

**ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY**

**SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST UKRAINIAN GREEK**

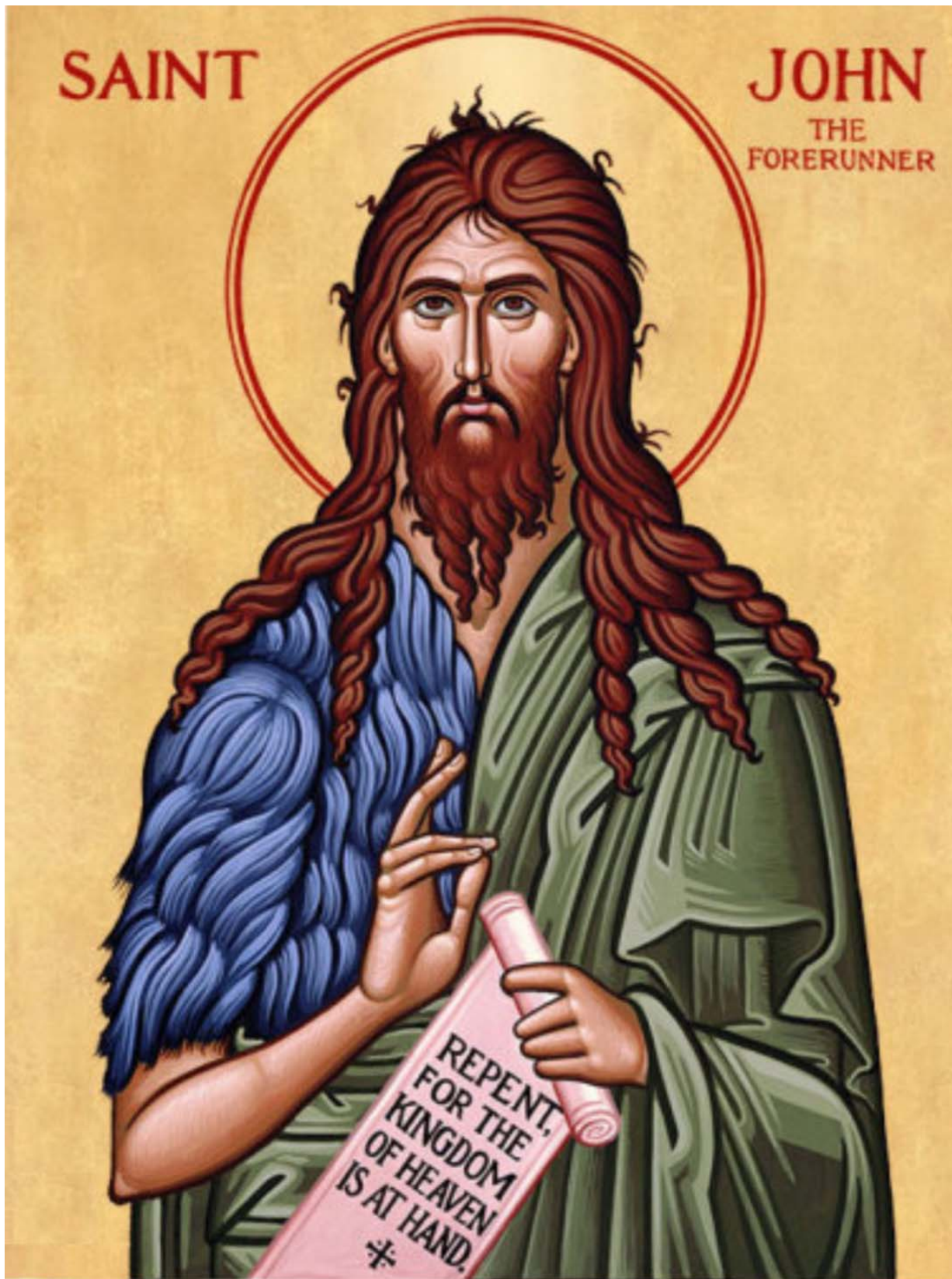
**CATHOLIC CHURCH**



**NORTHAMPTON, PENNSYLVANIA.**

**1900-2025**

**HISTORICAL SOUVENIR BOOK**



Saint John the Baptist and Forerunner of Jesus Christ and the patron of our church

# DEDICATION

Wow 125 years.

Just take a moment and let that sink in.

That is what I did when asked to put pen to paper and write this dedication. The year was 1900, our ancestors knew they wanted to keep God in their lives. They saved, donated, bought land, put pickaxe to soil, stone upon stone, hard work and sweat blossomed into a church building. A house of God where they could gather, worship, pray and communicate with God.

They accomplished their mission.

To their children who were brought up in the faith, that as they grew kept their parents dreams alive. They added and expanded and modernized over the years because it was just as important to them as it was to their fathers and mothers.

To their grandchildren who honor the legacy of their grandparents and parents, who continue in their footsteps to keep this house of God going, maintaining, expanding and beautifying it.

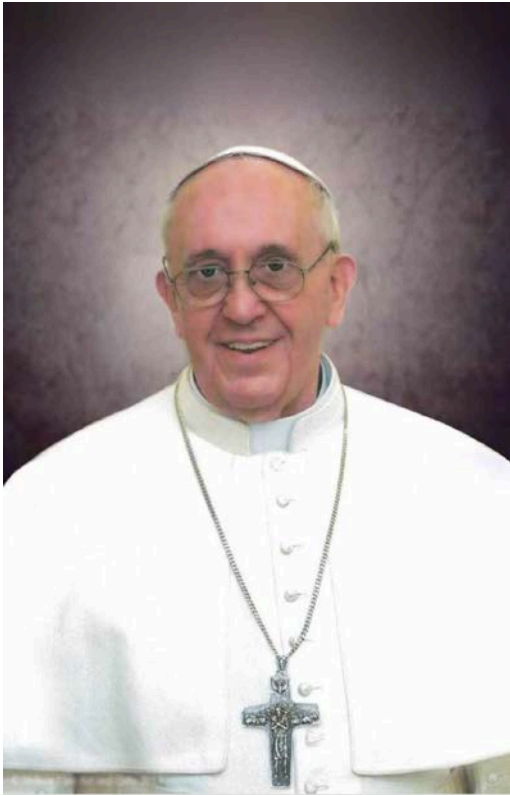
To these people who are long gone, the people who are here with us now and the people who are in the future to come.

To all of these people past, present and future who ever grasped the handle of any of the church doors and pulled them open and entered this beautiful house and gazed in awe at God's presence.

It is with great pride and honor that TO THESE PEOPLE I DEDICATED THIS 125 YEARS OF BEAUTY AND PEACE.

God's Blessings on all

Peter G. Nush



His Holiness Pope Francis





Apostolic Nuncio  
Christophe Pierre



Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk  
Metropolitan of Kyiv



Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak  
of Philadelphia



Bishop Paul Chomnycky  
of Stamford





Bishop Bohdan Danylo  
of Parma



Bishop Venedykt Aleksiychuk  
of Chicago



Father Vasil Bunik  
our Pastor

# PREFACE

This book was written to inform the readers about St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. It is also a testimonial to the pioneers who established this congregation. I take great pride in our Ukrainian faith and our church. This is proved by painstakingly doing research over the past 30 plus years in order to enlighten people about the events and the priests' lives that have taken place in our church. These events are documented from the infancy of our parish, leading up to our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Within this book, I did not go into detail about the friction that occurred between certain parishioners and the pastors over the years. I did not mention that the priests of the Diaspora, who were allowed to marry at this time, were not treated well by the priests of the Latin Rite. This in turn also caused a lot of tension. Despite this and a few other unfavorable events, there have been many wonderful things that happened in our church. The unfavorable events were described as gently as possible, in order to refrain from upsetting the readers.

There have been four other books published about the history of our church. The first book was printed in 1950, followed by another book in 1975. In 1988 a directory listing names and addresses of the parishioners along with historic facts was printed. For the centennial in 2000, another book was published.

A lot of research has been done for this current book, text from the three previous books, along with internet searches that include blogs, newspaper articles, articles from Wikipedia and other outside sources and the Cathedral archives helped to form the makeup of this book. Other churches' history books also provided me with some history of our past.

Baptismal, matrimonial and funeral records from our church's archives were also obtained and offered a lot of information. Interestingly enough, there were some differences that were found amongst these records. Names, birthdates and dates of death did not match what had been previously recorded. Proofreading, mispronunciation, phonetic spellings and other unknown factors may have caused these differences. For example, the first names of the priests written in Ukrainian/English language varied from place to place. Due to the various regional translations, a lot of confusion ensued. An individual with one specific name may have been referred to by two or three different names, despite being the same person.

I hope that everyone who reads this book learns about our church's history and all that has happened over the course of these 125 years of existence. Finally, I hope everyone can appreciate the sacrifices our forefathers endured in order to give us this beautiful place to worship.



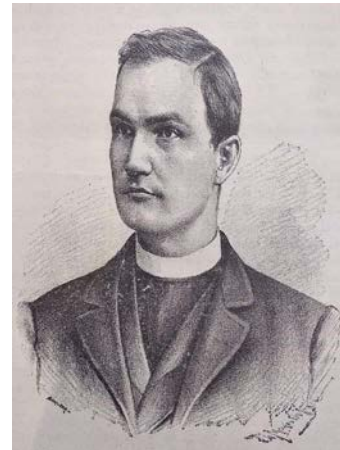
## A new country and a new beginning:

Immigrants coming to the United States of America at the end of the 19th century from Galicia, Austria, which is now present day Western Ukraine arrived in Massachusetts and Vermont and later made their way to Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. They all had the same things on their minds. Purchasing a home, finding a job, - and to some the most important thing- having a place to worship in their own Byzantine Eastern tradition.

The people in Shenandoah pleaded for a Ukrainian priest. Understanding this need Metropolitan-Archbishop Sylvester Sembratovych sent Rev. Father Ivan Wolansky to America. He came to New York in December of 1884. He stopped briefly in Jersey City, N.J., before continuing to Pennsylvania. History was made on December 19, 1884, when the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in a rented overflowing Shenandoah Hall.



