



# HISTORY OF ST. NICHOLAS PARISH<sup>1</sup>

by *Sophia Sluzar*

The formation of St. Nicholas Parish dates from 1903 when a sufficiently large and dedicated group of Ukrainian people in Wilmington decided they wanted their own church in order to pray according to the ritual of their homeland and to maintain their religious and ethnic identity. The evolution of the Wilmington Parish paralleled the establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States as a whole. Their history appeared to be marked by alternating periods of consolidation and conflict. This reflected the influences that played upon the Ukrainian immigrants at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ultimately, the reaction of the immigrants to these influences helped to define their religious and national affiliation.

## Early History

Ukrainians began to settle in Wilmington in the 1890's. They migrated from farms or the Pennsylvania coal-mining regions to work in the factories, mills, and iron and steel works located in east Wilmington, where most of the immigrants also lived. Initially, they satisfied their spiritual and social needs by traveling to a Ukrainian Catholic Church in Philadelphia and by inviting priests from Philadelphia to hold liturgical services in Wilmington in private homes or rented storefronts. Influenced, no doubt, by a campaign in Ukrainian-American newspapers at that time urging the erection of a church in every community where Ukrainians lived, the people in Wilmington converted a stable into a chapel. Records indicate that the chapel was already in use in 1903. A committee was formed to collect funds in order to build a proper church. In 1905 the committee received a charter incorporating St. Michael's United Greek Catholic Ruthenian Church. In the following year, the committee purchased a lot on South Heald Street; and, in 1909, the church was erected largely with the labor of the parishioners themselves.

Even before the church building was entirely completed, a rift developed among the parishioners. Some were dissatisfied that the parish did not have a full-time pastor. Reverend Alexander Paulak, who also served Baltimore and Curtis Bay in Maryland, as well as Chester in Pennsylvania, came to Wilmington at most twice a month. Reverend Paulak had received this pastoral assignment from Bishop Soter Ortynsky, who had been named bishop of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States by Pope Pius X in 1907. Some parishioners were also dissatisfied that the episcopal prerogatives given to Bishop Ortynsky seemed to place him in a subordinate position in relation to the Roman Catholic episcopate in the United States.

A group in the parish belonging to a Russophile organization invited the Reverend Ivan Zaklynsky to become pastor in Wilmington. Reverend Zaklynsky was a Ukrainian Catholic priest who had been in North America since 1895; however, he did not submit to the jurisdiction of Bishop Ortynsky. He frequently advertised his availability to serve as pastor and was invited by a number of parish communities, which hungered for their own priest. When he came to Wilmington, the parish-

<sup>1</sup> This account is based on the histories in *Diamond Jubilee: St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, 1903-1978*, (Wilmington, DE), 1978; Myron B. Kuropas, *The Ukrainian Americans: Roots and Aspirations, 1884-1954*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1991; and, relevant articles in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 5 Volumes, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1993.

ioners divided into adherents of Father Paulak and Father Zaklynsky. The Zaklynsky faction kept control of the church building. Father Paulak continued to serve those parishioners who had not joined the Zaklynsky group but informed Bishop Ortynsky that a new administrator was needed to heal the discord. In December 1909 Bishop Ortynsky assigned his chancellor, the Reverend Zachary Orun, to right the situation in the Wilmington Parish. Divine liturgy was celebrated by Father Paulak and then by Reverend Orun in the lower chapel of the nearby St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. To avoid confusion with St. Michael's, Father Paulak had proposed to call the chapel in St. Mary's the St. Basil's Chapel. His proposal was adopted.

Despite the dispute in this period, the Ukrainians in Wilmington organized an amateur theater group and a "Sich" society, which sponsored the Wilmington Band under the leadership of Messrs. Sitchka and Kostyk. The Band performed at community events in the region. For example, in 1910 it played at the dedication of Holy Ghost Church in Chester and the blessing of the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia. The Band gave a benefit concert for St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church in Wilmington, which served the local Polish community, and it played at its dedication.

Meanwhile, the number of parishioners in St. Michael's had dwindled. Bishop Ortynsky had placed St. Michael's under an interdict, forbidding religious services. Father Zaklynsky approached Russian Orthodox Church authorities in the United States for support. But many of his adherents did not want to belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, the Russian Orthodox authorities were wary of Father Zaklynsky and were reluctant to assist him. In October 1911, St. Michael's Church was put up for a sheriff's sale since its remaining parishioners could not support it.

The parishioners of St. Basil's Chapel collected sufficient funds to buy back St. Michael's in 1912. Constantine Levitsky and Mary Surma each donated \$500, and Father Gulez, the pastor of St. Hedwig's, lent \$2,000. With these funds and many other smaller donations, Bishop Ortynsky bought back the church building and purchased an adjacent lot. Father Orun proposed that the parish place itself under the patronage of St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker. A number of members of St. Michael's parish returned to St. Nicholas parish. In 1913 the church was incorporated as St. Nicholas Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church.



*Rev. Wolodymyr Derzyruka  
administrator with daughter Lidia*

### St. Nicholas Parish Flourishes

The parishioners refurbished and improved the church building, bought liturgical vessels and ecclesiastical vestments, and supported the Church with funds raised by the religious and social organizations in the parish. In 1912 the first church choir came into being. After a period in which priest-administrators had brief tenures at St. Nicholas, the Reverend Volodymyr Derzeruka became pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Chester and administrator of St. Nicholas in 1914. He remained until April 1922. Father Derzeruka was a talented and versatile individual. He was fluent in several languages, an author of books and articles, a translator of literary classics, and a composer of music. He was well liked by his parishioners. Ukrainian national life flourished during his tenure. A parochial school was founded in 1914. Father Derzeruka also promoted adult literacy. He organized a section of "Prosvita" (a patriotic self-education and self-

help society widespread in western Ukraine), loaned his own books to Prosvita, and subscribed to Ukrainian newspapers that he made available to the parishioners.

After Father Derzeruka was reassigned, Reverend Antin Lotovych was assigned as pastor in Chester and administrator in Wilmington from 1922 to 1926. The Church Hall was built in 1923 on the lot adjacent to the Church that had been purchased earlier. To defray the cost of the Church Hall construction, Father Lotovych asked the parishioners to donate \$25 and lend another \$25 for one year. In September 1925, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Church Hall was dedicated by Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky during his canonical visitation to the parish. Regrettably, the parish soon experienced another period of discord.

