

CONTINUED...

Eastern Rite

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Msgr. Golemba likened the situation to that of the United States Senate, explaining that each state has equal representation by two senators regardless of the state's population.

Father Sherman feels that Eastern Rite worshippers are knowledgeable of the Latin Rite, but the reverse does not hold true.

"Being a minority has its natural disadvantages," he said.

Father Weiner said the attempt of both rites to communicate is similar to an ecumenical effort.

"What is the first role of ecumenism? My definition of it is to be aware, and acknowledge that the group we want to be ecumenical with exists," Father Weiner said. "It has to work both ways."

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker is enjoying the fruits of such an awareness and consequent cooperation through holding its liturgies in the former St. Jude's Roman Catholic Church. A new St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Church is being built in the town of Gates, at 1492 Spencerport Road.

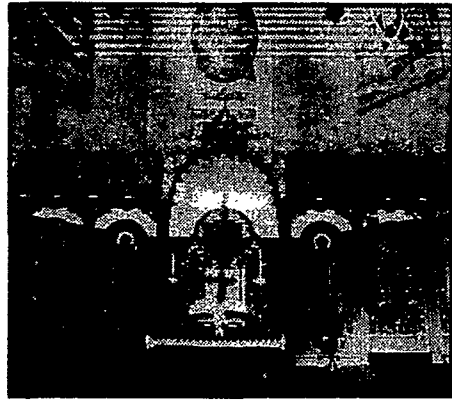
"Those people (at St. Jude's) have been more than generous. They've done fundraisers on our behalf," said Elias Yousef Sarkis, parish council president at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Father Sherman added that he meets regularly for Saturday dinners with a group of Roman Catholic pastors in the Gates area.

"We get to kidding around," he said. "I use the word 'Chrismation' (the Eastern Rite term for confirmation), and they'll say, 'What are you talking about?'"

Father John Firpo, pastor at St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church in Gates, hosted such a gathering earlier this month. He remarked that Father Sherman blends very naturally into that social circle.

"The thing that bonds us together is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. That just speaks volumes to me about inclusiveness,"



Iconography surrounds the altar at St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Rochester.

Father Firpo commented.

Msgr. Golemba and Father Godenciu, pastor at Church of the Epiphany, belong to a similar social coalition of priests in northern Monroe County. Meanwhile, Father Mihai Dubovici, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul, lunches frequently with Auburn-area Latin Rite priests.

Further evidence of assimilation exists at St. Josaphat's School. Most of the school's 135 students, Msgr. Golemba said, are parishioners at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit.

Both St. Josaphat's School, along with Ss. Peter and Paul School in Auburn, offer optional courses in Ukrainian heritage and language yet also follow curriculum guidelines set forth by the Department of Catholic Schools in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

However, language can be a sticky wicket in this pursuit of cooperation. Many Ukrainian liturgies, for example, are celebrated in full Ukrainian.

Father Godenciu remarked that many of his immigrant parishioners at Church of the Epiphany simply have never chosen to learn English.

"I find people who have been here for 40 years and they don't understand the English language," Father Godenciu said.

Older Ukrainians, Father Weiner point-

ed out, are no different than any other immigrant groups determined to preserve all elements of their homeland.

"They want something they can identify with, so they speak Ukrainian in their homes," said Father Weiner, whose Elmira Heights parish is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

Along with language differences, some of the major distinctions between Latin and Eastern rites include the fact that Latin Rite churches have traditionally emphasized statues, while Eastern Rite churches utilize iconography — the art of representing religious figures through such images as paintings.

In addition, Latin Rite Catholics attend Mass, and Eastern Rite worshippers attend Divine Liturgy. Eastern Rite priests preside over these liturgies while facing away from the congregation.

Both rites believe in the same seven sacraments, yet the administering of those sacraments can differ sharply. For example, Eastern Rites distribute Eucharist by dipping chunks of bread in wine, and then serving them on the tongue. Roman Catholics use Communion wafers, and in most parishes the reception of Eucharist on the tongue or hand is optional — as is the reception of wine.

Celibacy for priests is another key difference marking the Latin and Eastern rites. Latin Rite priests everywhere must take a vow of celibacy, and the same holds true for Eastern Rite priests ordained in the United States. However, in the Ukrainian Catholic Church, a man is allowed to marry in his native country before being ordained. Father Godenciu, for example, who was married 15 years ago in Romania but now serves in Rochester, has a wife and two children.

To trace how these differences developed, one would need to go back several hundred years.

All five Eastern Rite churches in the diocese follow the rituals of the Byzantine Rite, which was formulated in the late fourth century following the split of the

Roman Empire into East and West.

This division spurred the growth of church centers in Rome, where the Latin Rite solidified, and Constantinople, where the Byzantine Rite formed. The Byzantine Rite developed such national Eastern Rite churches as the Ukrainian and the Melkite rites. Due to cultural differences, traditions in these rites developed distinctly different from the Latin Rite.

The first wave of Ukrainian Catholic immigration to the United States, according to Father Weiner, occurred between 1870 and 1920. A second surge took place after World War II, followed by a smaller movement after Ukraine was freed from Communist rule in 1991.

Meanwhile, most parishioners at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker — which is Greek Melkite — are of Lebanese ancestry. Other parishioners, according to Sarkis, have Palestinian and Egyptian roots.

Today, all five parishes are sharply challenged to model their faith for young Eastern Rite Catholics. This urgency stems from the fact that current immigration levels are not nearly as prevalent as in previous generations.

"We still teach the children the Ukrainian heritage. But for the future, we don't know what's going to happen yet," Father Dubovici commented.

Perhaps this heritage will be preserved with the help of Catholics without Eastern Rite ethnic backgrounds — those who marry into the faith, or those who simply appreciate Eastern Rite traditions.

Helen Montesanto, a parishioner at Church of Christ the King in Irondequoit, has developed an attachment to St. Josaphat's through her attendance at Saturday-night Bible study classes. She also volunteers frequently at St. Josaphat's.

Asked if being in the St. Josaphat's community has grown on her, Montesanto replied, "It really has. The people here are so fine, it's wonderful."

"Even though I'm Italian and don't speak Ukrainian, I feel they just love me and I love them right back," she stated.

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