Archbishop Sylvester Sembratovych



Fr. Ivan Wolansky

Shenandoah was a coal mining town with hard and dangerous work, and this along with the uncertainty of going on strike led some of the people to decide to look for work somewhere else. They heard there was good work in the Lehigh Valley. They arrived in a place called Newport, which in 1902 became present day Northampton. This area was located near the Lehigh River and canal. Pioneers were attracted to the Lehigh Valley area because of its employment opportunity in the cement industry. The Atlas Cement company was the largest producer of cement in the world at that time. There were other employment opportunities too, such as working on the canal (which was used to transport coal and other things), the railroad, the developing truck and trolley manufacturing companies, garment and cigar factories.

## The building of a new church and community:



Postcard of St. John's 1912

Mr. John Popadich was very interested in this project. Others who were happy to hear about this exciting news included Michael Lukachowsky, Peter Solan, Stephen Spak, Michael Kowal, Michael Patrick, John Lychak, Anthony Crayosky, Anthony Lukach, Michael Maruschak, Joseph Gladish, Telka Molchany and Samuel Drabik.

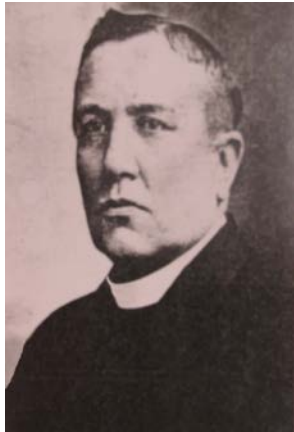
In the autumn of 1899, enough money was raised and they were able to purchase land from a Mr. Samuel Laubach who sold them six lots for the price of \$150.00 per lot. This was a beautiful wheat field and seemed most adequate since wheat is grown in Ukraine.

Knowing that the church body needed to have a charter, on January 22, 1900, the articles of incorporation were approved, and a charter was granted for the first Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in both Northampton and Lehigh counties.

## The first of its kind in the Lehigh Valley and Northampton counties:

The cornerstone of the first Greek Catholic Church in the Lehigh Valley was laid on the afternoon of May 6, 1900, with a large gathering of well over 2,500 people. The churches represented were St. Matthew's of Cementon with a group of 30 people; St. Andrew's of Catasauqua, 84; Sts. Cyril and Methodius, a turnout of 50. The Catasauqua and Stemton Bands and the Sailors' drum corps of South Bethlehem furnished music. At the conclusion of the ceremonies there were addresses made by Rev. Stephen Mkaro and Rev. Peter Keshelak. While the church was under construction, the needs of the people were taken care of by Rev. Gabriel Martyak. The son of Fr. John and Melania (Staurousky). He was born on November 3, 1859, in Vyskovce, Slovakia. He was ordained to the priesthood on February 15, 1885. He and his wife came to America in 1896,

Fr. Gabriel died on April 16, 1934. He came from Lansford, Pennsylvania along with Rev. Peter Keshelak, (born in Hungary on June 4, 1871, passed away on July 2, 1938).



Fr. Gabriel Martyak

Both priests came to the Lehigh Valley to advise these daring pioneers, and performed early weddings, baptisms and funerals at St. Lawrence church in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania.

St. John's was the first Catholic Church in Northampton and the first Byzantine Church in the Lehigh Valley. It was not until 1909 that a church was built to administer to the spiritual needs of Germans and Hungarians (Roman Catholic people), followed by churches for the Slovak and Polish immigrants. The members of St John's are proud of this distinction. Even before Northampton received its own charter to become a borough, our church and its people were great forces in laying the foundation for community life. Some of the priests that served our parish (including the two mentioned before) were Ruthenian, which later became the Byzantine church. They were known as Rusyns and came from the Carpathian region of Ukraine.

The new church, the only one of its kind in the Lehigh Valley, (measuring 40 ft. by 80 ft.) was built, at the cost of \$9,000. During renovations in 1999, it was found that two of the bells were cast in 1900, and that a third bell was installed in 1902. They were bought from a foundry in Cincinnati, Ohio. It also must be noted that during the existence of our church it went under several different names: St. John the Baptist United Catholic Church, St. John the Baptist Uniate Catholic Church, St. John the Baptist Greek Rite Church, and presently St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

## The first pastor was assigned:



Fr. Damascene Polivka



Original rectory

Church archives and internet findings make it uncertain on the exact date the first pastor came to the new parish. What we know is Rev. Damascene Polivka (?-1901) came here from St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Winnipeg, Canada. He was a Basilian priest who was born in the Bohemian village of Hostin u Vojkovic on February 4, 1869 and was ordained to the priesthood on September 12, 1897. He was very instrumental in organizing several churches in Canada.

The church was dedicated and blessed on the feast day of St. John the Baptist in 1900 and for that reason St. John the Baptist was chosen to be the patron Saint of the parish.

Rev. Damascene Polvilka's zeal was so captivating that he was able to overcome most of the difficulties of those trying times. Knowing that these hard-working people had to make great sacrifices to build a church and provide for their own daily needs, he did not even approach them in regards for him to have a place to live. He saved what little he received from the congregation for his services and built a rectory. When the parish was better situated financially, he sold the home to the parish. He received \$1,900 for this transaction. This was the only money he had on hand to be able to continue working for the interest of his parish. Later the rectory was used by the sisters as living quarters and eventually used to teach our young children. Research shows that he traveled to other communities in Pennsylvania while here at St. John's to help them organize their parishes. His last day at our church was June 24, 1901.

Branch 235 of the Greek Catholic Union was the first organization in our parish. A charter was granted on June 12, 1901. The purpose of St. John the Baptist Branch of the Catholic Union was to promote the founding and building of the Catholic Church of the Greek Catholic Rite in



Northampton, Pennsylvania. This was attained through the efforts of their members who also wished to name the organization after the patron Saint of the church. They also banded together for social and beneficial reasons. A sick and death benefit protection was granted to the members. The first offices of the organization were John Maruschak, (president), Andrew Chepelak, (secretary), and Michael Mondrick, (treasurer).

### As we continued to grow in spirit and faith:



Fr. Nestor Dmytrow

The second pastor was Rev. Nestor Dmytrow, (1901-1908) born in Utishkiv, Ukraine. In 1863 he was ordained to the priesthood, and he came to America sometime in 1895. He started his work as a missionary in New Jersey and then was sent to Winnipeg, Canada. Rev. Nestor was the first Ukrainian Catholic priest to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Canada; this happened on April 12, 1897. Coming back to the United States, he stopped in Chicago and New York before arriving at St. John's. He was instrumental in helping a group of people from the Ormrod area in organizing the St. Nicholas Society Branch 124 in September 1905. The first officers were John Onyszko (president), John Orotyla, (treasurer), Stephen Gressa, (secretary). Rev. Nestor Dmytrow was one of the so-called American Circle: a group of young seminarians who, while still in Lviv, resolved to immigrate to the United States in order to improve the religious, civic, and cultural status of Ukrainians in America. He was also a writer who printed articles for the Ukrainian paper Svoboda (1893) now the Ukrainian Weekly. In 1908, he was transferred to St. John the Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey. At this time, the people who traveled from Allentown to Northampton to go to church decided they needed a church closer to them. Rev. Nestor was sent back to the Lehigh Valley in 1911 to help establish St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Allentown. They became St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox church on November 27, 1932. He served at other churches before passing away on May 7, 1925, in Elizabeth, New Jersey.



The oldest picture from St. John the Baptist church. The Blessing of Holy Water on the Feast of the Theophany in, 1905.

## A leader was sent to America and a parish continues to grow:



Metropolitan-Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky



Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky

Also at this time (knowing that the immigrants in America needed a spiritual leader), Metropolitan-Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky of Lviv appointed Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky the first bishop of the Eastern Rite Catholics in America.

Rev. Peter Luczeczko (1908-1910) was born in 1866, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1893 in Przemyśl, Poland. He was sent by Bishop Soter Ortynsky from St. Mary's in McKees Rocks to St. John's and he celebrated his first Divine Liturgy here on Sunday August 16, 1908. For the sake of history, it must be said that during his time here there were factions among the people regarding who should be in charge of the church financially. In August 1910, Metropolitan-Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky arrived in New York from Lviv. He joined Bishop Soter Ortynsky in Philadelphia and came to Northampton to settle the issues. Father Peter Luczeczko was transferred to St. Mary's in Ramey, Pennsylvania, on August 15, 1910. Records show that Father Luczeczko passed away in 1930.

Rev. Omeljan Baransky (1910-1914) was born in 1883 in Galicia and was ordained to the priesthood in 1908. He was transferred from St. Nicholas church in Glen Lyons, Pennsylvania. He arrived on August 16, 1910, to replace Father Peter Luczeczko. Fr. Omeljan helped

organize the St. Olga's Lodge Branch 318 established on April 1, 1912. The first president was Pazia Rochniak, Ksenia Derewliana was secretary, and Justina Chepelak was treasurer. Another organization he was instrumental in organizing the Brotherhood of St. Michael the Archangel Branch 27; initiated on October 10, 1914. During this time, there was beginning to be the need for a larger rectory. Original plans were to add on to the existing home, which would have been two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. Once again there were issues, and Bishop Soter Ortynsky came to Northampton and held a meeting to sort out the problem. It was then decided to build a new rectory on the vacant lot next to the church. Construction started in late summer of 1913 and was completed at the cost of \$6800 by the end of the year. Father Omeljan was also helpful in organizing the Branch 18 of the Providence Association in February of 1914. Shortly thereafter he was transferred. Father Baransky died on November 10, 1929.



