

HISTORY IN STONE

Archimandrite George Appleyard



Church Domes Against the Backdrop of Downtown Pittsburgh

Source: ©Michael Haritan, photographer

Some buildings intended for utility may also be true works of art while others are not. Some structures are erected as memorials; others become memorials by fate or fortune, like Ford's Theatre in Washington DC, the site of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Some buildings, like Ford's Theatre, are a portal to a specific event in history, like a snapshot – while others, like museums, preserve an ongoing story. Pittsburgh's Ukrainian Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist, with its several domes, has become an iconic part of the Pittsburgh skyline, emblazoned on tee-shirts and pictured on postcards, usually with the other more modern skyscrapers of the city as a background, but conveys a history more than a millennium old.

Oleg Sets the Stage

The turbulent, complex and fluid alignments of the various city-states emerging in the region we call Ukraine and Russia today, and the lack of clear historical records as well as conflicting reports, make it more difficult to sketch their development than to undo



A Historic Landmark Famed for its *Pyrohi*

Source: ©Michael Haritan, photographer

a Gordian knot. This much is clear; a man known as Rurik the Red, possibly a Scandinavian who died in 879, had been “invited” by the people of Novgorod to “bring law and order” to that city, first mentioned in 859 and situated a little more than a hundred miles south by southeast from modern day St. Petersburg in northwestern Russia. He had a relative named Oleg, possibly his brother-in-law, who led a military expedition south to a very ancient city called Kyiv on the banks of the Dnipro River. It is said that this city had been founded by three brothers: Kyi (for whom the city was named), Schek and Khorev, along with their sister, Lebed, possibly as early as the fifth century. It was ideally situated for a trading post between the Scandinavian lands to the north and Byzantium to the south. It would become the hub of the Rus’ state when Oleg, on taking the city around 882, declared it the “mother of Rus’ cities” and installed himself as prince.

The deposed rulers of Kyiv, Askold and Dir, two brothers reputed to be descendants of Kyi, were executed after Oleg's victory. Askold was a Christian, as were many of his soldiers. A church was later built over his grave, a demonstration that Christianity had already made significant inroads at Kyiv.¹

Enter Olga

But the story really begins with a Varangian ferryman's daughter named Olga. She was born about a hundred miles west of Novgorod at Pskov around 890. It is said that Oleg introduced her to one of Rurik's sons, Ihor. The two married and probably lived in Novgorod until moving later to Kyiv. The monk Nestor's *Primary Chronicle*, also known as *The Tale of Bygone Years*, says Oleg died in 912 and was succeeded at Kyiv by Ihor, but the story line is hotly disputed. Ihor and Olga had a son named Svyatoslav who was three years old when on a tax gathering junket in 945 his father was assassinated by the Drevlians, another of the tribes in that area of Eastern Europe drained by the Dnipro River.² This event made Olga regent of Svyatoslav's domains until about 960, and she quickly showed her keen intellect and shrewd instincts. One example is that she changed the manner in which taxes were collected. No longer would the ruler ride out to his subjects to gather them, but the subjects would bring them to the ruler. She also resisted any attempt to have her marry again so that she could forestall any ambitious man from laying claim to the principality that she desperately wanted to bequeath to her son.

Born a pagan, Olga had become a Christian sometime in the middle of the tenth century – the date is disputed – in a grand ceremony in Constantinople recorded in the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII's *Book of Ceremonies*.³ She promoted Christianity in the realm, asking for missionaries from both the Byzantine Emperor and the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I in the West. Prior to this event two brothers from Thessalonica, Cyril (c. 826-869, a monk) and Methodius (c. 815-885, later a bishop) had been dispatched from Constantinople in 862 by Emperor Michael III in response to Rostislav of Great Moravia's request for evangelizers. Almost immediately the brothers began translating the Bible into the language now known as Old Church Slavonic⁴ and using that language in the Eucharistic Liturgy. So Christianity was already on the move north from Constantinople. Olga did receive a missionary bishop from Emperor Otto I in the person of Adalbert, the future archbishop of Magdeburg; but his mission did not succeed. The use of a language the locals understood probably gave the decided edge to the Byzantines. By this time the people in the orbit of Kyiv were being called the Rus' by the Byzantines and Ruthenians by the Latins.