### National Identity

To understand the issues leading to discord in the parish in the 1920's, as well as the earlier split, a brief account of the conditions that the immigrants faced in the United States and a review of the developments in their homeland is necessary. The first mass immigration of Ukrainians began in the 1870's. The immigrants were overwhelmingly from areas that now constitute western Ukraine, but that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy until its dissolution at the end of World War I. These areas are Bukovina, the Carpatho-Ukraine, and Galicia with its Lemko sub-region. The immigrants came primarily because a population explosion in the homeland had led to land hunger and peasant indebtedness and because there were few opportunities to work outside of agriculture due to industrial underdevelopment. By contrast, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of tremendous industrial expansion in the United States. Shipping-line agents and agents of American industrial concerns actively recruited laborers in southeastern Europe. These labor recruits were reputed to be hard workers and docile, that is, not prone to strike. While some of the immigrants established farming communities in a number of states, most became industrial workers and were heavily concentrated in the coal-mining regions of the United States, especially in eastern Pennsylvania.

It is impossible to arrive at an exact number of Ukrainian immigrants because United States immigration authorities listed immigrants by state of origin rather than by nationality until 1899. However, reliable estimates place the number of Ukrainians in the United States by 1914 at around 450,000. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most ordinary Ukrainians referred to themselves as Ruthenians (Rusyn in Ukrainian). Moreover, like many other Europeans at that time, Ukrainians were prone to identify more with their native region than with an entire nation. Nevertheless, a national and cultural revival had begun in the Ukrainian lands in the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy in the 1800's. Eventually, the popularly spoken language was accepted as the literary language. Recognition spread that the Ruthenians in Austro-Hungary were part of the Ukrainian nation, most of which lived under the jurisdiction of the adjoining Russian Empire. This recognition of a common Ukrainian national identity – different from Russians or other Slavs – was generally accepted by the start of World War I, although some Russophilism and Ruthenian identification persisted. Ukrainian national consciousness was reinforced during the common – but eventually unsuccessful – struggle by Ukrainians from both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires to establish an independent state in the aftermath of World War I.

The acceptance of the Ukrainian national identification was less widespread in the Carpatho-Ukraine, which became a part of Czechoslovakia after World War I. The Carpatho-Ukraine had experienced a somewhat different course of national and political development than had Galicia and this fact had repercussions for the establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States. The identification as Ukrainian was also largely – but not universally – adopted by the immigrants in the United States. To give just one example: a major fraternal association in the United States, the Ruthenian National Association, renamed itself the Ukrainian National Association in 1914.

## The Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States

The early Ukrainian immigrants were generally Catholic but they did not follow the Latin Rite. Instead, they followed their traditional Eastern Rite accepted from Byzantium with the Christianization of Kievian Rus' in 988. Moreover, when Ukrainian Orthodox bishops accepted union with Rome and the primacy of the Pope in 1596, they retained much local administrative autonomy, their Eastern Rite, Church Slavonic – not Latin – as the liturgical language, as well as the right to ordain married men for the priesthood. However, some Ukrainian bishops and clergy did not accept the union with Rome; therefore, the division of Ukrainians into Catholic and Orthodox dates from the 1596 Union of Brest (Berestia in Ukrainian).

Ironically, the Union was accepted only in 1700 in Galicia, where the Ukrainian Catholic Church became most firmly rooted. During the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, Galicia fell to the Austrian Hapsburg Monarchy. The Greek Catholic Church, so called to differentiate it from the Roman Catholic Church, was put on an equal footing with the latter. Ukrainian Church leaders had introduced a number of internal reforms and saw to it that the clergy was well educated at Austrian Universities or, later, at the Theological Academy in Lviv. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ukrainian Catholic clergy led the national revival in Galicia and took an active part in political life. Later in the century, secular leaders came to the fore. Nevertheless, members of the clergy continued to try to raise the economic standard for the peasantry, promoted literacy and temperance, sponsored institutions of learning, and helped to establish popular self-help societies. The majority of the clergy in Galicia identified themselves as Ukrainian. By contrast, in the Ukrainian territories that fell to the Russian Empire as a result of the demise of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ukrainian Catholic Church was suppressed as was an autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States dates from 1884 when Father Ivan Voliansky arrived in the United States. He had been sent by the Lviv Metropolitan and Cardinal Sylvester Sembratovych at the request of the Ukrainian community in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. During his five-year stay in the United States, Reverend Voliansky established a parish and built a church in Shenandoah, organized a choir, a school, a reading room, founded a printing press, and began publishing a newspaper. Ukrainians came from as far away as Minneapolis, Minnesota, to get married, to have their children baptized, or to attend services. Father Voliansky asked for additional helpers from Metropolitan Sembratovych and gradually more priests were sent to the United States.

Father Voliansky was married and came to the United States with his wife, who helped him in trying to better the situation of the Ukrainian miners. His married status aroused hostility on the part of the local Roman Catholic bishop and some of the clergy. Feeling surrounded by a hostile Protestant sea, some of the Roman Catholic hierarchy did not want to deal with Catholics who did not follow the Latin Rite and whose clergy was married. Thus, the issue of celibacy became a recurrent problem in relations between the Ukrainian and Roman Catholic Churches in the United States, as well as within the Ukrainian Catholic Church itself.

The hostile reception accorded Ukrainian Catholic priests by some Roman Catholic authorities induced a few of the Ukrainian priests to turn to Russian Orthodoxy. For example, the Ukrainian Catholic clergyman Alexis Toth, who was sent from Carpatho-Ukraine as a missionary to a parish in Minneapolis, converted to Russian Orthodoxy together with his parishioners in 1891, after a bitter confrontation with the local Roman Catholic bishop. His subsequent proselytizing efforts among his Ukrainian countrymen made him a leader in establishing Russian Orthodox parishes in the United States.

It can be said that the religious affiliation of the Ukrainian immigrants became an interna-

tional issue. Roman Catholic bishops were urging the Vatican to ban married priests. Ukrainian laymen and clergy were holding meetings and writing petitions to the Vatican asking for their own bishop. The Vatican was pressuring Metropolitan Sembratovych to send celibate priests to the United States, while the latter had difficulty finding such priests who would be able and willing to undertake the difficult missionary work. However, news of the conversions to Russian Orthodoxy disquieted the Church authorities in Galicia and prompted them to urge the Vatican to name a Ukrainian Catholic bishop for the United States. The Hungarian authorities also became worried that returning Orthodox clergymen might spread Russophilism together with Orthodoxy in Carpatho-Ukraine. They, too, lobbied the Vatican to appoint a bishop, preferably one from Carpatho-Ukraine whom they could influence. By that time, the European powers were enmeshed in alliances that pitted Germany and Austro-Hungary against Russia and France. Russian authorities had adopted an expansive Pan Slavism, equated with adherence to Orthodoxy, as a state policy and sought to gain influence by giving scholarships and other financial support to organizations and individual Ukrainians both in Austro-Hungary and the United States.