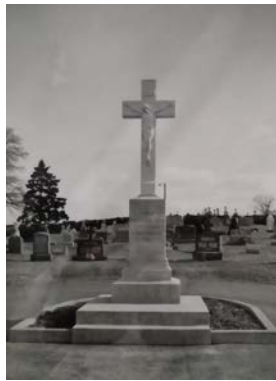
Fr. Omeljan Baransky



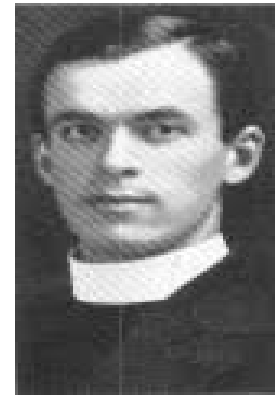
Rev. Michael Guryansky (1914-1915) was born in Ukraine on April 4, 1885, and was ordained to the priesthood on October 12, 1912. He was sent to America later that year. He was transferred to St. John's in 1914 to replaced Rev. Omeljan Baransky. Father Guryansky was the first president of the Providence Association: Damian Demchyk, secretary, and Harry Kochan, treasurer. The purpose of this organization was to propagate and sustain a religious spirit among the Ukrainian people in America and to assist its members in case of sickness and disability, to aid widows, orphans, and families in general in case of death. The first president was Wasyl Kochenash, and the Apostleship of Prayer, which received a diploma of recognition on July 19, 1915.



Fr. Michael Guryansky



Cross on the first cemetery



Fr. Michael Kuziw

Unfortunately, after less than one year as pastor of St. John's, Father Michael was transferred to St. John the Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan.

On December 31, 1915, Rev. Michael Kuziw (1915-1920) arrived as the new pastor of St. John's parish. Father Michael was born on September 17, 1886, in Denysy, Nesterov Raion, Lviv. He was the son of Stephen and Eudoxia (Yurkiv) Kuziw. Fr. Michael came to America in 1909 along with his wife and family.

Shortly after his arrival, the interior of the church was renovated and property was purchased for the use as a cemetery (May 11, 1916). During the summer of 1919, a handsome crucifix was erected inside the church and dedicated with impressive ceremonies.

On March 24, 1916, after 9 years as Bishop for all Eastern Rite Catholics in America, Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky passed away. No immediate replacement was installed.



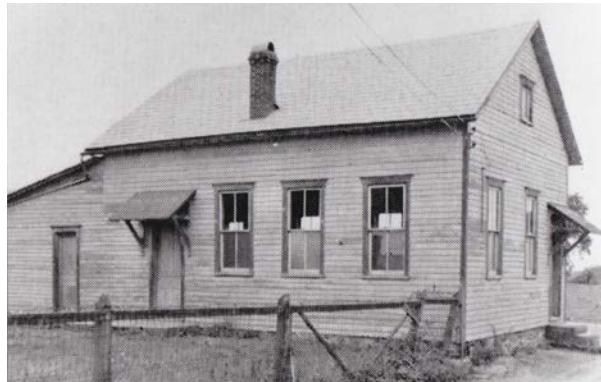
Again, with traveling from Bethlehem to Northampton the people from the surrounding Bethlehem area decided to start their own church. St. Josaphat had started as a mission before becoming a church in 1918. Since there were not many Ukrainian priests in America at



the time, Rev. Michael would travel back and forth from Northampton to Bethlehem to conduct services for a number of years. At the end of June 1920, Rev. Michael was transferred to Sts. Peter and Paul's in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He was pastor of other churches. His last assignment was in Syracuse, New York, at St. John the Baptist Church. He died on January 14, 1951, while at that parish. He was survived by his wife Mary (Glowa) and four children, Olga, Sophia, John, and Michael Jr., and a brother Rev. Elias Kuziw, who is buried on our cemetery.



Fr. Vasyl Maniowsky



Meeting house in Ormrod

The next priest to arrive was Rev. Vasyl Maniowsky, (1920-1921), who was born in Western Ukraine in 1871, he was ordained to the priesthood by Metropolitan Sheptytsky in 1902. He came to America sometime in 1913. At the time of his arrival, the people of Ormrod wished to provide their children with instructions in religion and the Ukrainian language. On September 18, 1920, a building was purchased in Ormrod, this was to serve as a meeting place for the different organizations and the parochial evening school conducted by the sisters of the order of Saint Basil the Great. Prior to that, the church choir director devoted a few hours in the evenings to give the necessary instructions to the children of the parish. Once again, in 1921 the people who came from West Easton to Northampton to receive the sacraments at St. John's decided they wanted their own place to worship. The new church was named the Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church. Unfortunately, also at this time numerous families split from our parish and founded the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Ukrainian Orthodox church in Northampton, Pennsylvania (1921). At this time, some members of the family stayed at St. John Catholic Church while others went to the Orthodox Church. So, there have been several churches that have been established from St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church in Northampton. For that reason, our church is known as the "Mother Church" of all Ukrainian catholic churches the in Lehigh Valley.

## The first 25 years:

Rev. John Kutsky (1921-1930) arrived with his wife Mrs. Evelyn (Krasnopera) Kutsky and their two children Irene and Roman. While Fr. John was pastor, he made several improvements to the church building. New pews were purchased to replace the dilapidated ones that had been there since the church was built.

Among other things while Fr. John was here, a greater interest was shown in the Apostleship of Prayer, and on January 29, 1922, a reorganization of the group took place and new officers were elected. Shortly before Father John was transferred in 1930, new stained glass windows depicting the Stations of the Cross were installed, they were purchased from the Zurich stained glass company in Chicago, Illinois.

Our new choir director, Mr. Zenon Hradkowsky arrived in Northampton on February 29, 1924. He was a native of Ukraine born on October 30, 1888. His wife was Mrs. Anna (Buchkowiak) Hradkowsky. They had three children: Helen, Walter and Alexander. He had been a choir director and cantor since 1917 in both Ford City and Johnstown Pennsylvania before coming to St. John's. Mr. Zenon Hradkowsky established an enviable reputation with his choir throughout the area. He had conducted concerts, produced plays some of which were performed at the Lyric theater (The Roxy)- and taught the children of the church religion, the Ukrainian language, Christmas carols and other songs. He was so dedicated that he would use his own vehicle to pick up the children and drive them to the meeting house in Ormrod.



Zenon Hradkowsky



St. John's Choir 1935. Zenon Hradkowsky and Father Ulanytzky



Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky

At this time, the Rev. Constantine Bohachevsky was sent from Warsaw to Rome. Pope Pius XI secretly installed him as Bishop in March of 1924. In August, of that same year he arrived in America as the first Bishop for all Ukrainian Catholics in the United States of America. He became the first Metropolitan-Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia in 1958. He held this title until his death on January 6, 1961.

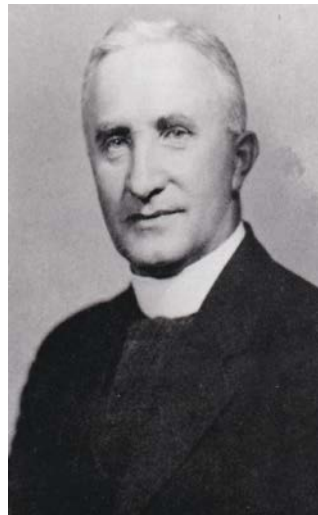
Rev. Michael Pazdrey (1930-1933) was born on November 21, 1872, in the town of Toki, Galicia, Austria. His parents were Constantine and Helen (Shemansky) Pazdrey. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 22, 1907. He was the husband of Mary (Ivanush) Pazdrey. Fr. Pazdrey and his wife had five children: Michael, George, Helen, Olga and Sister Carmela (Mary). He arrived from Sts. Peter and Paul in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Rev. John Kutsky was transferred to the same church in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Rev. Michael Pazdrey worked hard to carry on the good plans for the further development of the parish. In spite of his best efforts, a faction formed within the church that failed to cooperate with him. Since the condition did not improve, Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky transferred Rev. Michael Pazdrey to a church in Frackville, Pennsylvania, and appointed a determined spiritual leader Rev. Vladimir Ulanytzky (1933-1946), who was born in Austria, on July 27, 1879, and ordained to the priesthood in Lviv in 1909. Father Michael passed away on May 3, 1944. Rev. Vladimir came to America in July of 1912. Before coming to Northampton he was administrator of both Transfiguration of the Lord church in Nanticoke and St. Nicholas in Glen Lyon. Rev. Vladimir and his wife Vladimira (Jaciv) had two children: Roman and Bodham. With his arrival at St. John's the faithful of the parish worked with their new pastor and after a short time, the church was able to liquidate its debt and save enough money to acquire other properties.



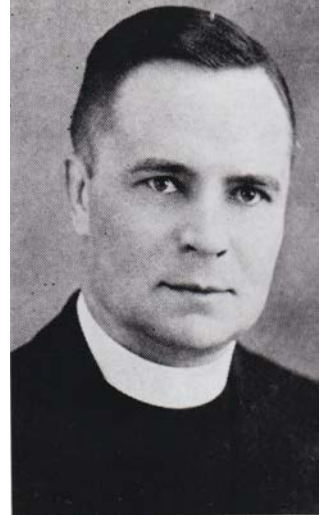
Fr. John Kutsky



Fr. Michael Pazdrey



Fr. Vladimir Ulanytzky



Fr. Paul Iwachiw

On September 3, 1940, the church purchased property for the purpose of a social hall on Stewart Street. This area was to be a parking lot since it was located within walking distance of the church.

On the weekend of February 6-7, 1943, Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky made a canonical visit to the church. There was a special vesper service held in his honor on Saturday evening and a

Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. There were hundreds of parishioners in attendance for both events.

With the need for more burial ground, property was purchased on January 25, 1943, across the street from the original cemetery. In November of 1944, a surprise anniversary banquet was held in the church hall to celebrate the eleven years of Rev. Vladimir being pastor of St. John's. There were over 500 people celebrating this event.

Dedication of the new cemetery took place on May 30, 1946. Father Vladimir's health was failing and demanding more attention. Because of this Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky sent Rev. Paul Iwachiw (1946) born on February 12, 1909, and died on November 2, 1992, to administer to the needs of the people during his illness. Saint John's parishioners received the sad news on June 4, 1946, that their pastor had passed away. A few weeks after the burial, Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky decided to transfer Father Paul, and sent another priest to be the pastor of our church.