At the end of the regency, Olga remained at Kyiv with Svyatoslav's two sons, Yaropolk and Vladimir, while Svyatoslav spent most of his time on the battlefield, acquiring the title Svyatoslav the Conqueror. She tried to persuade him to embrace Christianity, but he resisted on the grounds that "my soldiers would laugh at me." But what she could not get from her son she would get in her grandson. Olga died at Kyiv, on July 11, 969, and – as the first ruler of the Rus' to embrace Christianity, among other things – was immediately considered a saint. She would be formally canonized in 1547 and given the title *Equal of the Apostles*.

Upon his mother's death, Svyatoslav moved his capital from Kyiv to Pereyaslavets, a trade city at the mouth of the Danube, leaving his son Yaropolk as prince of Kyiv and his illegitimate son, Vladimir, as prince of Novgorod. Svyatoslav would die just three years later in 972, and fratricidal wars would break out in 976. Eventually Vladimir would consolidate political power in his hands and take the throne of Kyiv. He would begin his own illustrious era.

Vladimir

Vladimir was a pagan, through and through, at least for the time being. He brought more of the various Slavic tribes under his hegemony and greatly expanded the domains of his father. He seemed to have inherited his grandmother's intellect and instincts. At first he tried to "modernize" the native pagan religion but realized that effort was a lost cause. In 987, after consulting his court, he sent emissaries to study the main religions of the known world, including Western (Latin) and Eastern (Byzantine) Christianity, as well as Judaism and Islam. Vladimir decided to embrace Christianity from Byzantium and was subsequently baptized the following year in Chersonesos (a/k/a Korsun) in Crimea, a city he had occupied. One may question the purity of his motives. He had struck a deal with the Byzantine Emperor to provide him with troops – the beginnings of the emperor's fearsome Varangian Guard, his personal bodyguards – in return for the hand of Princess Anna, sister of the emperor. This action would require him to become a Christian, and he did. And to judge from the changes in his policies and life style, he seems to have been sincere.

Soon after his own baptism and even in the face of very strong opposition, Vladimir invited everyone in Kyiv to be baptized on August 1st with this notice, proclaiming that "those who do not come to the river tomorrow, whether poor or rich, of low birth or high, will be my enemy." Slowly the opposition gave way, no doubt with the aid of Vladimir's many programs. Not only did he build churches, but he promoted literacy and jurisprudence, moderating some of the harsher provisions of the old tribal laws, even abolishing corporal and capital punishment. His grandsons would compile the first written legal code, usually called the *Rus' Justice*; and his granddaughters married into European royalty: Elizabeth to Harald II of Norway, Anna to Henry I of France, and Anastasia to Andrew I of Hungary. In this period the foundations of a Ukrainian Church were laid, where the religious patrimony of Byzantium was tempered with native culture and custom.

Rise of Muscovy

The Mongol incursions, beginning around 1225, would put an end to the golden age of Kyivan Rus' and paved the way for the rise of Muscovy, at that time a small trading outpost on the north-east periphery of the Kyivan lands. Muscovy's remote, forested location offered some security from Mongol attack and occupation; and a number of rivers provided access to the Baltic and Black Seas and to the Caucasus region. The turning of the tides of fortune for these two cities would have an effect continuing to our own day. Little by little, the Grand Duchy of Muscovy extended its sway over territory once considered part of Kyivan Rus' to increase the population and wealth under its rule. As the population shifted, so did the ecclesiastical center of the Rus', from Kyiv first to the city of Vladimir-

on-Klyazma in 1299 and then to Moscow in 1322. Near the end of the 15th century, Grand Prince Ivan III, the Great, having tripled the territory under his rule, having beaten back the Mongol Tartars, and having married the Byzantine Princess Zoe Paleologue after the death of his first wife in 1467, felt confident enough to proclaim himself *tsar* (the Slavic form of Caesar) of all the Rus'. In 1589 the Metropolitan of Moscow would obtain from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople the title and powers of a patriarch. Here Moscow would surpass Kyiv in ecclesiastical hegemony in concert with its growth as a world power.

This realignment put the western part of the Rus' lands farther away from the new seat of power and brought in the use of the term "ukraine" to describe certain areas of the more remote Rus' lands. Although the word appeared for the first time near the end of the 12th century, it simply denoted a fortified border land on the edges of the various principalities, equal to the English term "the marches," or the current use of the expression "the sticks" to describe very rural areas. The term was applied to different areas of the Rus' lands, with the same elasticity as the word "country" can mean either rural areas or nation.