As noted, Bishop Soter Ortynsky was appointed in 1907. He stemmed from Galicia and was clearly of a Ukrainian orientation. He largely ignored his somewhat circumscribed jurisdiction vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic episcopate and threw himself into building up Catholic organizations, schools, and a press. He also took a dominant role in Ukrainian civic life that eventually aroused opposition from lay organizations. In 1913 Bishop Ortynsky was named exarch of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States. This removed him from any direct authority by the local Roman Catholic episcopate.

Despite his efforts, Bishop Ortynsky proved unable to mollify the clergy from Carpatho-Ukraine. Some of the clergy from the Carpathian area were under Hungarian cultural influence; others were of a Russophile or, perhaps more accurately, Pan Slavic orientation; most maintained the Ruthenian identity. They took exception to what they saw as a strongly Ukrainian national orientation in the Church of Galicia and in Bishop Ortynsky. Also, the Carpatho-Ukrainians felt they ought to have a larger role in administering Church affairs and let the Vatican know their views. After the death of Bishop Ortynsky in 1916, the Vatican appointed two vicars-general to administer Greek Catholics in the United States—Reverend Peter Poniatyshyn for the Galicians, based in Philadelphia, and Reverend Gabriel Martiak for the Carpatho-Ruthenians, based in Pittsburgh.

In 1924 Reverend Constantine Bohachevsky was appointed bishop for the Galician Ukrainians with an episcopal seat in Philadelphia. Simultaneously, the Vatican named the Reverend Basil Takach bishop for the Carpatho-Ruthenians with a seat in Pittsburgh. Clergy and parishes were divided almost evenly between the two exarchies – Bishop Bohachevsky received 144 churches, 102 priests, and about 237,000 faithful; Bishop Takach received 155 churches, 129 priests, and 288,000 parishioners.

In the eight-year hiatus between the death of Bishop Ortynsky and the appointment of Bishop Bohachevsky, Father Poniatyshyn proved to be an able interim leader. An urbane, soft-spoken man, Father Poniatyshyn healed the rift with the Ukrainian National Association that had developed under Bishop Ortynsky; counteracted the proselytizing by the Russian Orthodox (which waned in any case after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia); and, established two dozen new parishes. This last effort was aided by the visit to the United States in 1921-1922 of the charismatic Metropolitan from Lviv, Andrei Sheptytsky. Although Father Poniatyshyn was generally respected in the Ukrainian community, his directives were not always followed by the clergy, no doubt, due largely to the fact that he lacked episcopal rank.

Bishop Bohachevsky proceeded to restore discipline and order in the Church. He stressed Catholic doctrine and unity, as well as priestly celibacy. He instituted regular payments by parishes to the episcopal chancery; he also promoted a drive in order to build seminaries and to create a net-

work of parochial schools in his jurisdiction. Although Bishop Bohachevsky had impeccable Ukrainian national credentials, his policies soon appeared to the increasingly nationalist Ukrainian community to favor the Catholic at the expense of the national. A "Committee for the Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in America" was formed. This Committee convened a meeting in December 1926 that adopted a number of resolutions. Among them was an appeal to the Apostolic Delegate in the United States to recall Bishop Bohachevsky and to give the laity and clergy the right to propose future bishops. The resolutions also urged parishes to retain control over their finances and properties and to refuse to pay dues to the episcopal chancery. Needless to say, protests were also voiced against the introduction of celibacy. Among the 84 parishes represented at the meeting were delegates from the parish of St. Nicholas in Wilmington.

Bishop Bohachevsky suspended the priests who had attended the meeting until such a time when they recanted, and he "removed from communion" the organizers of the meeting. The Vatican backed Bishop Bohachevsky and his policies. In later years, there were a few more issues that roiled the relations between Ukrainian Catholic bishops and the laity. Invariably, the disagreements were over Ukrainian national issues rather than over questions of faith or doctrine. Later disagreements occurred more rarely and never reached the intensity experienced in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Split of St. Nicholas Parish

The reasons for the division in St. Nicholas Parish resulted from the general causes outlined above, as well as from particular dissatisfaction. Apparently, some parishioners were offended by remarks made by Bishop Bohachevsky at the dedication of the Church Hall when he noted that there was no cross above the Church Hall building. Some of his policies fed the belief that Bishop Bohachevsky was a "Latinizer," that is, someone who wished to bring Ukrainian Church practices closer to the Roman Catholic Church practices and who was indifferent to Ukrainian national causes. The requirement of celibacy for the Ukrainian clergy in the United States was seen as another abandonment of Ukrainian Church practices.

The main reason for dissension, however, was the question of ownership of church property, namely, should the deed of St. Nicholas be in the name of the Parish Committee or in the name of the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese. This accumulation of grievances led many parishioners to leave the Ukrainian Catholic Church and join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In 1927, Russian Orthodoxy was no longer the only option since an autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church had been reestablished during Ukraine's brief period of independence after World War I and a bishop of that Church was already in the United States. Thus, many St. Nicholas parishioners formed the parish of SS. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 1927.

As in 1909, the split of the parish led to another struggle over whether the Catholics or the Orthodox had a rightful claim to use and own the church buildings. The issue of ownership was an open question since the original deed in the name of Bishop Ortynsky apparently had lapsed upon his death and ownership had reverted to the State of Delaware. The struggle over ownership ended up in court and the church was closed to both parties on court order. The lawsuits dragged on until 1932 when the court ruled in favor of the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese.

### Consolidation of St. Nicholas Parish

When St. Nicholas Church was legally reopened, the recently ordained Reverend Dr. Stephen Chehansky was given his first pastoral assignment – administration of St. Nicholas Parish and St. Basil Parish in Chesapeake City, Maryland, where he lived. At that time, St. Nicholas Parish numbered little more than a dozen families. A religious society for women, the Apostleship of Prayer,



*St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, 1958.*



*Iconostas in the old church.*

was organized in 1932. In 1933 the men of the parish organized the Ukrainian Catholic Club of St. Nicholas. Father Chehansky promoted ties among the parishes in Chesapeake City, Chester, and Wilmington, all three of which had suffered a diminution of membership as a result of the earlier quarrel with Bishop Bohachevsky. Members of the three parishes organized joint sports competitions, picnics, religious and parochial feasts, and commemorated Ukrainian national holidays. The activities organized by the groups affiliated with the churches raised funds to support the parishes as well as contribute to other charitable causes. Father Chehansky remained Administrator in Wilmington until 1936. The Apostleship of Prayer continues to this day to organize activities in support of St. Nicholas Church. The members of the Catholic Club disbanded it in 1969 once the new church on Lea Boulevard had been built.

