



MISSION SOCIETY of the MOTHER of God of BORONYAVO, INC.

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Nativity 2003

From our chaplain, Father Christopher Zugger

Christ is born! Glorify Him!
This is the greeting used among Byzantine Catholics in the season of the Nativity. The people we are helping in Europe proclaim this joyous news of the angels in Rusyn, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Hungarian. But the sentiment remains the same: the Savior is born among us. Let us rejoice, for God has given us His Son.

In the villages, and some towns, the custom of carolers going through the streets is still kept, with children following a large star on a pole and singing carols. Or rather, it has been renewed – the singing of carols was considered anti-revolutionary in Soviet times, and people were fined heavily for this crime.

In fact, **Blessed Methodius Dominik Treka**, the Redemptorist Byzantine Catholic martyr, was thrown into isolation in a freezing cell on Christmas Eve in 1958 because of his crime – he *whispered* a Christmas carol while sitting on a ledge. Because of such a vile offense against Communism, the

Czechoslovakian guards put him in conditions where he contracted pneumonia. The cell was of concrete and the “bed” was a concrete slab with wooden slats sticking up, so that the prisoner was kept in darkness, in cold, and was unable to rest. He had double pneumonia and a high fever. A young prisoner from Catholic Action tried to help him, but the guards would not admit the martyr to the prison hospital. Finally, they allowed this priest, who had committed the grievous crimes of giving up the Latin Rite to serve as a Byzantine Catholic missionary and who had led countless souls to redemption through his preaching and the establishment of monasteries, to be carried to a cell with other priests. He lingered until March 23, 1959, when he finally died a holy death. How holy? He forgave the men who had destroyed his life’s work of building up Byzantine Catholic monastic life in Czechoslovakia; he forgave those who threw him into prison; he forgave the guard who put him into those awful conditions because he *whispered* the melody “Let us go to Bethlehem”.

The Christmas season in America began with scenes of shoppers lined up outside mall



doors at 6 am, knocking each other over with carts in order to get the best bargains as early as possible. While such scenes will be repeated until December 24th, to our shame, where are the public Nativity sets? Where are lit Nativity scenes in people’s yards? Why is more lavished on a Christmas tree than on the poor of the world?

Our Savior was born in a cave, and laid in straw in an animal’s feeding trough. There are still Byzantine Catholics in Europe who are celebrating the Holy

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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Sacrifice outside in streets and squares, or in hopelessly overcrowded houses. **Your donations will help Bishop Shashik in his mission of building 150 churches.**

There are many Byzantine Catholic priests who are old men now, living in poverty on diminished pensions, and whose health is poor because they served time in the Gulag prisons of the USSR or Czechoslovakia. **Your Liturgy intentions will give these heroic men badly-needed income, and they will pray for you devoutly.**

The Blessed Theodore Romzha Seminary in Uzhorod is only partly finished, and has “space” for 80 men crammed into crowded dormitory rooms, and limited resources. **Your gift will provide for a library, better sleeping accommodations, and food.**

Blessed Methodius Dominic Trcka died because he dared to whisper a Christmas carol. In the USA, there is great pressure to push religion totally out of public life. This Christmas season, honor his memory, and the memory of so many unknown martyrs. Sing those songs. Put up religious scenes. Put a holy picture on your desk at work, or on your dashboard. Remind those around you of the joy of the Savior, and the price that people have paid to honor this same Savior over the years. Above all, give the gift of love, in His Name and for no other reason than to give Him joy.

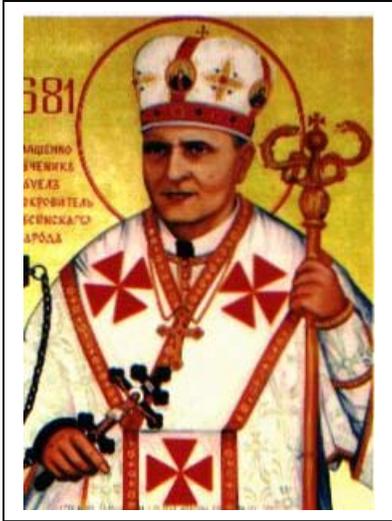
THE ROMZHA PROCESSION



Father Vitalii Shelemba (left) and his father, Father Mikhail Shelemba, share in the privilege of carrying the relics of Blessed Theodore Romzha through the streets of Uzhorod, June, 2003. Every priest in the Eparchy of Mukachevo took a turn carrying the catafalque with the precious relics, which were enshrined in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. This was Bishop Romzha's cathedral church, from which his body was removed in the 1950s. Now he reposes where he belongs.