Property on Main St. near the cemetery.



Original cross on the new cemetery



St. Nick's Club on Stewart St

## New life was brought to the church:



Fr. Stephen Chehansky



Fr. Strotsky, Bishop Bohachevsky, Fr. Chehansky and Mr. Paul Lauser Sr.

On July 8, 1946, parishioners received wonderful news that Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky had appointed Rev. Stephen Chehansky (1946-1982) pastor of St. John's church. The oldest of



son John and Julia (Paulishak) Chehansky, he was born on November 23, 1905, in Peckville, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. He was ordained to the priesthood on October 1, 1930, in Rome and celebrated his first Liturgy the following day at the tomb of St. Peter.

Father Stephen has the distinction of being the first Ukrainian Catholic priest born on American soil. His previous assignments were at the Cathedral in Philadelphia; St. Basil's in Chesapeake City, Maryland, and before coming to St. John's he was very instrumental in the building of a new church in Hamtramck, Michigan, Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The reason for the appointment of Father Stephen was that the parish might benefit from the instructions of sermons in both the English and Ukrainian languages, so that the young and older people of the parish may take a more active interest in the church. Within a relatively short period of time, a greater zest of the parishioners was noticed. A keen interest in all parish activities began to take place. Not only older members of the church but the younger youth and children were concerned about their duty to Christ and their church.



## Properties are purchased and a Parochial School is built:

Two plots of land adjoining the rectory were purchased on March 24, 1947. These would serve as a future building site for our parochial school and a recreational center. During 1946 and 1947, the rectory was redecorated and new furniture was purchased. Beginning in 1948, a special campaign was launched. This campaign included the plans to repair, improve, redecorate, and modernize our church in preparation for the Golden Jubilee of our parish.

Much effort, time, and money would be necessary to remodel the home that served as a sister's convent and parochial school. The majority of the people of the parish were keenly interested in

having sisters conduct the evening school. They recalled that in 1932 when the parish had financial difficulties the sisters had to leave because there was no means of support. The members of St John's were glad to hear that in September 1948- after the lapse of 16 years- the sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great would return to the parish. Sister Eugene and Sister Wladimira were assigned the first year and the following year Sister Joan replaced Sister Wladimira. Sister Angela was appointed to conduct for the first time in the history of our parish the first grade in our parochial day school. Our elementary school began on September 4, 1950, with 11 children in the kindergarten and first grade classes. When the second school year began, there was an enrollment of 36 children. These studies took place in the basement of the church, and as more grades were needed, they moved some classes to the convent.

Several female members of the parish chose to join the religious life. These women included Sister Augustine from the Termena family, Sister Dominica from the Maslany family, Sister Marina from the Goida family, Sister Innocence from the Bodnar family, Sister Clement from the Bartholomew family and Sister Christina from the Kraynick family.

The home on the new cemetery property was completely remodeled in 1948. It was prepared for living quarters for our choir director, a worthwhile expenditure that increased the valuation of the property considerably. Other improvements of our church properties were then made when living quarters on the third story of the parish club were completed. Rev. Charyna occupied this space, and during the housing shortage, we had allowed the displaced persons coming to the parish to use it. This renovation made the use of an entire floor previously without any value due to idle vacancy. Assistant pastors resided in this apartment for several years.

Renovations inside the church which included new colorful Byzantine style painting at the price of over \$40,000 and new furniture, other upgrades to the rectory, and other improvements on the outside of the church property had been completed. At this time, a new retaining wall was built along the front of the church property and landscaping around the grounds was completed in order to beautify the surrounding area in front of the church, rectory and convent grounds. During that year, donations were made by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Kraynick and other families who wanted to remain anonymous. With this money, statues of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette were erected on top of an altar that was built by the parishioners in front of the rectory. This shrine was dedicated on May 21, 1950, at the annual May procession. This was also the start of the Golden Jubilee celebration.

## **A Golden Anniversary of faith and dedication:**

The celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the parish was an outstanding event. It took place on May 30, 1950. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Rev. Stephen Chehansky, assisted by



Rev. John Bobyock and Rev. Constantine Berdar as deacons. The sermon was preached in Ukrainian by the Rev. Dr. Basil Feddish of Staten Island, and in English by Rev. Bennett of the Mary Immaculate Seminary. Over 50 priests attended the Divine Liturgy to represent all the Catholic churches in both the Greek and Latin Rites in the Lehigh Valley.

A civic reception followed at the Lehigh Valley Dairy Auditorium in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Well over 800 people (including priests, sisters, state officials and parishioners) attended the banquet and program. Rev. Fr. Dr. Stephen Knapp of New Kensington, Pa., was toastmaster. Speakers included Rt. Rev. Msgr. Leo Fink, Hon. Francis Walter, (a member of Congress), and Hon. Blair Gunther, (Judge of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania).

Keen interest from the public about the happenings of our church festivities was maintained through the many informative articles and write-ups along with pictures of the interior and exterior of the church in the daily editions of the local newspapers "The Morning Call" and "The Evening Chronicle". Several broadcasts over local radio stations were very instrumental in keeping the majority of the listeners well informed of the activities of the church. Especially through the facilities of the Lehigh Valley Catholic Hour, a broadcast on radio station WSAN, where Rev. Stephen Chehansky explained the importance of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The church choir under the direction of Mr. Zenon Hradkowsky was most cooperative in enhancing the prominence of these broadcasts.

## Teaching the Byzantine Theology to the young:

The growth of the parochial school prompted the good people of the parish to contribute towards the building of a new school building that could accommodate the children that attended along with future enrollment. The cornerstone was blessed on January 4, 1953, by Rev. Stephen Chehansky. A formal dedication of the new school took place on Labor Day, September 7, 1953. Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky officiated the solemn blessing. The school opened two days later with 120 children in kindergarten through fourth grade.

To liquidate the school debt the St. John's Holy Name Society and the St. John's Ladies Society offered to help by sponsoring various fundraising projects to provide income for this building plan.

In 1954, a group of women began making pyrohy, and to this day proceeds from the sales have been a very important source of income for the parish.

When the 8th grade started in 1957, there were 233 pupils in our school. The first graduation was held on June 9, 1958, when 14 students received their diplomas.

The following is a list of some of the sisters and laypeople that had the pleasure of teaching in our school. Sisters Angela, Eugenia, Joan, Lucy, Ignatius, Gabriel, Gregory, Innocence, Damian, Ambrose. Also, laypeople Irene Demchuk, Richard Stetch, Marie Sedonic, Irene Liebold, Carol Simon, Julie Cabbage, Marie Skrotsky, Michael Duda, Coleen Berger, Andrew Batcho and others.

Groundbreaking for a second floor of classrooms along with a gymnasium and cafeteria took place on March 3, 1957. Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky along with Rev. Msgr. Chehansky dedicated the addition on April 27, 1958. Within four years of fundraising and pyrohy sales, the parish was able to celebrate a mortgage burning ceremony with a dinner for over 700 church members at the Northampton Community Center.



Mr. and Mrs. Zenon Hradkowsky were honored on March 7, 1954, with a surprise celebration for the occasion of their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this also coincided with Zenon's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of him being choir director at St. John's. Miss Mary Kraynick president of the choir presented him with a gold watch. In Mr. Zenon Hradkowsky's remarks, he said, "the job is not too easy, since according to the Eastern Rite all the singing is done a cappella or done without accompaniment." Fr. Stephen Chehansky and Mr. Paul Lauser Sr. headed the banquet. Well over 300 people were in attendance for this happy occasion.

## 25 years in the priesthood and the elevation to Monsignor:

A testimonial dinner was held on August 28, 1955, at the Northampton Memorial Community Center in honor of Rev. Stephen Chehansky on the occasion of his Silver anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Rev. Stephen Chehansky was honored by the church on July 12, 1958, for his appointment as a Papal Chamberlain by Pope Pius XII. He was elevated to the dignity of Reverend Monsignor by Metropolitan-Archbishop Constantine Bohachevsky in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

With the death of Metropolitan-Archbishop Constantine Bohachevsky on January 6, 1961. Bishop Ambrose Senyshyn of Stamford replaced him on August 14, 1961, as Metropolitan-Archbishop. More sad news came when the parish was told the choir director Zenon Hradkowsky passed away in October of 1968. He had been the cantor/choir director for 44 years. With the need of a new choir director, Msgr. Chehansky approached Mr. Michael Prosak, who at this time who was the choir director for St. Vladimir's church in Palmerton. Mr. Prosak agreed to direct both choirs.

## Other milestones for a priest and a church:

While the pyrohy sales were a great source of income, it mainly supported the school. There were thoughts about finding others ways to raise money to continue the maintenance of the church and start renovation for the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was decided to hold a BINGO social every Monday evening in the gymnasium.

St. John's parishioners wished to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rev. Msgr. Stephen Chehansky's pastoral work at the church. On June 27, 1971, in St. John's Auditorium a testimonial banquet was giving in his honor. During this celebration, he was presented with a very generous gift of \$11,000.00. Realizing St. John's 75th anniversary was soon approaching, Rev. Msgr. Chehansky offered the entire amount to the church to create a Jubilee fund for much needed renovation and repair to the church building. This act inspired many parishioners to make their own generous contributions. In fact, the Jubilee committee found it unnecessary to make any assessments for the renovations because of his generosity and the entire project was accomplished without incurring any debt.

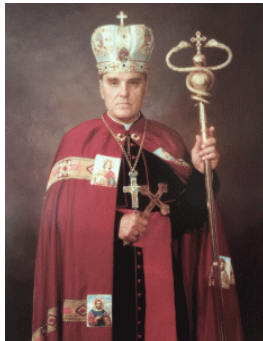
In 1972, it was necessary to build a new convent; the new building would accommodate six nuns and have a chapel and office.

