



# Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo

*Summer 2016*

## The Icon and Shrine of Boronyavo

In this issue, we start a series on the history of the icon and shrine of Boronyavo.

### Part 1:

Our Lady of Boronyavo is not exactly a well-known title among Americans, not even Byzantine Catholics. Our founding meeting was in 1997, which was attended by four visiting seminarians from the Eparchy of Mukachevo. They were the first ones to study in the United States or do visiting of parishes here, seven years after the Soviet Union imploded. In our discussions, they related the history of this wonder-working icon which was so unfamiliar to us, but which plays an important role in the spiritual life of the Eparchy of Mukachevo. The founding members decided to put the work of the new Mission Society under the protection of Our Lady, doubly appropriate since the eparchy of Phoenix where we are based is dedicated to the Protection of Our Lady.

### Boronyavo

The village of Boronyavo is first mentioned in documents in 1389. While part of the Kingdom of Hungary, itself part of the Austrian empire, this is the Maramoros region of Subcarpathian Rus', a region now split between Ukraine and Romania. It is also famous as the home of the Hutsul Rusyns, who have their own unique customs and dialect. It lies in the Tisza river valley, home to forests and farms, at the end of the road that winds its way down from the city of Khust. The Union of Uzhhorod of 1646 began a long process whereby the Orthodox of Subcarpathian Rus' became Greek Catholics.

The monastery was founded in 1716, when Father Ivan Kozak decided to live a life of prayer and work in the woods outside the village of Boronyavo, changing his name to Father



*Boronyavo Mother of God, with crowns sent by Pope Leo XIII*

**All support of the Mission Society's work is in addition to members' and donors' existing support of their local parish, their eparchy, and the Metropolia of Pittsburgh. Renewal of our Mother Church in Central Europe cannot mean a diminishment of our financial and spiritual dedication to the church in America.**

**MISSION SOCIETY OF  
THE MOTHER OF  
GOD OF  
BORONYAVO, INC.**

*The Mission Society is an independent organization dedicated to the renewal and strengthening of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America and Central Europe.*

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Joseph. The first monks lived in humble caves beyond the village, which they dug themselves; this is how the great Pechersky Lavra in Kyiv began in 1051. A wooden chapel dedicated to the Annunciation to Our Lady was built atop a gentle slope and served as their spiritual and physical center, and a spring provided fresh water. The monastery followed the Rule of Saint Basil the Great; in 1773 all of the monasteries<sup>1</sup> in the eparchy of Mukachevo agreed to unite under the leadership of the hegumen of Saint Nicholas Monastery on the Mountain of Monks outside of that town, follow the Rule of Saint Basil, and join the Basilian Order. At that time, Boronyavo had at least a dozen monks. They had 59 acres of farming land and 5 acres of forest.

**“Chudotvori ikona” - Miracle-working Icon**

One day, Our Lady, holding the Infant Jesus, appeared to one of the monks who was at the spring collecting water, and told him that their lives of prayer were pleasing to her Son. What was to become the miraculous icon was painted by the monk Ioannicus Basilevich in commemoration of this event and hung above the Royal Doors of the iconostas on March 25, 1785, the feast of the Annunciation. It is a classic Ruthenian icon, in which the Child Jesus holds a little flower with three petals representing the Trinity. It is of the *Hodegetria* type: Mary's left arm cradles her Son, while her right hand points to Him as the center of attention, showing that He is the way to salvation. Father Ioannicus had served at the monastery of Maria Pocs, and that icon's influence is obvious in the Boronyavo.

Pilgrims came from across the Hutsul region bringing their sick and crippled. Miracles took place very soon: not only did people experience physical healing, but also the return of souls to the practice of their Faith, something that would become common after communism arrived.

Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) decided that monastic lives of prayer, penance, and labor was a waste of valuable workers, and in 1788 the monastery was closed, despite the miracles taking place.<sup>2</sup> The monks had to go back into caves, watch their beloved home slowly slip into ruin, and had to trust in the Mother of God that their lives would resume. After the emperor's death, some 600 monasteries were able to reopen, including Boronyavo, which

*Continued on back...*

THE EASTER CARD PROJECT benefiting Saint John the Baptist Church in Uzhhorod was an enormous success! Thank you very much to everyone who donated or bought cards. We were able to wire the amazing sum of \$4,355 which went to the construction of the new church in Uzhhorod, Ukraine.



NAMES - We never distribute or sell your name and address to any other charity or company whatsoever. We value your privacy in an age when the lack of privacy seems to be the norm.



