth in our parish!

Due to the current economic crisis in Ukraine, it is not feasible to build something new. Therefore, the parish has elected to buy an old house with a barn and renovate it. The cost is \$23,000. Parishioners have donated \$7,000 and the Eparchy of Mukachevo has submitted a request for \$10,000 to the United States Catholic Bishops' Conference Office for Eastern Europe. **They ask us for \$6,000.**

This project has the full support and approval of Bishop Milan Sasik, CM.



Mission Society chaplain Father Christopher Zugger with Bishop Milan Sasik, at the consecration of Bishop Kurt Burnette

Featured Mission Society Work

*There are so many needs!
The following projects are the ones we wish to emphasize this month.
Please indicate which ones your donation supports:*

- Sisters of St Basil in Slovakia and Ukraine
- Seminarian Support: Eparchy of Mukachevo
- Seminarian Support: Slovakia
- New Church Construction: Mukachevo eparchy
- Support of Young Priests
- Korolevo Orphanage

Divine Liturgy Intentions

Please send \$10 for each Divine Liturgy. If you want Liturgy cards mailed to you, please include a note and tell us how many. These cards are full-color icons of Our Lady of Boronyavo, with an interior page where you can write your intentions, and a history page, with a matching envelope. We are happy to send you as many cards as you would like: keep them on hand for special occasions!

Note from the Chaplain

Ukraine has been in the news a great deal in 2013-2014. The four months of daily protests at Maidan Square in Kiev, in freezing weather, suddenly were resolved in the revolution which took place after the shooting of peaceful protesters by rooftop snipers. The new government has scheduled elections for May 25 and is working to provide a democratic and transparent transition. However the Russian invasion of Crimea followed by the placing of Russian troops all along Ukraine's borders and now the stirring up of trouble in the east and south has sorely stressed the new government, to say the least.



Our Church in Ukraine exists only in the Transcarpathian Oblast, which borders Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. The Oblast is thus far from the military events, **but shares the anxiety of all citizens regarding the future of Ukraine.** While 62% of Ukrainians have no religious affiliation (which does not mean that they are atheists, but rather they are mostly indifferent or unattached), the Churches still command respect in society and were very present at Maidan. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church sent priests and an American-born bishop, Bishop Borys Gudziak (Bishop of France and the Benelux nations, rector of Ukrainian



Clergy attempt to keep protests peaceful. Russian Orthodox priests (above) and Lutheran minister (below)

Catholic University in L'viv) to minister to the Greek Catholics and anyone else at Maidan. The square had tents for worship by Orthodox, Catholics of both the Greek and Latin Catholic Churches, Protestants, Jews and Muslims. The Lutheran pastor of Kiev, whose church is just steps from the square on the aptly-named street Luteranskaya ulitsa, was famously shown standing between the two opposing lines, asking both sides to resort to peaceful negotiations, as were Eastern Christian clergy. We can hope and pray fervently that the religious presence at Maidan will translate into a greater religious presence in Ukrainian society at large, and religious influence on the new republic. That would help bring about an end to "kleptocracy", the looting of a country's wealth by a few wealthy oligarchs* and the establishment of a traditional democratic state.

The Eparchy of Mukachevo has been holding prayer services for peace, requiems for the souls of those killed at Maidan, and canceled many activities that were considered to be too joyous given what was happening to the east and now the south. Together with Pope Francis, the Eparchy prays fervently that Ukraine will know peace and justice.

**Oligarchs' wealth and power in Ukraine are defined by the independent Kyiv Post newspaper as: "a system where great public wealth was suddenly 'available' for privatization (e.g., the Soviet Union as it was dissolving), oligarchs could be counted on to figure out how to enrich themselves, and many certainly did. But the essence of oligarchy is the fewness of those at the top, not their wealth" and the fact that these few businessmen who dominated the circles of influence around the former president, but still have power.*

The Dramatic Life of an Underground Byzantine Catholic Hero

Bishop Ivan Ljavinec took as his Episcopal motto: The Lord is my strength, from Psalm 27: 1. This was appropriate, since when reading the story of his life, you realize that he had to have depended upon God for all that he managed to accomplish. He was born in the northeastern mountain town of Volovents in 1923. He was a seminarian during World War II, and was sent to Vienna to finish his studies and so was outside of Transcarpathia when it was annexed to the USSR. He thus joined the Eparchy of Prešov in democratic Czechoslovakia and was ordained a priest in 1946 by Bishop Paul Peter Gojdič. Appointed spiritual directory of the seminary, he escaped arrest in the 1950 roundup of Greek Catholic clergy and suppression of the Church by the communists. Bishop Basil Hopko gave him extraordinary powers to keep the Church alive underground, including the authority to reconcile those Greek Catholic priests who had become Orthodox but wished to return to the Church while still officially serving as Orthodox priests (these priests later helped re-establish our Church in 1968). He was arrested in 1955, as were nine priests, one Sister of St. Basil, four laymen and one laywoman who were all involved in the Greek Catholic underground. Father Ivan was sentenced to four years in the harsh prisons of the communists. After his release, the communists forbade him to live in eastern Slovakia, the stronghold of the Greek Catholic Church, and banished him to Prague, thinking he would thus suffer a lonely exile since he spoke no Czech and had no connections there. But nothing could keep Father Ivan down, and while he took up jobs like a garbage collector, fireman, and train conductor, he successfully contacted underground Christians, both Latin and Greek Catholics, and so went back to priestly work.