Galicja

At this point the story line must shift from Moscow to the opposite end of the Rus' lands known to many Americans as Galicja, or *Halychyna* in Ukrainian. In his day Vladimir the Great laid claim



Kievan Rus'

Source: Msgr. George Appleyard

to this region in what is today the Ivano-Frankivsk area in western Ukraine. Halychyna had become a semi-independent kingdom in the 12th century when one of Vladimir's descendants, Prince Roman Mstyslavich, amalgamated into one principality the two small city states of Volyn (actually Vladimir-in-Volhynia) and Halych to its west. This new principality became increasingly prominent as many emigrants resettled there after fleeing declining Kyiv. Halychyna passed back and forth to and from Poland in the 11th century and became part of Hungary at the end of the 12th. Casimir III of Poland annexed it in the middle of the 14th century, and the territory eventually became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By 1596 the southwest part of the old Kyivan state came under the rule of the Polish crown where "Ukraine" was then used in a more specific way to describe the borderlands between Poland and the Tartars in the south. And so what is now called the Ukrainian Church found itself living in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Merge two churches and get three . . .

Even amateur church historians are aware of an affair called the Great Eastern Schism in which the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople broke communion with each other in 1054. The immediate impact on the Church in Rus' was rather minimal. There is documentary evidence that the ecclesiastical leaders there saw it more as a family squabble that needed to be settled. However, the Crusader sack of Constantinople in 1204 – seen as an unbearable outrage of "Christians" brutalizing Christians – galvanized the Church in Rus' and raised the emotional temperature terribly. Nonetheless, attempts were made at reconciliation, such as the Second Council of Lyon that began in 1272. On appearances, it seemed to be a success, but in reality it failed to achieve its goal. Another attempt was the Council of Basle-Ferrara-Florence, beginning in 1431. An important representative of the Eastern Church at that council was Isidore, born in southern Greece around 1385, who became a monk and later hegumen (abbot) of the Monastery of St. Demetrius in Constantinople. He knew Latin well and was a good speaker; he had a good reputation as a theologian and seems to have had a heart-felt desire for reunion with the West. In 1437, the Byzantine Emperor, John VIII Palaeologus, had Isidore appointed Metropolitan of "Kiev, Moscow and all Rus'," hoping that he would draw the Grand Duchy of Moscow into an alliance with the Church of Rome, at least for saving the Byzantine Empire and the Church of Constantinople from the rising threat of the Ottoman Turks. Grand Prince Basil II of Moscow received him with hostility but did underwrite his return to the Council, after which Pope Eugene IV made him a cardinal. In due time Basil II had a synod of six bishops depose Isidore and imprison him. After two years Isidore escaped and returned to Rome where he was appointed papal legate to Constantinople.

Since the Ukrainian Church in Western Ukraine lived within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, it saw certain social and political advantages in re-establishing communion with the Church of Rome. The hierarchs of the Kyivan Church gathered in synod in the city of Brest and composed thirty-three articles of **Union**, which were accepted by the pope; and a reunion was proclaimed at Rome in June of 1595. This Union begins what we call today the

Ukrainian Catholic Church. The various eparchies (i.e., dioceses) signed on individually, with Lviv not officially embracing the Union until 1700. At first this Union was fairly successful due to support by the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania, but within several decades – like the Union of Lyon – it lost much of its initial support outside the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, due mostly to the ineffectual and often heavy-handed way in which its implementation was attempted. At the end of the 18th century, with the partition of Poland, all of Ukraine, except Galicia, was annexed to Russia. Within decades all the eparchies (dioceses) would revert to Orthodoxy as Tsar Nicholas I abolished the Union in all areas under Russian rule in 1839. The eparchy of Kholm (now in eastern Poland and called Chelm) would remain in the Union until 1875 when it would be forced into Orthodoxy.

The emergence of the Cossacks, perhaps best described as semi-nomadic mercenary tribes on the very rural frontiers through the 14th and 15th centuries, also deepened the division of Ukraine into

Catholic as opposed to Orthodox since these Cossacks were militantly opposed to the Union of Brest, *militantly* being the operative word. Things were very different in Austrian Galicia, however. The Greek Catholic Church, as it came to be called there, underwent a great renewal. Under Austrian auspices the clergy received a better education, and in general the moral tone and practice improved. This



Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky

Source: Msgr. George Appleyard

revitalized Church eventually became part of a great Ukrainian national awakening in the 19th century. In the Second Polish Republic, between the World Wars of the 20th century, the Church contributed to the growing Ukrainian culture and nationalism. But it would pay the price. The Church flourished under the energetic leadership of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, metropolitan of Lviv from 1900 to 1944.⁵ The situation changed dramatically, however, at the beginning of World War II, when most of Galicia was annexed by the Soviet Union, which acted decisively to liquidate the Greek Catholic Church. In April of 1945 all its bishops were arrested and sentenced to long terms of forced labor. In March 1946, in Lviv, a sham synod was held which officially dissolved the Union and integrated the Ukrainian Catholic Church into the Russian Orthodox Church. After the new trials and tribulations of its catacomb existence, though, it would come back above ground officially on December 1, 1989,

when its communities were given the right to register with the Soviet government as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

Coming to America

In the meantime, in the last quarter of the 19th century, large numbers of Ukrainians from the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains as well as from Galicia, north of the mountains, began to migrate to the United States and Canada, many recruited by agents of the American anthracite coal industry for the hard labor that mining required. They tended to settle in Pennsylvania, and from there moved into neighboring states, also taking jobs in the lumber industry, the steel mills and other factories. These people tended to be peasants and, for the most part, were not accompanied by clergy or professionals who might have been very helpful to them. For their spiritual needs they usually attended the local Latin Catholic Church of a similar ethnic group, such as the Poles or the Slovaks.

Father Volansky

In 1882 the sixty or so Ukrainian families in Shenandoah (Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania) sent a petition to Bishop Sylvester Sembratovych, at that time Apostolic Administrator of Lviv and soon to become its archbishop and a cardinal, requesting him to send them a priest. The prelate replied by appointing the Rev. John Volansky, a Ukrainian priest of that archdiocese, as their missionary pastor. Fr. Volansky arrived in Shenandoah on December 10, 1884, and began organizing the Ruthenian Church (as it was then called) in America. He was described in a newspaper article three years later as “barely more than 30 years of age, tall and slim, though compactly built and fairly good looking.”⁶ He was faced with unexpected obstacles. Attempting to pay a courtesy call on the Roman Catholic archbishop of Philadelphia, Patrick J. Ryan, he was met by the vicar general, Fr. Maurice A. Walsh, who refused to accept his credentials and promptly told him that he was forbidden to function as a priest. The fact that Fr. Volansky was a married man most likely precipitated this reaction. Fr. Volansky notified (by now) Metropolitan Sembratovych and said he would proceed to exercise his ministry if the prelate did not rescind his appointment. With no answer from Lviv, Fr. Volansky rented Kern Hall on Main Street in Shenandoah and conducted the first service, Vespers, on December 18 of that year. The erection of a proper church was initiated and, despite construction problems, was dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel on November 21, 1886. Eventually the congregation had to build a bigger church, dedicated in 1909, that burned to the ground in 1980. It was replaced with the new structure that stands today.

Fr. Volansky cast a wide pastoral net and soon realized he would need help. He petitioned Metropolitan Sembratovych, who sent Fr. Zenon Liakhovych in March of 1887. Leaving him to tend the flock in Shenandoah, Fr. Volansky began an extended tour of the immigrant communities, visiting as far away as Colorado and several times in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With the completion of St. Mary’s Church in Kingston (Luzerne County, Pennsylvania), Fr. Liakhovych was stationed there. Unfortunately he died in November of 1887, and Fr. Volansky was alone again. Rev. Constantine Andrukhovych came in 1888 as a third church in Freeland (Luzerne County, Pennsylvania) was completed. During his stay, Fr. Volansky founded a

number of agencies for the benefit of the immigrants, including the first Ukrainian newspaper, *America*, still published today. By 1889 there were two more churches in the anthracite region: Olyphant (Lackawanna, Pennsylvania) and Shamokin (Northumberland County, Pennsylvania), with additional ones in Jersey City (New Jersey) and Minneapolis (Minnesota). In that same year (1889) Fr. Volansky was recalled to Galicia, most likely due to misunderstandings with the Latin hierarchy. This time it was more than the fact that he was married. In the coal strikes of 1887 and 1888, Fr. Volansky was the only local Catholic priest to support the miners.