The procession, going through the gate under Bishop Romzha's portrait.



Another Byzantine Catholic Blessed – **Bishop Basil (Vasyl) Hopko** was beatified by the Pope on September 14, 2003, during his difficult trip to Slovakia. Bishop Hopko suffered terribly in prison, and finally was transferred to an old-age home in Moravia staffed by Roman Catholic Sisters. (Nuns in communist Czechoslovakia were confined to work that no Communist would do – with the abandoned elderly, mentally disabled, or handicapped, and were forbidden to take new members). These nuns nursed him back to health, and after the Prague Spring of 1968 he was able to return to Presov. But political reasons prevented him from exercising his ministry as a bishop. Undaunted, he persevered with liturgical celebrations and preaching in Saint John’s Cathedral. He complained of continued physical problems, and only after 1989 when his bones were exhumed was it discovered that he had been steadily poisoned by arsenic by a traitor in his company. Bishop Hopko is another symbol of Christian fidelity, and an advocate for the depressed as he had to emerge from deep depression in darkened cells without any help but God’s. He said to an American cousin who visited him in 1974 “do not abandon your religion and God will always walk with you.”



Our web site, <http://www.missionboronyavo.org> has been updated by Father Chris. Check it out, and pass the link to other friends on the Internet.



Please remember the Society in your will. Your wishes will be honored to the best of our ability, and you will be helping many souls. Our legal title is Mission Society of the Mother of God of Boronyavo. Thank you.



Joyful Light, the publication of our Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, announced the continued growth of our Seminary. This year, there are seminarians from Parma, Van Nuys and Pittsburgh; a Byzantine Franciscan; and a Byzantine-Romanian Catholic student. The seminarian from the Albuquerque parish, Michael O’Loughlin, will be ordained a sub-deacon on Dec. 28th, and a deacon in the summer of 2004. Please remember these men in your prayers, and pray that more men will respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to serve as priests in the American Byzantine Catholic Church.

Heavenly Father

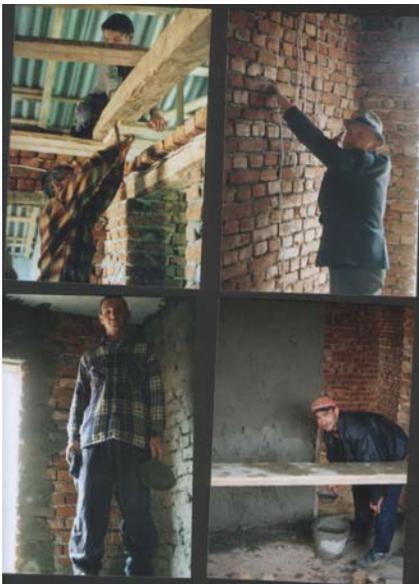
through the intercessions of Saints Cyril and Methodius, make known your truth to the people of their heritage who were denied religious instruction and may the Good Shepherd bring back to His fold all those who have strayed. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.



Seminarian from the Albuquerque parish, Michael O’Loughlin, lower left

A reminder: no one working in the office in Albuquerque, or in Phoenix or Denver, receives any compensation. Everyone in the Mission Society gives of their time freely. Special thanks go to Deacon Gerry Sondergaard, who has updated our bookkeeping completely; Rose Mary Mastropolitto for her work on the books and records; Father Chris Zuger and Stephanie Block for the newsletter; and our representatives in Phoenix (Diane Rabiej at Saint Stephen Pro-Cathedral), Gilbert, AZ, (Cassandra Epstein at St. Thomas the Apostle), and Denver (Deacon and Mrs. Andrew Bodnar, Holy Protection).



Photos of the building of the parish house in Kugor. All of this work has been done by the adults and children of Saint Michael Church.

The Kugor parish is asking for funding to put on one room attached to a house that they bought in the village, to use as a hall. What can you send to these dedicated people?