In preparation for the Diamond Jubilee celebration the exterior of the church was resurfaced, chandeliers and new lighting were acquired, the interior was painted, new confessionals were purchased, and wood paneling was installed along with new carpeting and air conditioning.

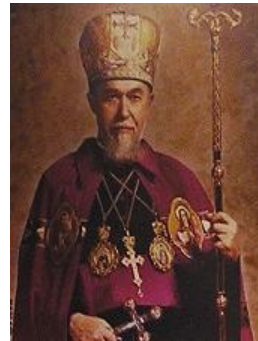
Sunday May 25, 1975, was chosen as the date to mark this milestone of St. John's, the first Catholic Church in Northampton and the first Eastern Rite Church in the entire Lehigh Valley. Metropolitan-Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn O.S.B.M. D.D. concelebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with several priests from the Ukrainian Catholic Church.



Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn  
August 14, 1961-September 11, 1976

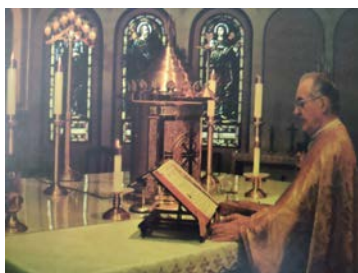


Archbishop Joseph Schmondiuk  
September 20, 1977-December 25, 1978



Archbishop Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky  
November 12, 1979-March 27, 1980

The Divine Liturgy was recorded by the local cable company and was televised to the public the following week. This celebration was capped off by a banquet held at the Northampton Community Center attended by hundreds of faithful and scores of priests.



Another highlight at this time was the recording of the Divine Liturgy by Rev. Msgr. Chehansky with Rev. Michael Batcho as assistant pastor and the church choir directed by Mr. Michael Prosak. This was the first time the Ukrainian Divine Liturgy was recorded in English. On May 8, 1977, the choir appeared on Channel 6 WPVI with Auxiliary Bishop Basil Losten to sing the liturgy on the TV program "The Mass".

Michael Prosak who was still directing St. Vladimir's in Palmerton and our choir was having some health issues. He thought it would be best if he would just direct here at St. John's and not travel the long distance to Palmerton anymore.



Pope John Paul II and Rev. Msgr. Chehansky



Auxiliary Bishop Basil Losten



Archbishop Lubachivsky, Rev. Msgr. Chehansky

## A parishioner is ordained to the priesthood and another priest's pilgrimage:

At this time Rev. Msgr. Chehansky's influence was very inspirational to a young parishioner, Mr. Thomas Sayuk. Born in Northampton on December 13, 1949, he was the son of Stephen and Margaret Sayuk. After graduating from Northampton Area High School, he entered the seminary and was ordained to the priesthood on August 15, 1974, by Metropolitan-Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn. Ten years later on December 3, 1984, Rev. Fr. Thomas was elevated to the rank of Monsignor by Bishop Robert Moskal from the Parma Diocese in Ohio. Rev. Msgr. Sayuk passed away on August 22, 2022, in Brookville, Florida at the age of 72.



By the early 1970's the parish had grown to around 500 families, at this time there were 4 Divine Liturgies on Sunday morning 7:00, 8:30, 10:00 which was sung by the choir and 12:00 noon. With changes in society as far as some people needing to work on Sunday mornings it was decided to have a Liturgy on Saturday evening and three Liturgies on Sunday morning.

Rev. Msgr. Chehansky continued to lead the church, and on August 31, 1980, celebrated his Golden Anniversary of his ordination with a Divine Liturgy and banquet in his honor. The celebration culminated with a two-week pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Italy and Germany. Highlights of the trip included a private audience with Pope John Paul II and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the grave of St. Peter at the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome. Rev. Msgr. Chehansky retired on November 28, 1982, and spent the rest of his life living with his sister until his death on September 12, 1985.



## A new leader and a change in traditions:



Msgr. Constantine Berdar



Peter Nush greeting Archbishop Sulyk



On August 17, 1982, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk transferred Rev. Constantine Berdar (1982-1994) from St. Anne's in Warrington, Pennsylvania to St. John's. Msgr. Berdar was born on August 26, 1922, in Watervliet, New York, the son of Cornelius and Natalia (Demianchyk) Berdar. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 3, 1945. He became a Papal Chaplain on September 15, 1980, and a Domestic Prelate on June 26, 1985. Both honors were bestowed on him by Pope John Paul II.

His first action was to reopen the school, which was closed for a short period by Rev. Msgr. Chehansky before he retired. During the next few years, renovations and improvements were made to the gymnasium and kitchen along with the parking lot.

Also during Msgr. Berdar's time here, he started a monthly breakfast that was prepared by several church members. This was with the intention of bringing the parish closer together as a family.

On March 3, 1985, Rev. Msgr. Berdar celebrated his 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a Divine Liturgy followed by a banquet held in the school gymnasium.

In anticipation of the 1000 years since Ukraine adopted Christianity in 988, a series of religious icons portraying Ukrainian Saints and other artwork were commissioned. The millennium of the of Ukrainian church also prompted a number of other renovations including the installation of a ramp for easier access to the church along with the repainting of the interior of the church.





On September 18, 1988, Christians from all the Ukrainian churches in the Lehigh Valley gathered at St John's to mark the Millennium of Christianity in Ukraine with dinner and entertainment by the Lehigh Valley Millennium choir, which consisted of members from both Catholic and Orthodox churches and was directed by Mr. Michael Prosak.

Rev. Msgr. Berdar's health was declining and he asked Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk for assistance. Fr. Stephen Hutnick was assigned as assistant pastor in 1984. However; he was needed elsewhere and only spent a short time here. Rev. Marian Kawola, a missionary from Sybertsville, and Rev. Julian Anthony substituted whenever needed and performed the Divine Liturgy and other services. Rev. Julian also conducted adult Scripture classes while here.

Rev. Kawola concelebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Rev. Msgr. Berdar when Metropolitan- Archbishop Stephen Sulyk made a canonical visit to the church on May 13, 1991.

Deacon Joseph Szupa was sent to help Rev. Msgr. Berdar in 1993. While he was here, he instructed the parishioners how to do congregational singing.



Fr. Kawola, Archbishop Sulyk and Msgr. Berdar



After serving 12 years in the parish, Rev. Msgr. Berdar asked Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk for permission to retire. He was named pastor emeritus in February 1994 and Rev.

Leonard Sinatra (1994-1999) was appointed Administrator; he was born on March 31, 1941, the son of Leonard J. Sr. and Victoria (Solazzo) Sinatra. He was ordained to the priesthood on December 21, 1967.



Fr. Leonard Sinatra



Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk  
March 1, 1981-November 29, 2000

St. John's parishioners received the sad news of the passing of Rev. Msgr. Berdar while he was on retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Kentucky, on May 25, 1994. At this time, Rev. Leonard Sinatra was assigned pastor of St. John's. Fr. Leonard began to incorporate changes in the church practices in an effort to follow the directives of the congregation for Eastern churches: Vis-a-vis the liturgical and spiritual renewal of the Eastern Tradition. He had a series of classes to inform parishioners about the history of the church and the rationale for these changes.



The following is a list of the assistant pastors that served at St. John's Parish.



Fr. Charyna  
1949



Fr. Bobyock  
1949-1951



Fr. Bohatiuk  
1951-1952



Fr. Kocaba  
1952-1953



Fr. Strotsky  
1955-1961



Fr. Wiwcharowsky  
1961-1962



Fr. Lewycky  
1962-1964



Fr. Baunchalk  
1964-1965



Fr. Petrenka  
1965-1967



Fr. Hnatyshyn  
1967-1968



Fr. Kuberski  
1968-1969



Fr. Korpics  
1969-1972



Fr. Nestor  
1972-1973



Fr. Levandusky  
1973-1974



Fr. Batcho  
1974-1978



Fr. Worschak  
1979-1980



Fr. Kubacki  
1980-1982



Fr. Hutnick  
1984



Fr. Antony  
1991



Deacon Szupa  
1993



## Working towards the 100th anniversary:

With the centennial of the church fast approaching a parish meeting was called on April 28, 1998. At this time, a centennial committee was formed along with other subcommittees such as, the centennial book, renovation, and fundraising committees.

On September 23, 1998, the Schmit Construction Company from Palmerton removed the original cornerstone of the church. The contents were put on display at the centennial banquet.

The original cornerstone contained a wooden box from W. Baker Chocolate Candy Company. Within that box, a small metal box was found containing the following items: a fountain pen, a pencil wrapped in a part of a newspaper clipping, three prayer cards, three coins (1879 Austrian Hungry Franc, 1900 U.S. Indian Head penny, 1899 U.S. dime), three newspapers (Jednota-July 4, 1900, Slovak V Amerika - July 10, 1900. The Catholic Standard and Times -July 7, 1900), a partially deteriorated handwritten letter with President William McKinley's name on it, and a newspaper article about Archbishop Martinello, and a document bearing the church seal.



Paul Lauser III, Peter Nush  
and Peter J. Krywczuk



Fr. Leonard Sinatra



Mr. Paul Lauser III and Mr. Paul Lauser Jr.

Rev. Leonard blessed the new cornerstone on November 22, 1998, which; was donated by the Northampton Memorial company and installed by Mr. Paul Lauser Jr. and Mr. Paul Lauser III.

Placed behind the new cornerstone was a Divine Liturgy Book of Saint John Chrysostom (1999 edition), 5 icon prayer cards, an 1899 U.S. silver dollar (donated by Mr. Peter J. Krywczuk), a 1999 U.S. proof set, an article reporting removal of the original cornerstone the week of October 12, 1998, and a photograph of the original cornerstone removal.

Because of health reasons, Father Leonard resigned from his position as pastor on February 28, 1999, after 5 years of dedication to our parish.

Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk appointed Rev. John Seniw (1999) as the next pastor of St. John's parish. He was born on July 9, 1956, in Erie, Pennsylvania, the son of Wasyl and Sophia Seniw. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 16, 1982. Rev. John was confronted

with the task of continuing the renovations in anticipation of the upcoming centennial, but at the same time, he was taking care of his aging mother.