Growing and Dividing

From 1889 more priests had begun to come to America, but chiefly from the southern side of the Carpathians. Nevertheless, as the communities grew in number, they outpaced the number of clergy coming. And trouble was brewing. The slight variations in language, custom and ritual between the people from south of the Carpathians and those from north of them, plus various movements of nationalism in the homelands echoing here, became a terrible irritant – to the point that those from Galicia began to establish their own parishes. Their aims were abetted by the arrival of seven young celibate priests from Galicia between 1895 and 1898. These priests, while seminarians in Lviv, were imbued with the spirit of the Ukrainian national revival and had formed themselves into the “American Circle” with the intention to do missionary work in America. One of these priests was Rev. Nestor Stefanovich who, after a few months in Buffalo, moved to Pittsburgh and would become the pastor of the parish there in 1895. These missionaries were clearly of the same caliber as Fr. Volansky. For instance, Fr. Tymkevich, who settled in Yonkers, New York, erected a model apartment building to house thirty-nine families. In 1904 he began an orphanage for Ukrainian boys with the hope that the superior education they could receive there would prepare them to provide good leadership for their community later.

Relationship with the Latin Hierarchy

But relations with the Latin hierarchy and clergy remained a paramount problem; e.g., the lack of any official, and thus mutually recognizable, status – and the absence of any normal ecclesiastical organization. Many priests coming from the homelands came with authorizations from their own local bishops there and so felt no particular need to cooperate with any of their colleagues here, and sometimes they practiced their ministry across Latin jurisdictional boundaries. The Latin hierarchy, acutely aware of the confusion that was ensuing – even aside from the fact that so many of these priests were married – began petitioning Rome to require celibacy in America and to subject these priests to their jurisdiction. The Vatican, in the person of Cardinal Mieczislaus Ledochowski, responded in 1892 to James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, conveying the instructions previously given to the Ruthenian bishops in Austria-Hungary in 1890, requiring: (1) priests coming to serve in the United States be celibate, (2) priests who were married had to return to the homeland, and (3) priests had to report to the Latin bishop of the place in which they intended to settle and to receive jurisdiction from him.⁷ This more informal instruction would be given much greater weight when Pope Pius X issued an Apostolic Letter, *Ea Semper*, on June 14,

1907. The document attempted to provide a charter for the Ruthenian Church in America, and appointed a bishop who would have at least limited authority. It codified and greatly enforced previous instructions regarding the Ruthenian Church in America, including those conveyed to Cardinal Gibbons by Cardinal Ledochowski fifteen years earlier. The immemorial practice of Byzantine priests’ confirming the individuals they baptized at the same ceremony was suspended, and much more. Many saw this as a betrayal of the Union of 1595 by Rome and it intensified the dissatisfaction of many Ruthenian Catholics and further undermined their confidence in the Latin Church, if not the Catholic Church, and many would convert to the Orthodox Church as a result.

The Russian Orthodox Mission

All these events occurred while the Russian Orthodox Mission, in 1891, was at work trying to induce the immigrants to return to communion in that Church. In March of that year, the first priest to convert to the Orthodox Church was the Rev. Alexis Toth⁸ in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was followed by Rev. Gregory Hrushka of Jersey City, New Jersey. As one century was coming to a close and another opening, the Ruthenians (both Galician and Transcarpathian) were battling the propaganda of the Russian Orthodox Mission subsidized by the tsarist government. By 1901 the Mission had succeeded in converting thirteen congregations with a total number of almost seven thousand people, about a third being from Galicia and the remainder from Transcarpathia. The number of Ruthenian Catholics switching to the Orthodox Church, mostly because of difficulties with the local Latin bishop or with their own authorities, would eventually almost double the constituency of the Orthodox body before 1913; and the exodus would continue. The Very Rev. Alexander Dzubay, who would serve as vicar general with the appointment of the first Ruthenian bishop, would convert to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1916 and be ordained bishop of and for that Church’s Pittsburgh diocese. All this internal instability also provided fertile ground for various Protestant groups to gain converts – including a startling entity: Sacred Heart of Jesus Ukrainian Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey!

Apostolic Visitor: Fr. Hodobay

There was a considerable consensus that a bishop, or at least something akin to a vicar apostolic, was needed to bring order to the situation, not only among the Ruthenian clergy and people but also between them and the Latin hierarchy and pastors. In 1902 the Rt. Rev. Andrew Hodobay, a canon of the Diocese of Preshov in Hungary (at that time, but now in Slovakia), arrived in the United States as Apostolic Visitor to Ruthenian Catholics. The obstacles he faced were many. The Ukrainian clergy were strongly opposed to him because he had the full support of the Hungarian government. The Hungarian government was wary, even at a distance, of the growing Ukrainian nationalism. Cooperation between Ruthenian clergy and Latin Catholic bishops proved to be an insurmountable challenge for a number of reasons, even beyond the chaotic conditions among the Ruthenians, including the development of lay committees holding title to church property. The visitor called for a convocation of priests on May 21, 1902, in Brooklyn, New York, to begin to draft statutes for the Ruthenian Church in America. The convocation was