In 1940 the mortgage on the church building was paid off and St. Nicholas parish celebrated this important achievement at a banquet. The parish had received a loan of \$7,800 from Reverend Gulcz, pastor of St. Hedwig's, on which it had repaid only \$7,300. Father Gulcz generously donated the remaining \$500 and so was

given the honor of burning the mortgage at the banquet. Relations between the Ukrainian Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches in Wilmington were amiable from the beginning and remain excellent to this day.

In the late 1940's, Ukrainians who had been displaced from their homeland by the events of World War II began arriving in the United States. Many of those who settled in the Wilmington area were Ukrainian Catholics and they swelled the ranks of St. Nicholas Parish. Among the new immigrants to the United States were also married priests with their families. By this time, the married status of the priests did not deter Bishop Bohachevsky from appointing them as pastors to parishes. In 1948 Father Bohdan Osidach, a recently arrived married priest, became the first resident pastor of St. Nicholas. The parish immediately purchased a house for a rectory at 608 South Claymont Street, a few blocks from the church.

By the 1950's, it became obvious that the existing church was too small to accommodate the influx of new parishioners. Moreover, as the neighborhood where the church and rectory were lo-

cated began to deteriorate, many parishioners who had lived there began to move to North Wilmington. In 1958, at a celebration marking the founding of the parish, plans were announced to erect a new church in North Wilmington.

### Beautifying the House of God

*What follows is an account of the work of the Parish Church Building Committee written by Lidia Harwanko and published in 1978 in the Diamond Jubilee Book of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church.*

#### **Building Committee of the New St. Nicholas Church**

The second immigration arrived during the late 1940's and early 1950's, and the St. Nicholas Parish more than tripled its membership. This situation created the need to find a newer and larger location to accommodate the spiritual and parochial needs of the enlarged parish. In 1957, Rev. Alexander Ulitsky already saw the need for St. Nicholas to expand and relocate. Toward this end he introduced the special envelope, preparing for the time when a formal Building Fund would be launched.

In December 1957, Rev. Stephen Hotra became administrator of St. Nicholas and assumed acting pastorship in 1960, after the passing of Rev. A. Ulitsky.

During Rev. A. Ulitsky's pastorship, the Church observed its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1958) at which time the plans for the new church were first announced.

On October 3, 1964, Rev. Stephen Hotra announced a \$150,000 new Church Fund Drive and the purchase of a \$30,000 piece of property at Lea Boulevard and Miller Road, the site of today's St. Nicholas. In barely six months parishioners collected the first \$25,000 of the Building Fund.

On April 7, 1964, a Building Committee was formed. On April 21, 1964, the Committee elected its Chairman, Myron Harwanko. He served the Building Committee elected its Chairman, Myron Harwanko. He served the Building Committee and the parish in that capacity until the completion of the church building in October 1969.

The Building Committee originally consisted of: Rev. Stephen Hotra, Myron Harwanko – Chairman, Stefan Matwijkiw – Secretary, Joseph Baczynsky – Member, Michael Bilecki – Member, John Knehnetsky – served as Treasurer, and, later, Secretary, John Wozny – Member.

During the five years that the building Committee existed some members resigned and new members were elected. These are the names of people that at one time served on the committee: Stanley Cybak, Stanley Husak, Wasyl Maybroda, Dr. Dmytro Skrypec, Peter Stecko – served as Treasurer, Gregory Wojteczko, Joseph Ziegler.

Members visited different new Ukrainian Churches in the vicinity (Bristol, Pennsylvania and Trenton, New Jersey) and talked with different architects, contractors, and artists. Committee members along with Father Hotra visited homes of all parishioners soliciting a pledge of a thousand dollars per family for the Building Fund. The Committee also introduced Building Fund envelopes and a weekly list of donors. The Committee held monthly meetings as well as meetings with the Parish Council and informative meetings with the parish in general.

Much time and effort went into preparation before the building started. During the five years of the Committee's work, the parish had four priests: Stephen Hotra, Anthony Radchuk, Augustine Molodowitz, and Andrew Baunchalk.

Rev. A. Baunchalk contributed the most effort to the building of the church. He was present from the design to the completion. Being a person of great energy and dedication, Father Andrew worked closely with the committee, helping in any way he could.

Of tremendous help were the services of committee member Gregory Wojteczko. Being retired, he donated all of his time to the building of the church. He also contributed generously to the Building Fund.

Dr. Dmytro Skrypec was another outstanding Committee member. His advice and moral support were invaluable. Unfortunately he did not live to see the finished structure; he died on August 1, 1966.

In November of 1967 the architectural firm of Wayman and Fidance was engaged to design the structure. On June 24, 1968, contracts were signed with the Wm. C. Ehret Co. to construct the new church and within a few days building began.

With the blessing of the Most Rev. Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn and the help and cooperation of all the parishioners the cornerstone was laid on December 7, 1968. Rev. Andrew Baunchalk celebrated the first Divine Liturgy on May 4, 1969.

Truly, this was a great moment for St. Nicholas parish. During the month of September 1969, the parish initiated papers to buy a house at 801 Lea Boulevard. The house, bought for the sum of \$33,500 would be used as the rectory.

On October 28, 1969, after five years of hard work, the Building Committee transferred the continuous duty of beautifying the new church and grounds to the Parish Council. The Committee was then dissolved.



*1969 Parish Building Committee  
for the construction of new church.*

*Seated, left to right: John Knehnetsky – Secretary, Rev. Andrew Baunchalk, Myron Harwanko – Chairman. Standing, left to right: Joseph Ziegler, Stanley Husak, Peter Stecko, William Maybroda, Michael Bilecki. Missing when the picture was taken: Gregory Wojteczko, Stanley Cybak.*

#### **Decorating the Church**

On October 5, 1969, the new church was blessed and dedicated by Metropolitan Ambrose Senyshyn after a solemn Divine Liturgy. However, much work remained to be done in the interior of the church and on its grounds. Started by Father Baunchalk, this work was continued by Reverend Roman Dubitsky, who succeeded Reverend Baunchalk as pastor of St. Nicholas in June 1971. Mosaic icons, created from Venetian Smalti stones, were executed by J.M. Baransky Studio of Yonkers, New York, and installed behind the altar and at both sides at the front of the church in 1972. In 1973 a sign identifying the church was bought from Andco Industries Corporation of Greensboro, North Carolina, and placed at the entrance to the church grounds. In 1974 the church parking lot was paved with asphalt by the local firm E. Earle Downing, Inc. In 1975 a blue carpet was laid down in the center aisle of the church and in the apse containing the altar.