During the famous Prague Spring of 1968, Father Ivan collaborated with Prague's Archbishop František Tomášek for the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church. This brief liberalization of communism was harshly ended with the Soviet invasion in August, but the new laws giving partial restoration to the Greek Catholic Church survived, and Father Ivan was installed as pastor of St. Clement Church, the parish founded by his mentor, Bishop Hopko, in 1929. This church and all of its daughter parishes and missions had been closed in 1950. With the reimposition of harsh Stalin-style communism after the invasion, Father Ivan was allowed to conduct pastoral work only in the city of Prague: all those Greek Catholics who had moved to Bohemia and Moravia had to go to the capital for their sacraments. That same year he was ordained as a bishop for the Greek Catholics by the controversial underground bishop Felix-Maria Davidek, who feared that the Church faced total destruction.^[1]

Father Ivan was deeply involved in Catholic resistance work in communist Czechoslovakia, collaborating in events such as the public Masses held at Velehrad in honor of the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius, in direct defiance of the communists. At the end of 1989, communist rule came to an end. On January 1, 1993, the Velvet Divorce took place, wherein the new states of Slovakia and the Czech Republic became separate countries. Choosing to remain in Prague, Father Ivan was named Greek Catholic Episcopal Vicar for the new republic, and in 1996, at the age of 72, he was named the first Exarch of the new Greek Catholic Exarchate in the Czech Republic. For this post, he was conditionally re-ordained a bishop, appropriately enough in the Basilica of St. Clement in Rome (where St. Cyril is buried), to regularize his secret ordination. His pastoral work from 1960 on laid the foundation for the flourishing Greek Catholic Church in the Czech Lands today. He died celebrating the Divine Liturgy – a gift from God. After his death, he was laid to rest in his hometown, on December 15, 2012 with Bishop Milan Šašík presiding at the funeral. May his memory be eternal!

Notes

^[1] Bishop Davidek later ordained Fr. Marián Potáš, O. S. B. M. as another secret Greek Catholic bishop, in 1972, as the communists continued their stranglehold on religious life in Czechoslovakia. At that time, Bishop Hopko was free, but he was never allowed to function as a bishop; thus, these steps were taken realizing that once he died, so would the Greek Catholic episcopate in Czechoslovakia.

Statistics of the Greek Catholic Exarchate of the Czech Republic: Faithful: 178,000 Priests: 39 Parishes: 25



Bishop Ivan Ljavinec died on December 2, 2012, while offering the Divine Liturgy. What a wonderful way to die - offering the Holy Sacrifice!! Nothing could be better for a priest.

Bishop Ivan, Eternal Memory!

Easter Card Project

Next Year, Nationwide

This Easter, we tried a new project locally. We made Easter Cards to be given as gifts. Each card had a space for an intention for the Easter Sunday Divine Liturgy offered by Bishop Milan Šašik at Holy Cross Cathedral in Uzhhorod. We raised a total of \$2,050 through sales in Albuquerque at Annunciation Roman Catholic Church, where Father Chris was preaching on the Fridays of Lent and at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church. The volunteers are simply astounded! We will expand this program to a national level.



Bishop Milan, holding prayer cards while vesting

About The Mission Society

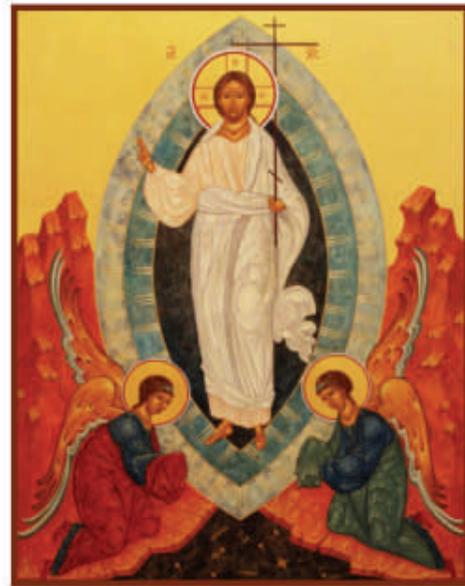
The Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo raises money to help the Byzantine Catholic Church in Ukraine and Slovakia.

We distribute funds to the priests, seminarians, Sisters of St. Basil the Great, in both countries and for the Korolevo Orphanage in Ukraine.

We are an all-volunteer organization working for the building up of the Byzantine Catholic Church in its ongoing recovery from Communist persecution.



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Christ Is Risen!