

PARISH PROFILE

Echoes of Ukraine resound in Eastern rite church

Parish Profile

St. Josaphat's
Ukrainian
Catholic
Church, Irondequoit



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — Ivanka Hanushevsky, a 16-year-old parishioner at St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church, can hardly contain her enthusiasm for being a second-generation Ukrainian-American.

She attends the parish's Saturday Ukrainian language school, belongs to a Ukrainian dance troupe and participates in Ukrainian scouting. A junior at West Irondequoit High School, Ivanka said she is the envy of her less ethnically aware friends.

"My friends think it's awesome that I know my background and another language," she said. "They all wish they knew their backgrounds, and they don't."

Older parishioners expressed the hope that the parish's other young people can keep alive in their hearts the spirit of ethnic pride that burns in Ivanka's. Indeed, it's a desire to inspire such pride that motivates Peter Leschyshyn, a Ukrainian immigrant who directs the language school. He noted that many members of the last great wave of Ukrainian immigrants who came to the parish after World War II have already died.

"If their children and grandchildren will not know the Ukrainian language, they will forget Ukraine," he said. He pointed out that the language school (grades one-11) has seen a steady decline in students from a high of more than 200 a few decades ago to 60 today. Daria Hanushevsky, Ivanka's mother, and a leading member of various church groups and Ukrainian organizations, echoed Leschyshyn's views.

"I think it's important to know who you are, and if you can throw in a language, you're just that much more well-rounded," she said. "It's like living in two worlds."

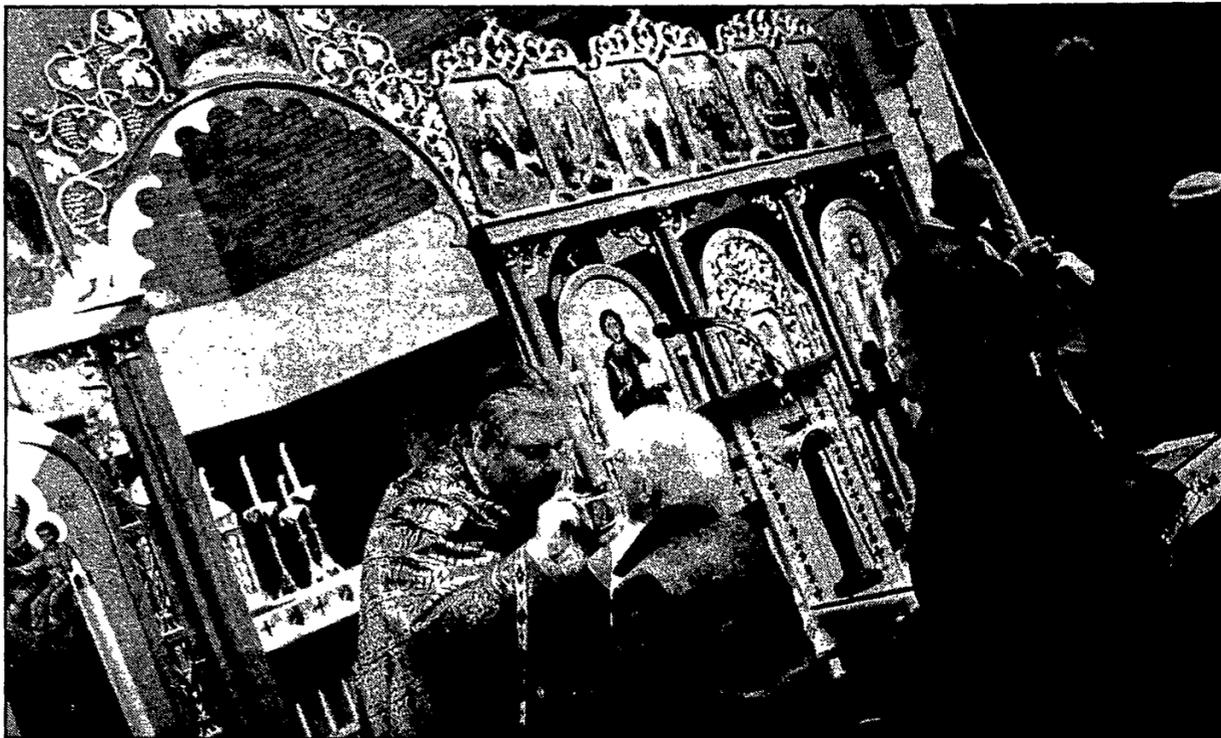
St. Josaphat's has been helping Ukrainian Catholics keep in touch with both their ethnic roots and their faith since it was founded in 1908 by immigrants from western Ukraine. The parish has moved twice in its existence, first from Remington Street to Hudson Avenue in 1914 and then to its present location on East Ridge Road in 1979. The parish offers two weekend Masses in Ukrainian and two in English.