In 1978 the beautification of the church was essentially completed when the iconostasis and the stained glass windows depicting the Stations of the Cross were installed in the church. The windows were purchased from Baut Studios in Swoyersville, Pennsylvania. The icons for the iconostasis were painted by Philadelphia artist Christine Dochwat. The gilded woodcarvings that frame the



*New St. Nicholas Church in 1975.*



*Church interior in 1978.*

iconostasis were designed by John Smoley from Munhall, Pennsylvania. A further achievement in 1978, the year of the Diamond Jubilee of St. Nicholas Parish, was the repayment of the \$200,000 mortgage taken out for the construction of the new church. Both events were marked at a banquet held in the du Pont Hotel.

*Memorial Gifts for the Church*

DONOR	ITEM	MEMORIAL
Andrushko, Wasyl	Vestments – gold	His Own Memory
Anonymous	Collection deposit box	Their Families
Apostleship of Prayer	32 oak pews	Their Work & Labor for Church
Apostleship of Prayer	Stove, oven, sinks, etc.	Their Work & Labor for Church
Bakomenko, A. & Karacz, A.	Vestments – blue	Their Own Memory
Bakomenko, Anna	Pair of funeral candle sticks	Of Her Family
Bakomenko, Anna	Pair of candles on main Altar	Of Her Family
Baunchalk Family	Melchisedech mosaic	Of Their Parents
Budnick, Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas	Pair of funeral candle sticks	Of Their Family
Cybak, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley	Cross & picture for Tetrapod	Of Their Families
Dycio, Mr. & Mrs. I. Michael	2 candle lighters	Of Their Own
Dycio, Mr. & Mrs. Michael, Sr.	6 vases of artificial flowers at mosaics & Tetrapod	Their Own Families
Dziubak, Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl	Ukrainian Gospel Book	Of Their Own
Dzwonchyk, Mr. & Mrs.	Censor, boat & censor stand	M / M Thomas Hubiak
Fedorkowicz, Mr. & Mrs. Milton	Pair of candles on main Altar	M / M Nestor Dzwonchyk
Ginsiorsky, Orest	Holy Communion spoon	Semen & Mary Fedorkowicz
Husak, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley	Pantacrator-mosaic “Christ in Majesty”	Of His Parents
Kazio, Anna & Mary	Large vigil stand at Sacred Heart	Of Their Parents
Kazio, Anne	Electric bells	Her Own Memory
Kazio, Mary	Shawls and covers for Ciborium (3)	Her Own Memory
Kit, Mr. & Mrs. John	Preching lectern, tabernacle & censor redone & re-gilded	Their Own Families
Korzeniowsky, Orest	Large vigil stand at Blessed Mother	Petro & Domenica Korzeniowsky
Kowalchuk, Mr. & Mrs. Michael	Baptism-Confirmation set	Their Own Memory
Kowtun, Mr. & Mrs. Paul	Episcopal thrones (2) ensembles	Peter & Tekla Kowtun
Krawczuk, Mr. & Mrs. John	Sick-call Communion spoon	Their Own Memory
Kucaba, Mr. & Mrs. Walter	Red-purple Holy Cross covers	Their Own Memory & Family
Kunitsky, Mr. & Mrs.	Mosaic: Abraham & Isaac	Their Own Memory & Family
Leskiw, Mr. & Mrs. John	4 Altar vases for mosaics in church	Their Own Memory
Lopatka, Mr. & Mrs. John	Main Alter red cover	Their Own Memory
Losten, Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas	3-branch candles (Trichi) 3 sets	Their Own Memory
Lubun, Walter	Ciborium & regilding of all Sacred Vessels	Nicholas B. & Michele K. Losten
Luczyszyn, Michael	Red covers for three small altars	His Own Memory
Maybroda, Mr. & Mrs. Harry	Glass covering for all 4 altars	† Anna Luczyszyn
Morrow, Mr. & Mrs. William H. Jr.	Diskos & antimension	Their Own Memory & † Heroes of Ukraine
Pastock, Mr. & Mrs.	Two single-Vigil lights before two side front mosaic	Mrs. James V. Brooks & M / M Stanley Niemczyki
Pastock, Stephanie	Holy Water fonts, sprinkler, dispenser	Their Own Memory
	Two prie-dieu kneelers	Remain Anonymous

DONOR	ITEM	MEMORIAL
Pawlun, Mrs. Lena	4 Altar vases for main Altar & Tetrapod	† Joseph Pawlun
Poczynok, Mrs. Mary Ribovich, Mrs. Anna	One set (pair) of funeral candles Mosaics: Sacred Heart & Blessed Mother	Her and Her Husband's Memory Her Memory and Her † Husband
Ritz, Mrs. Maria	All 4 Altars	Memory of Herself, † Roman & † John
St. Nicholas Ukrainian Club	All light fixtures, and P.A. System	Memory of Living & Deceased Club Members
Serba, Mr. & Mrs. John P.	Crucifixes & sets of candles on 3 small Altars	M / M Peter Serba, Sr.
Serba, Mr. & Mrs. Peter, Sr.	One pair of candles on main Altar, crucifix on main Altar, & re-gilding of his own donated chalice	Memory of His Wife and Whole Family
Sielicka, Ludwika Skrypec, Jaroslava	Sick-call set for Communion Mosaic of St. Nicholas	Herself & Husband † Herself and † Dmytro
Stecki, Mrs. Catherine Stecko, Mr. & Mrs. Peter	Cruets, tray & retaining tray Vestments – white	Herself, Husband & Children Memory of Their Families
Szotkiewicz, Mrs. Katherine Wojteczko, Mr. & Mrs.	One pair of candles on main Altar Censor stand, 20 wooden tables for Social Hall	† Wasyl & Katherine Szotkiewicz Gregory & Anna Wojteczko
Yasik, Mr. & Mrs. John	166 metal chairs, 10 floor ash trays, inserts & mats	Their Own Memory
Ziegler, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph	Reliquery of St. Josaphat	Their Own Memory