HOW MUCH GOES WHERE? The Mission Society was founded to fund the restoration of the Byzantine Catholic Church in Slovakia and Transcarpathian Oblast of Ukraine. It is all-volunteer, with no salaries paid out to anyone. Our computer, printer, and software are all donated. The Society's main expenses are the three p's: printing, paper, postage and a \$40 fee which is charged for the wire transfer of funds to the bank accounts. These account for 10% of your donations. Therefore, over 90% (average 2007-2014) of unspecified donations and 100% all specified donations goes to Europe. We no longer send checks in the mail, as the bank charges in Slovakia were so high for the Prešov archeparchy and Mukachevo eparchy that they cut into the amount of aid. All donations that are designated for the various intentions are sent this way (Liturgies, orphanage, special projects, seminarians) as soon as we have a sufficient amount to wire.



SEMINARIES - Donations marked for seminarians are split between the Theological Academy in Prešov or the Theodore Romzha Academy in Uzhhorod. As was the case from the 1890s until World War II, we are again being served by priests from Europe.

After the unfortunate papal decree of *Cum Data Fuerit* in 1929, married priests were no longer allowed to come to North America. Today, that restriction has ended. We have about a dozen priests serving in the Pittsburgh Metropolia, from Prešov and from Mukachevo. Miron Kerul-Kmec, Jr., the son of the pastor of St. Nicholas church in Barberton, Ohio, will be entering our seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh this year. He is the first of the new wave of priests from Europe to pursue his vocation in America.

In our next issue, we will have an interview with Fr. Artur Bubnevych, pastor in Albuquerque and a graduate of the Romzha Seminary in Uzhorod, speaking about the seminary there.

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COULD BE YOUR PASTOR TOMORROW!***

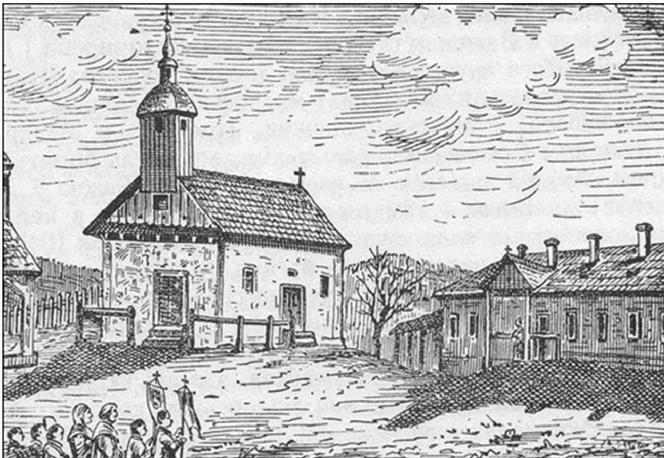


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was restored in 1821. So the first persecutor of the Basilians was a Catholic!

The church served by the Basilian monks was a humble structure, giving no indication of the treasure within. It was 70 feet tall at its peak, and 127 feet long and almost 32 feet wide. The wood was covered with yellow plaster, and the small tower and front painted white: these are the colors of the Habsburg dynasty which ruled the empire. Miracles continued to take place, and the monks catalogued them, ultimately sending them to their headquarters in both Galicia and Rome. While the monastery owned forest and farm land, worked by the monks, it also had three houses which sheltered the poor and elderly.

Many healings continued to be reported over the years, and these records were reviewed by a special theological commission set up by the eparchy in the late 1880s. As a result, in 1893, Pope Leo XIII ordered the icon to be crowned with crowns for Mary and Jesus of gold and precious stones in recognition of these miracles. Three pilgrimages were authorized annually: the Annunciation (March 25), Saint Elias (July 20), and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14). At these events priests would come to assist with Confessions of the diverse pilgrims: Czech, German, Hungarian, Romanian, Rusyn dialects, Slovak, and Ukrainian. Great crowds would fill the large open fields which still surround the chapel. The monastery underwent renovations in 1806 and again in 1888. The last one funded by Emperor Franz Josef himself, the Ministry of Education, and the county, allowing the monks to finally put up buildings of stone that would do better in the climate. In 1893, Pope Leo XIII sent golden crowns for the icon, and designated the Annunciation (March 25), Saint Elijah (July 20) and Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) as special days in which to earn a plenary indulgence by participating the pilgrimage there and receiving the Holy Mysteries.



*Pilgrims at the Boronyavo shrine, early 19th century*

*To Be Continued in Christmas Issue ...*

#### Notes

1. These were the monasteries in Uzhhorod, Hrushiv given to the Orthodox by the state, Boronyavo, Imstichevo, Maly Berezny, and Mukachevo. A hegumen is the superior of a monastery.

2. Over 700 monasteries were closed in the Austrian Empire, and 38,000 monks expelled from their homes.