less than successful. The Ukrainian priests had not been invited, and only thirty-two of the others attended. The relationship between the visitor and the priests from Hungary began to cool and then become hostile. Some of the clergy began to see the visitor as increasingly more concerned with Hungarian political interests than the organization of the Church, possibly because at the May meeting he himself was quoted as saying that he was “the official representative of the Hungarian government.”⁹ Fr. Hodobay was recalled in 1907.

First Bishop: Soter Stephen Ortynsky

The candidate the pope chose to be the first bishop for the Ruthenians in the United States was a Basilian monk from Galicia with a doctorate in theology – Soter Stephen Ortynsky.¹⁰ The new prelate arrived in the United States in August of 1907. He had been ordained a bishop earlier, on May 12, for the titular see of *Daulia*, and for his mission in America he was under the direct purview of the apostolic delegate in Washington (Archbishop Diomedeo Falconio). He was to be an auxiliary bishop to any Latin bishop in whose territory he would have to work. The fact that Ortynsky’s residence was in Philadelphia, the distance from Washington would actually intensify the problems he would face. Almost immediately upon his arrival, the new bishop called for two convocations at St. George’s Church in New York City, one for priests on October 15-16 and another for lay delegates from the parishes on the following two days. Both convocations drew a respectable attendance, and each group endorsed specific and favorable action on each item on the agenda. The lay delegates also voted a *cathedraticum* (a tax from the parishes for the livelihood of the bishop).

But the fact that Ortynsky was a Ukrainian from Galicia more than irritated the Hungarians among the Ruthenians, to the point that – when Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky came to America in 1910 – a delegation of priests from Transcarpathia presented him with a petition listing their grievances against Ortynsky and asked for a bishop of their own. All these irritants had exacerbated the situation; but the bishop managed to carry on with his episcopal duties – navigating through the Latin hierarchy since he had no jurisdiction of his own. He established an orphanage in 1911 and brought some of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great to staff it. He also opened a church supply store and a printery, and he laid plans for a seminary in Washington, D.C., affiliated with the Catholic University of America. With the subsequent outbreak of World War I, he organized help for victims of the conflict overseas.

On May 28, 1913, the Vatican conferred full ordinary jurisdiction on Bishop Ortynsky, making the Ruthenian Church in the United States completely independent of the Latin hierarchy.¹¹ At the time, the exarchate, as the entity was called,¹² had 152 churches, 43 missions, and 154 priests serving approximately 500,000 souls. Within

a year some of the most egregious restrictions were suspended by the papal decree *Cum Episcopo* – only to be imposed again sixteen years later in 1929 with the decree *Cum Data Fuerit*. But all of this took its toll on the man, and he died unexpectedly after an eight-day bout with pneumonia on March 24, 1916. These reversals of policy

on the part of the Vatican led to violent reactions and a second wave of Catholic Ruthenians’ converting to Orthodoxy, especially after *Cum Data Fuerit*. In July 1935, 37 parishes opposed to the re-imposition of the restrictions organized a congress to determine the future of their churches in the United States. This first Diocesan Council-Sobor met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 23, 1937, with Father Orestes P. Chornock as moderator. The participants abrogated their communion with Rome and joined the Orthodox Church, initiating the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Interregnum and Division

Upon the death of Bishop Ortynsky, the then-apostolic delegate, Archbishop Giovanni Bonzano, proposed that the consultors of the exarchate choose two candidates for the position of administrator *sede vacante*, one for the clergy and laity

from Galicia, and the other for the Transcarpathian Ruthenians and Hungarians. On April 11, the apostolic delegate conveyed the news that the Holy See had appointed the Very Rev. Peter Poniatishin as administrator for the Galicians and Rev. Gabriel Martyak for the Hungarians. In situations where both groups were represented, the two administrators were to decide together on appointing pastors, etc., but there was to be a single exarchate. The administrators were told to remain in their respective parishes since the interregnum was expected to be short. It would last for eight years, and the division made permanent in the creation of two distinct ecclesial communities: the (now) Byzantine Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and the (now) Ukrainian Archeparchy of Philadelphia. St. John the Baptist Church is part of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat, which in turn is part of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia. The Vatican appointed Rev. Basil Takach of Uzhorod for the Rusyns, Slovaks, and Hungarians who had been under the temporary care of the Very Rev. Gabriel Martyak; and the seat of this new exarchate was to be Homestead (Allegheny County), Pennsylvania. Fr. Constantine Bohachevsky, serving at that time as the vicar general of the Peremyshl Diocese in Galicia, would succeed to Philadelphia for the Ukrainians in 1924.