**MEMORIALS DONATED FROM 1971 TO 1978**

DONOR	ITEM
Apostleship of Prayer	Embroidered Altar linens for Easter
Barczak, Mr. & Mrs. John	Snow blower
Bilinski, Peter	Red vestments
Cybak, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley	Wood carved Cross and candle sticks from Ukraine
Harwanko, Vera	White-gold vestments and dalmatics
Hrycushko, Petrycky Family	Embroidered Altar linens for summer months
Hrycushko, Mr. & Mrs. Ivan	Icon for Tetrapod with wooden carved frames
St. Nicholas Ukrainian Club	P.A. System / Stereo for Hall
Wasylyszyn, Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl	Mower
League of Ukrainian Catholic Youth (LUCY)	Metal art glass panel design of Holy Spirit

**NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS – PASSION OF OUR LORD  
(From Right to Left around Church)**

Szotkiewicz, Katherine	“Jesus is condemned to Death”
Barczak, Mr. & Mrs. John	“Jesus Carries His Cross”
Bilecki, Mr. & Mrs. Michael	“Jesus Falls the First Time”
Bakomenko, Anna	“Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother”
Dycio, Maria	“Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross”
Losten, Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas	“Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus”
Leskiw, Mr. & Mrs. John	“Jesus Falls the Second Time”
Poczynok, Mary	“The Women of Jerusalem Weep over Jesus”
Cerkownuk, Family	“Jesus Falls the Third Time”

Hynansky, Mr. & Mrs. John	“Jesus is Stripped of His Garments”
Ginsiorsky, Mr. & Mrs. Edward	“Jesus is Nailed to the Cross”
Kucaba, Mr. & Mrs. Walter	“Jesus is Raised, Upon the Cross, and Dies”
Kucaba, Mr. & Mrs. Walter	“Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross”
Kucaba, Mr. & Mrs. Walter	“Jesus is Laid in the Sepulcher”

**ICONOSTAS  
(First row, left to right)**

St. Nicholas	Matkowski Family
St. Michael the Archangel	Knehnetsky, Mr. & Mrs. John
Mother of God	Matkowski Family
Four Evangelists	Ginsiorsky, Mr. & Mrs. Edward
Christ the Teacher	Matkowski Family
St. Stephen	Matwijkiw, Mr. & Mrs. Stefan
St. Josaphat	Ziegler, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph

**HOLY DAYS  
(Second row, left to right)**

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Kassian, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley
Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Bakomenko, Anna
Nativity of Our Lord – Christmas	Pukatsch, Mr. & Mrs. Wolodymyr
Presentation of Our Lord	Szczerban, Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl
Pentecost	Husar, Ladia
Theophany of Our Lord – Jordan	Korzeniowsky, Dominica
Transfiguration of Our Lord	Korzeniowsky, Mr. & Mrs. Orest
Christ's Entry into Jerusalem – Palm Sunday	Bilecki, Mr. & Mrs. Michael
Resurrection of Our Lord – Easter	Wasylyszyn, Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl
Ascension of Our Lord	Yatzus, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Skrypec, Tatiana
	Hrycushko, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph

**OVER ROYAL DOORS**

Last Supper	Lenio, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph
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**Major Renovations**



*Building the new addition.*

# ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH ADDITION

IN GRATITUDE TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THOSE  
WHO HAVE MADE THIS BUILDING  
POSSIBLE. BLESSED ON APRIL 5, 1998  
BY REV. FR. WILLIAM GORE, OSFS.

The Acton Family  
Mrs. Camille Anderson  
Mrs. Ann Anthony  
Mr. & Mrs. John Baker  
Mr. & Mrs. John Balanczuk  
Mrs. Eva Baunchalk  
Mr. James Baunchalk  
Mr. & Mrs. Matwiy Berbeza  
Mr. & Mrs. William Bijansky  
Mrs. Irene Biskup  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Blackhurst  
Mr. Peter G. Bobby  
Dr. George M. Bohaliuk  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Bracaglia  
Mrs. Eva Brown  
Mrs. Anna Butters  
Mr. & Mrs. Gregory Bychkowski  
Mr. & Mrs. George Chubaty  
Mrs. Sophia Cybak  
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Dell'orelice  
+Mrs. Anastasia Delay  
The Duffy Family  
Mrs. Joanna Dycio  
Ms. Helen Dziubak  
Mrs. Pauline Dziubak  
Mrs. Anna Dziubinsky  
Mr. Petro Dziubinsky  
The Gimbels Family  
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Ginsiorsky  
Mr. & Mrs. Milton Ginsiorsky  
Mr. Orest Ginsiorsky  
Mr. & Mrs. William S. Gore  
Rev. Fr. William R. Gore, o.s.f.s.  
Dr. & Mrs. Basil Gregorovich  
Mr. & Mrs. William Hall  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Harasika  
Mr. & Mrs. George Harvilla  
Mr. & Mrs. Myron Harwanko  
+Mrs. Vera Harwanko  
Mr. Bohdan Hasluk  
Mrs. Maria Hawryszczuk  
Mrs. Kataryna Hlyniansky  
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Hortiz  
Mrs. Mary Horvatt  
Mr. & Mrs. Jaroslaw Hrycak  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Hrycak  
Mr. & Mrs. Roman Hrycak  
Mr. & Mrs. Bohdan Hrycushko  
Mrs. Stephanie Hrycushko  
Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Husak  
Mrs. Ladia Husar  
Ms. Tatiana Husar

Mr. & Mrs. John Hynansky  
Mrs. Donna Jacobs  
Mr. & Mrs. John Jester  
+Mrs. Anastasia Karacz  
Ms. Mary Kazio  
Mr. & Mrs. Basil Klapcuniak  
Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Koch  
The Kostyshyn Family  
Ms. Doris Korzeniowsky  
Mr. & Mrs. Jaroslaw Korzeniowsky  
Mr. & Mrs. Myron Korzeniowsky  
+Mrs. Anne Kosowsky  
Mr. Mitchell Kosowsky  
Mr. & Mrs. Will Kozulak  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Krauthauser  
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Krawczuk  
Mr. George Krawczuk  
Mr. & Mrs. William Krawczuk  
Mr. & Mrs. Waller Kucaba  
Mr. & Mrs. Bohdan Kuichyckyj  
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Kurych  
Mr. & Mrs. Rostyslaw Kutny  
Mr. & Mrs. Ivan Lewyckyj  
Mr. & Mrs. Igor Lissy  
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Losten  
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Lubun  
Mr. Walter Lubun  
Dr. & Mrs. Alexander Lushnycky  
Mr. & Mrs. George Luszczyk  
Mr. & Mrs. Walter Markewycz  
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Marushchak  
+Mr. Michael Marushchak  
Mr. & Mrs. Stefan Matwijiw  
Mr. & Mrs. George Medwick  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Metrinko  
Mr. & Mrs. John Mynuk  
Mr. & Mrs. Sydir Nowakiwsky  
Mrs. Mary Osborne  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Palamar  
Mr. & Mrs. Gene Paranczak  
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Parosky  
Mr. & Mrs. Myron Pastock  
Mr. & Mrs. Stefan Pastuszok  
Mr. & Mrs. Teofil Pawluk  
Mrs. Kataryna Petesz  
Mr. Walter Petryk  
Mrs. Karen Phillips  
Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl Picyk  
Mr. & Mrs. James Pierce  
Dr. & Mrs. George Popel  
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Pryslak  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Pryslak