St. Josaphat's belongs to the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of Stamford, Conn., which encompasses New York state and New England. Home to 600 families and a Catholic school with 75 students, St. Josaphat's Catholics are joined with their Roman rite fellows in the Diocese of Rochester in their allegiance to Pope John Paul II and their common faith and moral beliefs. Where the rites differ is in the mode of expression in their liturgies and rituals.

For example, a Ukrainian Catholic priest celebrates Mass with his back to the congregation because he is leading them in prayer before the altar, and the liturgy is more of a call-and-response ceremony — much of it sung — between the priest and the lay people than in a Roman Mass.

The Very Rev. Archpriest Edward P. Young, St. Josaphat's pastor since January 2000, also pointed out that Ukrainian Catholic churches like St. Josaphat's are generally more ornate than their modern Roman counterparts. For example, St. Josaphat's features colorful stately icons or images of Christ and the saints. These icons are most noticeably displayed on the iconostasis, a screen with doors separating the altar from the nave.

Ukrainian Catholics have a spirituality that involves communicating with the di-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

The Very Rev. Archpriest Edward P. Young distributes Communion at Mass on March 18 at St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Irondequoit.

vine through the senses via candles, incense and icons, he noted. The practice of venerating icons, he said, is rooted in the desire "to be able to touch the holy and to connect with one who has been made holy by the grace of God."

Interestingly, Father Young is of Italian and Irish background, and became a Ukrainian Catholic priest 18 years ago out of a desire to serve as a missionary to Eastern-rite Catholics, he said. Parishioner Janis Stelnyk, a member of the parish's choir, said the parishioners have been impressed with Father Young's devotion to an ethnic community not his own.

"Of all the priests I've seen pastor this church, he seems the most knowledgeable about the traditions and the services and the way (they) are conducted," Stelnyk said.

Father Young is far from the only non-Ukrainian who has fallen in love with the rituals of Eastern Rite Catholicism. Michael Anuszkiewicz, who grew up attending Our Lady of Mercy Church in Greece, is a non-Ukrainian who is president of the school's Parents Association. Anuszkiewicz stressed that Ukrainian Catholics are as Catholic as Roman-rite Catholics.

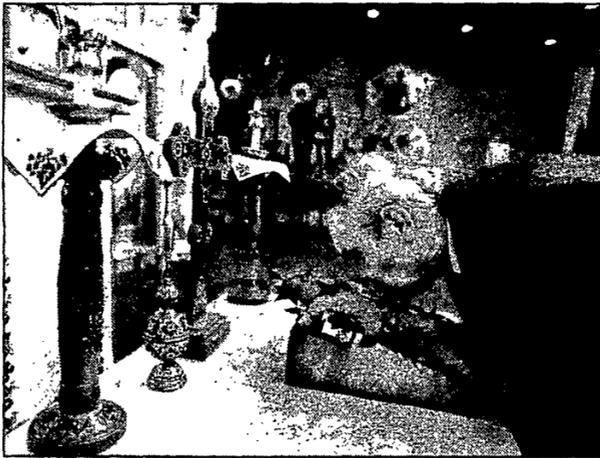
"I'm a Catholic, and I happen to be practicing my Catholicism in an Eastern-rite church," he said.