Pittsburgh

The first Ukrainian of record in Pittsburgh was Andrew Andreyszyn, who arrived in 1880. By 1890 there were twenty-five Ukrainian families in or near the city, and Fr. Theophane Obushkewich, pastor of Transfiguration parish in Shenandoah (Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania), had been serving the congregation as a



Bishop Soter Ortynsky

Source: Msgr. George Appleyard

visiting priest, coming for major feast days, baptisms, and weddings. In 1890, Rev. Gabriel Wyslocki became the first official pastor, but remained with the congregation only a few months. As plans for a church were being completed at that time, Fr. Obushkewich, still acting as a trustee of the parish, purchased an existing wooden frame hall on the corner of Carson and S. Seventh Streets on Pittsburgh's South Side, the site of the present church. The Rev. Ambrose Polansky then became pastor of the parish. He served until 1895, the year a new brick church in the Ukrainian Baroque style replaced the old frame structure. He was succeeded by Rev. Nestor (or Nicholas) Stefanovich, one of the "American Circle," who served for sixteen years. It was during Fr. Stefanovich's term that the growing animosity between the members from Transcarpathia and those from Galicia, stoked again by the tsarist-backed Russian Orthodox Mission, became a crisis of such proportions that it resulted in a court case in 1901, after which the Transcarpathian members of the parish left it to establish a nearby parish of their own, which endures to this day.¹³

The Ukrainian community continued to grow as thousands of new immigrants flocked to Pittsburgh to work in the steel mills. The aftermath of World War I would have repercussions here in the United States, even for the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The first great immigration of Ukrainians to the United States was motivated by a desire for a better life. The immigration that was instigated by the situation in Europe after World War I was driven by politics. The dispositions of the two groups were very different and led to some internal conflict.

St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church

By the second decade of the 20th century, the building that housed St. John the Baptist Church was too small and had to be enlarged.

The addition, more than twice the size of the original part, is the structure most people see today. A careful look at the northern elevation of the building (along E. Carson Street) shows the seam where the first structure adjoins the new addition, which would boast five of the eight "onion" domes atop the building today, indicative of Eastern Slav church architecture.

A series of short-term pastors followed. By 1931 the ecclesiastical situation had stabilized due to Vatican action, and Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky appointed the Rev. Michael Kindey as pastor. Fr. Kindey would hold the post until he retired in 1955. He was a shrewd, ingenious businessman while a self-sacrificing model of love and devotion, guiding the parish through the frightening days of the Great Depression and keeping it financially viable, even serving as its janitor. In 1933 he established a parochial school at the church to be staffed by the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great. A few pastors served the parish after that until the longest administration in its history began on September 1, 1966, with the appointment of Msgr. Michael Poloway, now retired. It was during his tenure that the U.S. Department of the Interior listed St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁴ In 1990 the parish observed its centennial.

Centuries of history, with all its currents and eddies, have coalesced in the brick structure on the corner of E. Carson and South Seventh Streets. The effects of developments in Eastern Europe, more than a millennium ago and half a world away, have found concrete expression in a building that has come to represent the contributions of countless people, in their faith and hope, their dreams and labor, and especially in the descendants they left behind. It still houses their heirs!



The Church Complex on Pittsburgh's South Side

Source: ©Michael Haritan, photographer

Suggested Readings:

George Appleyard, *Light of the East: A Guide to Eastern Catholicism for Western Catholics* (Parma, OH: Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of St. Josaphat in Parma and National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, 2000)

George Fedoriw, *History of the Church in Ukraine* (Toronto: Sophia Assoc., 1983).

Wasył Halich, "Ukrainians in Western Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania History* [Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania] Vol. 18, No. 2 (June 1935), 139-146.

Stephen P. Haluszczak, *Ukrainians of Western Pennsylvania* (Columbia, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

Ivan Kaszczak, *Bishop Soter Stephen Ortynsky: Genesis of the Eastern Catholic Churches in America* (CreateSpace, 2016).