Also at this time our choir director/cantor, Mr. Michael Prosak approached Father John and explained to him the reasons that he was going to retire. Father John asked Mr. Michael Broschak, (son of Michael and Olga Hrynkiw) who was very knowledgeable in music, to take over as the church choir director. He also asked Mr. Paul Lauser III to be cantor. They both agreed.

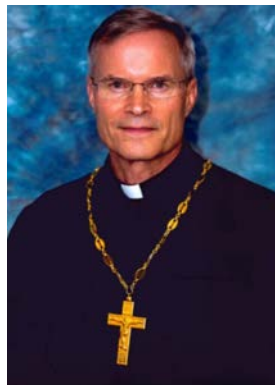


Mr. Paul Lauser III

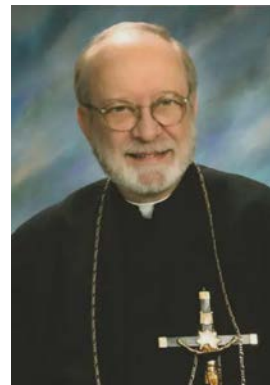


Mr. Michael Broschak

Within a few months, Father John was finding it difficult to take care of the church and his mother at the same time. He requested a leave of absence and his final day at St John's was June 30, 1999.



Fr. John Seniw



Fr. George Kuzara

On July 1 1999, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk assigned Rev. George Kuzara C.P.P.S., (1999-2001) who was a bi-ritual priest to lead St. John's parishioners and continue plans for the centennial celebration.

Fr. George was first exposed to the Byzantine Church in the Divine Liturgy during his elementary school years in East Chicago, Indiana. After attending high school and graduating from Brunnerdale Seminary in Canton, Ohio, he earned a BA in Theology from St. Joseph's

College in Rensselaer, Indiana. Throughout this time, he read extensively about Eastern spirituality and the history of its churches.

While studying at Mount St. Mary's seminary of the West in Cincinnati Ohio he was encouraged to continue his Byzantine interest. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 24, 1978, for the Society of the Most Precious Blood. After that he earned his master of Byzantine theology from John 23rd Center for Eastern Christian studies in New York in 1983, faculties for the Ukrainian Catholic church. He is the only member of the Society of the most Precious Blood throughout the world to receive this honor.

When Fr. George arrived at St John's he was given the opportunity to use his bi-ritual faculties for the first time in a Ukrainian Catholic Church.

One of the first activities Rev. George was asked to join was in recognizing the accomplishments and dedication of Mr. Michael Prosak. On July 11, 1999, our longtime choir director was honored at a retirement banquet in St. John's hall. He had served as a choir director and cantor in the Ukrainian Catholic Church for over 62 years, with more than 25 of them here at St. John's.

## A centennial celebration:

Renovations of the church for the centennial celebration progressed with unwavering support and wonderful generosity from parishioners and friends, which allowed much to be accomplished. Work progressed inside the church as the paneling was removed exposing the original wainscoting. Rev. George removed several icons to prepare the walls for repainting. Painting and repairs began on October 11, 1999. This work was completed in December of the same year. During this time, Rev. George conducted The Divine Liturgy in the school gymnasium.

Also at this time there were more adult men serving at the altar, so Father George found it necessary to purchase new vestments to accommodate their needs.

Early in 2000, after the painting was complete new carpeting was installed and the pews were rearranged slightly to allow for more room in the front of the church. A closet was built to store priests' vestments. Also at this time, the installation of a chandelier low-rater had taken place.

On the afternoon of July 23, 2000, close to 300 parishioners and priests came from near and far to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Catholic Church in Northampton, Pennsylvania.



Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk was welcomed by Mr. Paul Lauser III at the front of the church. The eldest male member of the church presented him with the traditional bread and salt and the eldest woman presented him with flowers.

Concelebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Stephen Sulyk were Very Rev. Angelo Anthony C.PP.S., Rev. George Kuzara C.PP.S., Rev. Monsignor Thomas Sayuk, (son of the parish), Rev. Archpriest Daniel Gurovich, (pastor of St. Josaphat's in Bethlehem, Pa.), Rev. Father George Worschak, (Totowa, NJ; former assistant of St. John's Church), and Rev. Deacon Michael Waak of Perth Amboy.



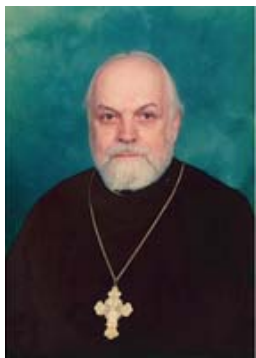
Following the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy there was a formal reception at the Holiday Inn in Allentown, Pa. At this time, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk recalled the dramatic changes that occurred during the 20th century and reminded the faithful of their responsibility to their children and grandchildren to instill their faith in God and the traditions of their church.

At the end of the year long celebration, a time capsule was buried in front of the church on November 19, 2000, after the Divine Liturgy. The capsule was marked with a plaque telling the faithful to open it in 2050 for the 150th anniversary. A dinner followed afterwards at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Home Association.

## More changes come with a new leader:

Rev. George Kuzara requested a transfer because of personal reasons. Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka granted his request. Father George's last day at St. John's church was June 1, 2001. Rev. Archpriest David Clooney came to the church on weekends to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. On July 15, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka made a visit to St. John's to assess the situation of the church and served the Divine Liturgy.

Choir director Mr. Michael Broschak also put in his notice for resignation. His last Divine Liturgy was on July 20, 2001. Mr. Paul Pristash, a long time choir member, agreed to replace him as choir director.



Rev. Archpriest. David Clooney



Archbishop Soroka visits St. John's in 2004



Metropolitan-Archbishop Soroka  
November 29, 2000-April 16, 2018

On August 1, 2001, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka announced that the Very Rev. Archpriest David Clooney (2001-2017) would become pastor of St. John's. He was born on August 17, 1938, in Malden, Massachusetts, the son of David and Faith (Miltimore) Clooney. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 30, 1964.

During his pastorate, there were more improvements done to the church. He had an elevator installed for easier access to the church and the new multi-purpose room (the basement). He also had electric clappers installed on the church bells and a spiral staircase making it easier to get into the bell tower. This all happened during 2003.

Rev. Archpriest Clooney celebrated his 40th anniversary on April 17, 2004, as a priest in conjunction with the annual Easter dinner and the official ribbon cutting for the elevator.



Shortly after this celebration, Rev. Archpriest Clooney had the difficult decision to close our Parochial School due to lower enrollment, higher salaries, and (the biggest reason) the asbestos, which was used in the building of the school. The school was closed on June 9, 2004, after the 8th grade graduation.

St. John's parishioners received the sad news that their former choir director, Mr. Michael Prosak had passed away on January 16, 2005, in Cape Coral, Florida. He was the son of Frank and Mary (Rubaha) Prosak born on June 16, 1916, in Palmerton, Pennsylvania. He was 88 years old.



Michael Prosak

1990



St. John's Choir 1975



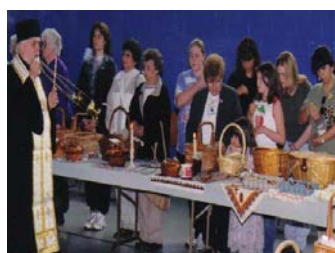
Lehigh Valley Ukrainian Millennium Choir

## Continued Improvements and 50 years as a priest:

During July and August, plans were made and achieved to convert the lockers in the gymnasium into handicapped accessible bathrooms. Also at this time, the apartment on the lower parking lot was demolished.

Many things happened in 2006. Property on Main Street in Northampton was sold, and the church parking lot was resurfaced and relined. The church domes were also painted and later that year a fence was installed around the parking lot.

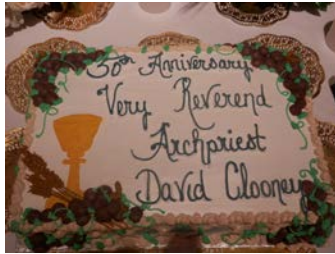
Rev. Archpriest Clooney kept going. In May of 2009 a new icon style cross was erected on the altar at the cemetery, and the driveway was repaved. Demolition of the school building took place at this time. It was possible not to damage the gymnasium, and the two rooms in the basement, the first floor bathrooms, and two rooms on the second floor are still intact.





On April 27, 2014, Rev. Archpriest Clooney was honored with the presence of Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka concelebrating the Divine Liturgy followed by a banquet at the Northampton Memorial Community Center in celebration of his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the priesthood.

In 2017 due to failing health, Rev. Archpriest Clooney asked Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka for permission to retire. His last day serving St. John's parish after 17 years pastor was March 1, 2017. He had the second longest pastorate in the history of the church.



On March 2, 2017, Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka sent Rev. Roman Petryshak (2017) to be administrator of St. John's parish. Father Roman was born on August 11, 1974, in Stryi, Ukraine. He is the son of Vasyl and Anna Petryshak. His ordination to the priesthood took place on June 2, 2002. He and his wife Nataliya have one son: Damyan. Father Roman was the first married priest at St. John's since Fr. Vladimir Ulanytzky in 1946. He was only at our parish for about 4 months. He was then transferred to Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Berwick, Pa., and the pastor of that church was transferred to St. John's.



Fr. Roman Petryshak



Appointing Rev. John Seniw as pastor came as a surprise to the parish. This was the second time Father John would be pastor of St. John's church. Making this the first time a priest served two times at our parish. During Father John's second time here, he remodeled the kitchen in the rectory. He also held adult classes teaching the parishioners about different aspects of Catholicism in the Ukrainian Catholic church. This took place after Lenten services. He also reinstituted the tradition of having a Parastas on Pentecost Sunday at the cemetery.