He added that he enjoyed the Ukrainian-rite Mass.

"To me it's more of a solemn ceremony than what the Roman Mass is right now," he said.

He and his wife, Patricia, have two children at the school, Peter, 14, in grade 8, and Mary Rose, 11, in grade 6. Patricia sings in the choir and teaches religious education as well. Her husband pointed out the parish school has both non-Ukrainians as well as non-Catholics as students.

Tom Myers is another non-Ukrainian, who married Mary Dzuiba and with whom he has a 10-year-old daughter, Erika. Myers, 47, said he remembers the pre-Vatican II Roman Mass in Latin, and attending St. Josaphat's with his family brings him back to those days.



Michael Zaretsky kisses the cross in front of the altar after Mass on March 18.

"The English version of the Latin is what it feels like," he said of the English Mass.

Myers' in-laws are Christine and Peter Dzuiba who emigrated to the United States in 1950. In the past, with her husband's help, Christine Dzuiba has overseen the parish's kitchen for various social events including the parish's annual festival, which this year takes place Aug. 16-19. Like many of the older Ukrainian immigrants at the parish, the Dzuibas came to the United States for reasons related to the chaos created by the Second World War and the persecution of Catholics in Soviet-ruled Ukraine following the war.

"We were still young, and it was difficult, (but) we adjusted pretty good," Christine Dzuiba said of the couple's new life in the United States after leaving Europe.

Within a year of living in their new country, the Dzuibas had a daughter, Mary, who grew up attending the parish school. She remembered that St. Josaphat's was the place her family spent almost every night during certain months like May when the parish gathered for devotions to Mary. However, she said, as the members of her generation have moved away from the parish, it has become harder to keep in touch with the people she knew as kids.

"There were 36 in my class, and of the 36 I graduated with, there are only a handful who come to church," she said.

One dedicated graduate of the school is George Hanushevsky, Daria's husband, an active parishioner like his wife. His grandfather was a Ukrainian Catholic priest who was imprisoned by the Soviets for 10 years because he refused to convert to Russian Orthodox Christianity. It's apparent that

SNAPSHOT

St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church
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Rochester, NY 14621
Phone: 716/467-6457

Ministerial Staff:

Pastor:

Very Rev. Archpriest Edward P. Young

Assistant pastor:

Father Wolodymyr Piso

Deacon:

Deacon Stefan Bilyk

School principal:

Sister Bernitta, SSMI

Religion instructor:

Sister Juliette, SSMI

School secretary:

Mary Rudak

Rectory secretary:

Mary Ann Skorochoda

Hanushevsky is proud of his people's history and his parish, and that he considers it unthinkable not to volunteer.

"If I want to see (St. Josaphat's) grow and flourish, you have to get involved," he said.

A daughter of Ukrainian immigrants who joined the church in its first decade, Kay Fedoryshyn served as volunteer parish secretary from 1962 to 1985, and shares Hanushevsky's devotion to the church which she attends with her sister, Mary Fedoryshyn.

"There was no question that you didn't volunteer for the parish," she said.

Ukrainian Catholics love St. Josaphat's because it's more than just a place to attend Mass, said Mary Ann Skorochoda, the rectory secretary.

"It's the extension of my own family," she said. "It's nice to know people care about each other and there's a lot of warmth."

On Sunday, March 25, St. Josaphat's is hosting a spaghetti dinner from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. to benefit the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund. The fund is set up for the victims and children of the victims of the Chernobyl (Chernobyl) nuclear plant meltdown in Ukraine in 1986. The dinner is sponsored by the Holy Name Society and the Knights of Columbus Patriarch Josyf Cardinal Slipyj Council 10949. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$2.50 for children 12 and under.