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Pukatsch  
+Mrs. Olena Pukatsch  
Mrs. Olga Radulski  
Dr. & Mrs. Ihor Rak  
Mrs. Anna May Riebe  
Mr. & Mrs. John W. Rollins, Sr.  
Mr. Eugene Romaniuk  
Mrs. Maria Rushchak  
Dr. Olha M. Rybakoff  
Mr. & Mrs. John Sadiwnyk  
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Saitis  
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Santak, Sr.  
Mr. Frank Santak, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. William Santak  
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Sawina, Sr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Waller Schurga  
Mr. & Mrs. Gregory Seedor  
Mrs. Donna Seningen  
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Serba  
Ms. Patricia Shatynski  
Mr. & Mrs. Myroslaw Skamay  
Mrs. Jaroslawa Skrypec  
Ms. Sophia Sluzar  
Mrs. Maria Soares  
Mrs. Anastasia Stecko  
The Stevens Family  
Dr. Irena Stolar  
Mrs. Rosalia Stolar  
Mr. & Mrs. Waller Szerban  
Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl Szerban  
Mr. Stefan Szewczyk  
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Tabelaing  
Mrs. Julia Tresznewsky  
Dr. Orysia Tresznewsky  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles VandenBergh  
Mrs. Myra Voloshin  
Mr. Joseph Wansoniak  
Ms. Maria Wasylyszyn  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Wasylyszyn  
Mr. & Mrs. Wasyl Wasylyszyn  
Mrs. Roseanne Wexler  
Mr. & Mrs. Dmytro Woloszyn  
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Worth  
Mr. & Mrs. John Wozny  
Mrs. Tamara Yatzus  
Mr. & Mrs. Ihor Zajac  
+Mrs. Sophia Zajac  
Mr. & Mrs. Petro Zaryckyj  
Mrs. Irene Zatwarnytsky  
Mrs. Sophie Ziegler



Door to elevator in new addition.

When Reverend William Gore became pastor of St. Nicholas Church in 1993, he soon came to the conclusion that the church buildings needed to be refurbished. To accommodate the increasing number of elderly and handicapped parishioners, a restroom was installed on the same level where Church services are held. To give the access to the Church Hall for parish functions, an elevator to the lower level was necessary. Under the energetic guidance of Father Gore, the parishioners quickly raised the funds necessary to build an addition to the church to house an elevator and restroom. The new addition was completed and blessed in April 1998. The interior of the Church was repainted, the Church Hall refurbished, and the kitchen upgraded. The parking lot was re-paved. A room that serves as an office was constructed in the rectory.

## A Vital Parish Life

Traditional Ukrainian church architecture blends with modern elements in the new church. Although some long-time members of the parish initially regretted losing "their" old church that they helped build, they soon started coming to the new church. Many young people, who had been going to services in other parishes, returned to their "own" parish of St. Nicholas. Also, the "new" immigrants joined the "old" immigrants in the parish organizations and worked together for the good of the parish and their community. Most of the credit for the creation of a harmonious and vibrant parish life is due to the pastors of St. Nicholas. The parish was fortunate to have two outstanding, dedicated priests for a period of twenty years: Father Roman Dubitsky (May 1971-March 1981) and Father Martin Canavan (March 1981-August 1990). Their relatively long tenure as pastors permitted them to know and serve their parishioners well. In return, they received the cooperation and love of their parishioners. Their excellent sermons explaining the relevance to contemporary life of the teachings of Christ enriched the spiritual life of the parishioners. Missionaries were regularly invited to conduct retreats during Lent.

Both pastors exerted themselves to engage young people in parish activities. Father Dubitsky established in St. Nicholas Parish a branch of the League of Ukrainian Catholic Youth, which was joined by most young people then in the parish. A Sodality for young girls was organized and the Altar Boys society was revitalized. Priests were invited to speak to young people about vocations to the religious life. Young people attended events of the League of Ukrainian Catholic Youth in Philadelphia and they staged plays and gave concerts in the parish. English became the language used primarily in the youth groups in the 1970's and 1980's as fluency in Ukrainian began to fade. During this period, it was no longer possible to maintain a parochial school. Because the number of students and teachers diminished, Saturday Ukrainian heritage classes were discontinued. Parents interested in having their children attend Ukrainian heritage classes, enrolled their children in the school at the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Center in Philadelphia.

Organized activities for youth waned in the 1990's because there simply were fewer young people in the parish. Nevertheless, both Father William Gore (September 1993-November 1998) and Father Roman Mirchuk (February 2000-May 2002) had a special interest in youth ministry. They held discussion groups for young people and in other ways engaged them in parish activities, including plays and programs before the Christmas Eve Liturgy and at parish dinners. Parishioner Carl





*Father Sivinskiy and Father Gore with parishioners, October 1998.*

Krauthauser included teenagers in outreach programs, such as taking holiday food baskets to the needy and helping the elderly. The introduction of a church choir during Father Gore's tenure, after the retirement of long-time cantor Michael Kowalchuk, created another opportunity for young people to take part in parish life.

For the youngest children of the parish, the visit of St. Nicholas in December is an eagerly anticipated event. After a brunch prepared by the Apostleship of Prayer, St. Nicholas distributes gifts to children who had been good during the past year. Young children of the parish are prepared annually for their First Holy Communion. In the 1980's the Basilian Sisters instructed the children in the catechism. In recent years, the pastor and a parish member prepare the children for First Holy Communion.

Parishioners gather regularly several times a year. Members of the Apostleship of Prayer prepare dinners in the Church Hall for the parishioners to mark Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. They also prepare traditional Ukrainian foods for sale at bazaars. Often, the men of the parish sponsor a chicken barbecue in the summer and host visitors from Ukraine. A New Year's Eve celebration/dance takes place in the Church Hall. In addition, coffee and pastry after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday provide another opportunity for the parishioners to socialize. Income from these functions contributes to the support of the Church.