Happy news came from one of our young parishioners. Mr. Nicholas Sharga, son of Paul and Marie Sharga, decided he wanted to enter the priesthood. Nick is a 2012 graduate of Northampton Area High School and he attended Temple University studying kinesiology. He was also a running back for the Owls football team. After receiving his degree in 2018, he was signed by the Oakland Raiders, but unfortunately, he was cut during tryouts. At this time, he decided to follow the footsteps of his role model, Jesus Christ, and was accepted into the seminary in the autumn of 2021. Over the past years, he has attended several religious functions with Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak.



## The Pandemic that changed our Church:

In January of 2020, a worldwide pandemic changed the way we celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Covid-19 was a flu like sickness that for some was just a mild likeness of the common cold and others a much worse sickness, which could even cause death.

Some of the precautions taken to stop the spread of the illness were keeping people distanced from each other and the wearing of facial masks. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated but with a huge change: only the priest, the cantor, and one other person were allowed in the church. With



the resources of social media (Facebook), we were able to live stream the Divine Liturgy to the parishioners via the internet.

Once again our parishioners received very sad news: on April 25, 2020, cantor Paul Lauser III suddenly passed away. Born in Whitehall, Pennsylvania, on May 27, 1958, he was the son of Paul Jr. and Theresa (Gober) Lauser. Long time choir member, Ms. Anna (Kochanasz) Saurman (the daughter of John and Pauline (Romanic) Kochanasz) volunteered to take his place.



Ann Saurman



Bishop Andriy Rabyi

In June of 2020, Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak and Auxiliary Bishop Andriy Rabyi visited St. John's pyrohy workers to see the process of the making of our famous pyrohy.



St. John's parishioners received the sad news on October 19, 2020, that their former pastor Rev. Archpriest David Clooney had passed away. He served the Archeparchy in several ways at different parishes. Some of his assignments include parochial vicar of the Cathedral, several churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and rector of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Seminary in Washington D.C. Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak presided over the Divine Liturgy along with several other priests.





In May of 2021, the Ukrainian priests in the area held a meeting to discuss the idea forming a religious group. This group became the Lehigh Valley Brotherhood of Ukrainian Catholic/Orthodox Clergy. Charter members were Fr. John Seniwi, Fr. Daniel Gurovich, St. Josaphat's, Bethlehem, Fr. Paul Makar, Holy Ghost, West Easton, Fr. Richard Jendras, St. Mary's, Allentown, Fr. Oleg Kravchenko, Assumption of Mary, Northampton and Fr. Edward Higgins, Sts. Peter and Paul, Bethlehem.

The parishioners received more heart-breaking news on October 8, 2021, when they were told about the passing of choir director Paul Pristash. He was born on May 30, 1933, in Northampton, Pennsylvania. He was the son of Fedor and Tanka (Salasky) Pristash. Paul was a long time member of the church choir singing under both Zenon Hradkowsky and Michael Prosak. He was also a member of the Lehigh Valley Millennium choir. At this time Ann Saurman took over as both cantor and choir director.



Mr. Paul Pristash



## The war in Ukraine:

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Armed Forces invaded Ukraine, in what Russian President Vladimir Putin called a military exercise.

At this time, the Lehigh Valley Brotherhood of Ukrainian Clergy decided to hold a Moleben prayer service for peace in Ukraine to the Blessed Virgin Mary every Tuesday evening. The Moleben would be rotated at a different Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic Church on a weekly basis.

## Quasiquicentennial Anniversary:

To get more use out of the church's multi-purpose room (basement), Father John began a monthly social after the Sunday Divine Liturgy, so that parishioners could chat with each other while enjoying a hot beverage and some pastries.

After almost 5 years at St. John's parish, Father John requested Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak for permission to retire. He was granted retirement with the condition that if needed he would substitute for priests that are on vacation and other reasons. His last day at St. John's was July 31, 2022.



On August 1, 2022, Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak appointed Rev. Vasil Bunik pastor of St. John's parish. Before coming to St. John's, he served at two parishes: St. Anne's in Warrington and the Presentation of Our Lord in Lansdale.

Father Vasil was born in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine on November 26, 1954. He is the son of Ivan and Tatiana (Kachur) Bunik. Fr. Vasil was ordained to the priesthood on April 27, 1993. On October 30, 1993, Father and his wife Natalia (Marchak) Bunik along with their daughter Tanya and her husband came to America. When Fr. Vasil was sent to our church, he also had the duties as administrator of St. Vladimir's Church in Palmerton, Pa. He held both positions for about 6 months until a permanent pastor was assigned to St. Vladimir's.

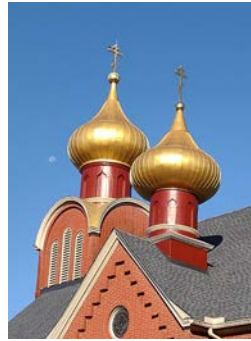
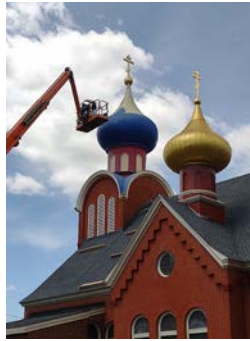


Rev. Vasil Bunik



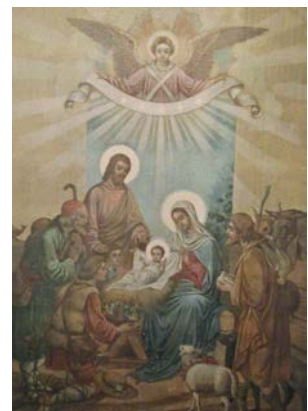
Photo taken by Scott Nagy 2023

Rev. Bunik was charged with the monumental task of preparing our church for its upcoming 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. His first hurdle was replacing the church roof. Work began shortly after Easter in 2023. This was the first time in the history of the church that the whole roof was replaced. Immediately following completion of the new roof, the domes were painted a brilliant golden color.



Other things that happened during this time were the installation of new windows in the basement of the church and the whole rectory, new downspouts and gutters on the church, and repainting of the trim around the windows.

Now with the outside of the church complete it became time to focus on the repairing and painting of the interior in anticipation of the new icons and stencil that were going to be installed. Several factors were taken into the consideration on what should be done. It was decided to remove the four murals that were on the ceiling and the three others so that the fragile plaster that was pulling away from the wood lathe could be dealt with in a proper way.







This process would not only make the ceiling stronger and smoother, it would also give the iconographer a blank canvas to work with. For the next several months, it was necessary to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other religious services in the gymnasium.



On September 23, 2023, the repairs to the ceiling, walls, and the painting of the church were finished. Not only was the church repainted, the remaining paneling in the vestibule and choir loft was removed. Although the work was not complete, the parishioners were excited to return to the church with the understanding that there was more work to be done to the inside of the church.

Also at this time, the rectory was also being renovated. Over the past 30 years there were some changes, like remodeling the kitchen and bathrooms, but now it was decided to renovate the whole house. The majority of the work was accomplished on the second floor. An

additional powder room was added along with a laundry room. All the bedrooms and the offices on the first floor were also updated.

On November 24, 2023, Fr. John Seniw and Fr. Roman Dubitsky were elevated to the Dignity of Archpriest. Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak performed this ritual in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia.





## The Pyrohy Project:

For over 70 years, parishioners (and now even non-parishioners) have come to the school on almost a weekly basis to make one of the Lehigh Valleys favorite staples: Pyrohy. We originally started in the basement of the school and eventually moved to the gymnasium. Over those years, things have changed in big ways. When the project started, everything was done by hand, which included making and rolling the dough, peeling the potatoes and than shaping them into balls and cutting the dough patties for the potatoes. With advancements in technology, these tasks have been made easier. Some of the first things we invested in were an electric mixer and potato peeler. This made the preparation of the dough and mashed potatoes faster. Then there was the purchase of a dough roller. This would roll small batches of dough thin enough so they could be cut by hand into circles. This would make about a dozen circles. To make it simpler and more accurate measurements, a meatball maker was bought. It just so happened to make the mashed potatoes the same size for each pyrohy. After years of doing the project this way, parishioner Charles Chrin donated a machine that saved even more time. This machine would roll large batches of dough and cut close to 3 dozen circles in a matter of minutes. Our pyrohy are sold to various retail stores and restaurants in the area. We estimate that there have been close to one and a half million dozen pyrohy made over the years and that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been earned from these sales.



# PASTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS (\*) WHO HAVE SERVED AT SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST UKRAINIAN CHURCH NORTHAMPTON, PENNSYLVANIA

1900-1901	Reverend Damascene Polivka
1901-1908	Reverend Nestor Dmytrow
1908-1910	Reverend Peter Luczeczeko
1910-1914	Reverend Omeljan Baransky
1914-1915	Reverend Michael Guryansky
1915-1920	Reverend Michael Kuziw
1920-1921	Reverend Vasyl Maniowsky
1921-1930	Reverend John Kutsky
1930-1933	Reverend Michael Pazdrey
1933-1946	Reverend Vladimir Ulanytzky
1946	Reverend Paul Iwachiw*
1946-1982	Reverend Monsignor Stephen Chehansky D.D.
1982-1994	Reverend Monsignor Constantine Berdar
1994-1999	Reverend Leonard Sinatra
1999	Reverend John Seniw
1999-2001	Reverend George Kuzara C.PP.S
2001-2017	Very Reverend Archpriest David Clooney
2017	Reverend Roman Petryshak*
2017-2022	Reverend John Seniw
2022-present	Reverend Vasil Bunik



## Teaching the faith:

Although the parish school had been closed for several years, it was still very important to teach the children of the church about our Ukrainian faith.



On Tuesday evenings during the school year, they would meet in the church's multi-purpose room for Catechism classes. A very special event that has happened for over 35 years is a visit from St. Nicholas. In recent years, it has been held as a breakfast for the children and their families.

## A Fantastic 125-Year Photographic Journey of our Church



THE FOUNDERS OF OUR PARISH



Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Solan and Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lukachovsky, the oldest members of our Parish.



MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH GLADISH AND MRS. TEKLA MOLCHANY

The above group was active in Church work. Mrs. Molchany was the maid of honor at the first wedding performed in our Church. The first couple was Mr. and Mrs. Michael Sember. Mrs. Michael Sember now lives in Bridgeport, Conn. Her husband died in 1949. Mr. Mike Maruschak was their best man.



ANDREW ANTOLICK



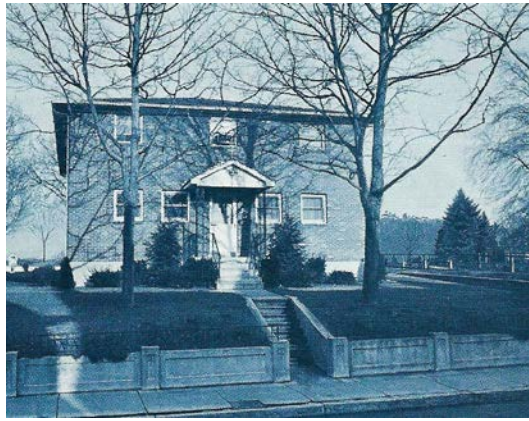
MICHAEL LUKACHOVSKY











Convent 1975









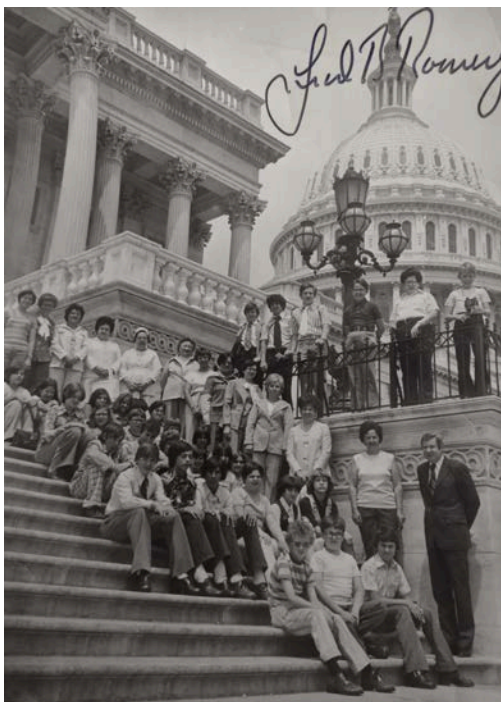








**Society of the Archangel Michael, Lodge #27 of the Providence Association, in Ormrod, Lehigh County, founded 1914 with both Rusyn and Ukrainian members. (1938 photo)**



Lesya Hrycenko (bread) and Zoria Komperda present Archbishop Stefan with bread, salt and flowers.













1965



1985





1995



2005



2025



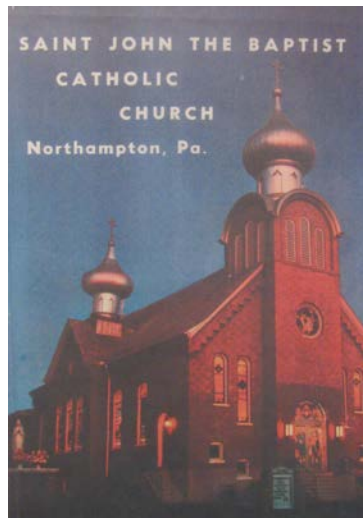
1945



1955



1965



1975



1985



2005

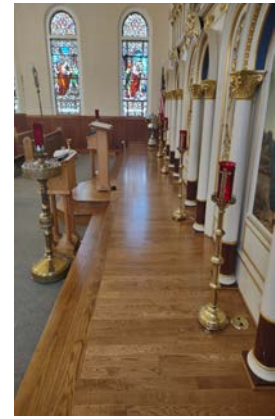


2025

## A Byzantine Iconographer is contracted to decorate the church:

Prior to hiring an iconographer there was other work to be done to the interior of the church. Hardwood flooring was installed in the altar area. It was decided to extend the height of the floor beyond the icon screen to make a safer entrance from the nave to the altar area.





New speakers and microphone system along with additional electrical outlets were also installed at this time. Also at this time, a sign was installed on the cemetery property.



Ecclesiastical Art & Design, LTD was contracted to write and install the icons in the church. Formerly known as Makarenko Studios Inc; they evolved in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the late 1950's.

What are icons? Icons are representations of the Heavenly; they are considered a window or portal into the divine realm. They are expressions of teaching and worship. Icons are not drawings or creations of imagination. They are in fact writings of things not of this world. Byzantine icons, unlike Western pictures, change the perspective and form of the image so that it is not naturalistic. This is done so that we can look beyond appearances of the world, and instead look to the spiritual truth of the holy person or event. The Eastern Church uses icons to assist in worship and education of the faithful. It is important to note that the icons themselves are venerated only, not worshipped; we only worship God in the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit).





## Theophany-The Great Blessing of Water

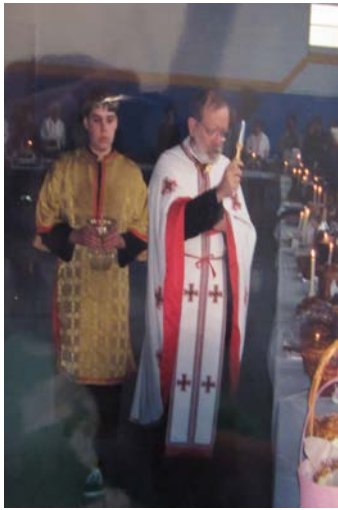


Good Friday, procession and laying of the Holy Shroud



Holy Saturday, Blessing of Easter Foods





Easter Sunday Resurrection Matins



Parish (Easter Dinner) Sviachene





Lehigh Valley Brotherhood of Ukrainian Catholic/Orthodox Clergy





Fr. Edward Higgins, Fr. Paul Makar, Bishop Alfred Schlert, Fr. John Seniwi, Fr. Oleg Kravchenko and Fr. Richard Jendras.



Fr. Yaroslav Lukavenko, Fr. Paul Makar, Fr. Oleg Kravchenko, Fr. Richard Jendras, Fr. Vasil Bunik and Fr. Edward Higgins



Parishioner's donations for the Icon





Parishioners' donations for new Icons





## The Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia:



The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception located in the Northern Liberties district in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was erected in 1966 through the efforts of the Ukrainian Catholics in America. This magnificent edifice, designed by Julian K. Jastremsky, replaced the old Cathedral Church, which had been purchased in 1907 by Bishop Sotor Ortynsky, O.S.B.M.

The present Cathedral, constructed to reflect authentic Byzantine architecture, is built in the same style as *Hagia Sofia* (St. Sophia) Cathedral in Constantinople (present day Istanbul Turkey).

The limestone and architectural concrete structure is 172 feet in length, 128 wide, and 106 feet high. The most impressive feature is the central dome, which is 100 feet in diameter. The exterior is covered Venetian glass tiles made of 22 karat gold fused glass. The dome's interior portrays a mosaic of the Pantocrator (Christ, the Almighty ruler). The dome seemingly rests on 32 windows, depicting the coat of arms of regions of Ukraine.

When the Cathedral cornerstone was laid on October 16, 1966, a stone from the tomb of St. Peter the Apostle was placed therein. This stone was given to Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn by Pope Paul VI for the Cathedral as a fitting symbol of unity of faith of the Ukrainian people with the Apostolic Roman See. Below the Cathedral sanctuary, there is a crypt that contains the remains of four bishops: Bishop Sotor Ortynsky, O.S.B.M. Archbishop Constantine Bohachevsky, Archbishop Ambrose Senyshyn, O.S.B.M; and Archbishop Stephen Sulyk.

The Ukrainian Catholic faithful does not only go to this beautiful edifice to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. They also make the journey from near and far too bear witness of the enthronement of a new Metropolitan, bishops and the ordination of priests.

In October of 1979, Pope John Paul II prayed at the altar along with close to two thousand Ukrainian and Roman Catholic Bishops, priests, nuns and laity.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At this time, we would like to thank the people who made this book possible.

The writing and design for this book was accomplished by Mr. Peter J. Krywczuk, a lifelong member of the church. Mr. Krywczuk is a 1978 graduate of St. John's school where he was an altar server. This is where he began to have a keen interest in the history of the church. After graduation, Mr. Michael Prosak approached him and asked if he would like to join the church choir. Along with singing in the choir, he also helped in other church activities over the past 45 years.

The cooperation of the Fella Photography Studio in Northampton has been very instrumental in taking photos of activities at our church since Msgr. Stephen Chehansky was our pastor.

Photos, which included kindergarten, 8th, grade graduations, first Holy Communion, the 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> and this anniversary book. Their photos from many events, such as weddings and canonical visits of the bishops, have kept the Fella Studio family busy here for generations.

For this book, we also had the help from Mr. Markian Komichak, choir director and historian at St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral in Parma, Ohio. He is originally from St. Mary's Church in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. He was very instrumental in his ability to research several different newspapers that had information about the priests who served at St. John's. Those newspapers included the following; The Morning Call, The Allentown Leader, The Allentown Democrat, The Tribune (Scranton, PA), and The Philadelphia Inquirer. Other information was acquired from the history books from Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic church in West Easton and St. Josaphat's in Bethlehem. Our own prior church history books also supplied information. Researching the priests and other churches on the internet provided helpful input in writing this book together.

We would also like too thank Mrs. Jennie Menio, who was very active in the 1950, 1975 and the 2000 anniversary's. Her knowledge of the church and her collection of photos and newspaper clippings were very helpful over the years.

For this book, we had several proofreaders, which included, Anna Hirsch, a senior at Northampton Area High School, Bernadette Nush, Jennie Menio, and Markian Komichak.

Some advice was also given by a Northampton native, a retired librarian from the Morning Call, and author Janice Monahan Rodgers.

Steve Pausinger, owner and operator of Budget Printing in Whitehall, Pennsylvania, did the printing of this book. His knowledge was very helpful in the productions of this anniversary book.

# NOTES