_____, *Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky and the Establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States* (Toronto: Basilian Press, 2013).

Alexander Lushnycky (ed.), *Ukrainians in Pennsylvania: A Contribution to the Growth of the Commonwealth* (Philadelphia: Ukrainian Bicentennial Committee, 1976).

Paul Robert Magocsi, *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

Isidore Nahayewsky, *History of Ukraine* (Philadelphia: America, 1962).

Bohdan P. Procko, *The Byzantine Catholic Province of Philadelphia: A History of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the U.S.A.* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Ottawa, 1963).

_____, *Ukrainian Catholics in America: A History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982).

Fred J. Saato, *American Eastern Catholics* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2006).

Endnotes:

¹ See Isidore Nahayewsky, *History of Ukraine* (Philadelphia: America, 1963), 54 & ff.

² The Dnipro (also known as the Dnieper) is the fourth longest river in Europe, rising near Smolensk and flowing through Russia, Belarus and Ukraine to the Black Sea.

³ Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* (as published in the 19th century series *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*). See also Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies* (Ann Moffatt and Maxeme Tall, trans.), 2 vols. (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2012) – the first modern-language translation of the tenth century book by the Byzantine emperor Constantine (905-959), that includes ecclesiastical and secular ceremonies.

⁴ Cyril and his brother, Methodius, devised an alphabet (the Glagolitic) to translate the Christian Scriptures and liturgical texts into the Slavic language with which they became acquainted, and now known as Old Church Slavonic, for the use of the natives primarily in Great Moravia from which it spread. It can still be heard, at least in part, in some churches in Western Pennsylvania.

⁵ Andrew Alexander Sheptytsky, O.S.B.M. (1865-1944) was a native of

Galicia. He entered a Basilian monastery in Dobromyl, taking the name Andrew and was ordained a priest in 1892. Appointed Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishop of Stanyslaviv in 1899, he became archbishop of Lviv in 1901. His visitation of the United States took place in 1910. He was imprisoned by the Russians during World War I, and died during World War II. In 1958, the cause for his canonization as a saint was begun. Pope Francis approved his life of heroic virtue on July 16, 2015, thus proclaiming him to be Venerable.

⁶ *Evening Herald* (Shenandoah, Pennsylvania) (May 30, 1887), 4, as quoted in Bohdan P. Procko, "Focal Point of Ukrainian Immigration," in John E. Bodnar (ed.), *The Ethnic Experience in Pennsylvania* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1973), 221.

⁷ Bohdan P. Procko, *Ukrainian Catholics in America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), 12.

⁸ Alexis Georgievich Toth (1853-1909) was subsequently canonized by the Orthodox Church in America, the American successor to the Russian Orthodox Church, as St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre in 1994.

⁹ Procko, *Ukrainian Catholics in America*, op. cit., 17.

¹⁰ Soter Stephen Ortynsky, O.S.B.M. (1866-1916) was a native of Galicia. Having taken vows as a Basilian monk, he was ordained a priest in 1891. Appointed titular bishop of *Daulia* and bishop of Greek Catholics in America in 1907, he was ordained bishop by Archbishop Andrew Sheptytsky in Lviv.

¹¹ See August 25, 1913 letter of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop John Bonzano, notifying the American hierarchy of the Holy See's decision, in "Extension of Jurisdiction of the Ruthenian Bishop for the United States," *American Ecclesiastical Review* XLIX (October 1913), 473-474.

¹² In the Eastern Catholic Churches, an exarchate would be the equivalent of a vicariate apostolic in the Latin rite; a bishop would be appointed over a group of the faithful not yet large enough or organized enough to be constituted an eparchy (diocese). An archeparchy would be the equivalent of an archdiocese.

¹³ See "St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church" in Eleanor Patross, Emily Stecko, Vera Krokonko, Stephen Zinski, and George Appleyard, *Ukrainian Catholic Church 988-1988: Millenium of Christianity Directory, St. Josaphat Diocese of Parma, Ohio* (Gettysburg, PA: Herff Jones Co., 1988), 87. The Ruthenian immigrants organized a separate parish in 1900 under the name "Second St. John the Baptist Greek Catholic Church." In 1901, the membership purchased St. Casimir (Lithuanian) Church at 613 E. Carson Street. In 1958, the congregation relocated its church to 1720 Jane Street.

¹⁴ The church was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 29, 1974 as No. 74001747. In 1968, the building was designated a Historic Landmark by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.