#### ***Ukrainian National Anniversaries***

Although recent pastors of St. Nicholas rarely initiated functions commemorating Ukrainian national anniversaries, they were invariably supportive of them. In part, the pastors simply lacked the time to get involved. Like the Catholic Church as a whole, the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States does not have a sufficient number of priests. Thus, the pastors of St. Nicholas have simultaneously served as pastors of St. Basil's Church in Chesapeake City, Maryland, since 1976. Most have also held offices in the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolitan See, which necessitated their being in Philadelphia for several days per week. The local chapters of the Ukrainian Congress Com-

mittee of America and the Ukrainian National Women's League of America have held exhibits and bazaars featuring Ukrainian folk art in St. Nicholas Church Hall, hosted musical ensembles and dance groups, and marked Ukrainian Independence Day and other national anniversaries. The national commemorations at St. Nicholas have always enjoyed the support of the pastors and parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church. On appropriate occasions the pastors from both Churches have conducted joint liturgical services.

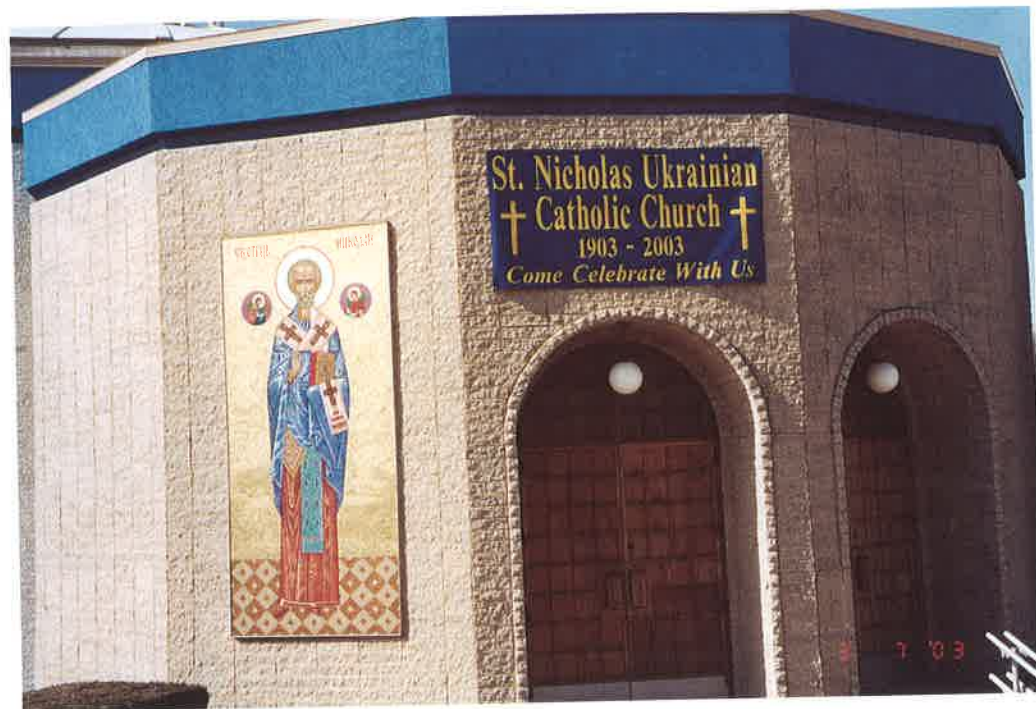
#### ***Ukraine's Millennium of Christianity (1988) and Proclamation of Independence (1991)***



*Pope John Paul II and Major Archbishop Myroslav John celebrate Millenium Liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica, July 10, 1988. Also celebrating at the Liturgy was our pastor, one of eight Ukrainian Catholic priests in the world given the privilege of celebrating with the Holy Father on this historic occasion.*

The proclamation of independence by Ukraine on August 24, 1991, and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, represented the fulfillment of a dream of generations of Ukrainians. It also made much closer interaction possible with relatives, organizations, and friends in Ukraine. For Ukrainian Christians, Ukrainian independence also meant that Ukrainian Churches again enjoyed a legal existence in their homeland. Earlier, in 1988, Ukrainian Churches and communities outside of Ukraine solemnly marked the Millennium of the Christianization of Kievan Rus'. For Ukrainian Catholics, including a number of St. Nicholas parishioners as well as their pastor Reverend Monsignor Martin Canavan, the week-long celebrations of the Millennium of Christianity of Ukraine in Rome were both spiritually enriching and emotionally affecting. The celebration of a solemn Pontifical Liturgy of the Byzantine Rite in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome by Pope John Paul II--in the presence of the College of Cardinals and bishops, clergy, and faithful from the entire world--placed the Eastern Rites firmly in the mainstream of the universal Catholic Church.

The emergence from the underground of the Catholic Church in western Ukraine in 1989 had a direct impact on St. Nicholas Parish. The Ukrainian Catholic Church had been officially liquidated on Stalin's orders in 1946 and its bishops and clergy who did not accept the dissolution of the Union with Rome were sentenced to hard labor or killed. Nevertheless, a legitimate hierarchy, clergy, and laity continued to adhere to their Ukrainian Catholic Church clandestinely and publicly asserted the Church's existence in the late 1980's under the leadership of Metropolitan Volodymyr Sterniuk.



*St. Nicholas Main Doors, 2003.*



*St. Nicholas interior Christmas Season, 2002-2003.*

A close interaction has evolved between the Church in Ukraine and the Church in the diaspora. The Ukrainian Catholic Church in North America was in the best position to help the Church in Ukraine. The Church in Ukraine needed not only material assistance but also help with proper training of seminarians and the establishment of the ecclesiastical structure. Three former pastors of St. Nicholas Church, Fathers Mirchuk, Gore, and Canavan, have served in Ukraine as teachers in the seminaries, priests, or administrators. Seminarians and priests from Ukraine have studied or taught at St. Basil College in Stamford, Connecticut, and at St. Josaphat Seminary in Washington, DC. Clergy from Ukraine have helped alleviate the shortage of priests in the United States. Unlike in the United States, where celibacy for Ukrainian Catholic priests ordained here remains the rule, in Ukraine married men continue to be ordained and there is no shortage of priests. St. Nicholas Parish benefited when Reverend Vasyl Sivinskiy, a recent arrival from Ukraine, was appointed administrator of St. Nicholas Parish in 1998 as Father Gore left to serve in Ukraine.

It is indeed a sign of Divine Providence that the Catholic Church in Ukraine survived intact and vibrant after half a century of persecution. As St. Nicholas Parish celebrates its centennial in 2003, our current pastor, Reverend Monsignor John Bura, has urged his parishioners to use the year for spiritual renewal. It is our hope and prayer that God will allow St. Nicholas Parish to remain vital in order to serve Him and our community for many years to come.

