

DECEMBER 2023

GCU

MAGAZINE

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George N. Juba
President
CEO

Did 'ya Ever Wonder...

I am not a huge television fanatic, but I do enjoy watching sports, especially the Miami Hurricanes, along with local & national news and reruns of Miami CSI & Columbo. On occasion I also enjoy watching MeTV (Memorable Entertainment Television) offering a variety of classic television programs from the 1930s through the 1990s. My favorite news program continues to be 60 Minutes. First airing on September 24, 1968, it is the oldest and most-watched news magazine on television—reporting on America’s most prevalent topics ranging from hard news coverage to politics, lifestyle, pop culture, business, health, and science. Although the various segments of the program were extremely informative, my favorite was **“A Few Minutes with Andy Rooney”** as he typically offered satire on everyday issues. He would often start his commentary with **“Did ‘ya ever wonder?”**

Being a “Baby Boomer” and sharing with you my favorite shows I grew up with, **“Did ‘ya ever wonder...”** what happened to the good wholesome shows that in many ways taught a lesson at their conclusion? I would welcome back the days when three networks broadcast and were received via TV antennas, concluding at midnight with the playing of our National Anthem. Today’s sitcoms and other reality shows, many portraying no morality or comedic relief, just don’t resonate with me. Maybe I’m just showing my age or being “grumpy” like Mr. Rooney!

Well, enough of that but I would like to place a little Christmas into my observations. **“Did ‘ya ever wonder...”** how the poinsettia came to be as a Christmas plant. Here are some fun facts about its history.

- The poinsettia flower is native to Central America – specifically, an area in southern Mexico called “Taxco del Alarcon.”
- It wasn’t until the 17th century that the plant first became associated with Christmas when Franciscan monks in the town of Taxco de Alarcon used the shrub in Nativity processions.
- The plants were used by the ancient Aztecs to make a purple dye for clothing and cosmetics.
- A medicine to treat fevers was made from the poinsettias’ milky white waxy sap.
- Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous. While some humans and pets are sensitive to the plant’s milky white sap, which contains latex, it is not toxic.

ic. It can, however, cause irritation to the skin, eyes, mucus membranes or digestive system if consumed. Well, maybe it is poisonous!

- The showy, colorful part of the poinsettia is not a flower, it is a modified leaf. The poinsettia’s modified leaves called bracts, are often mistaken for the flower. Actually, the small yellow flowers called cyathium, can be found clustered in the center of the bracts.
- Poinsettias can grow up to 15 feet tall. In their native tropical environment in Mexico and Central America, poinsettias are a perennial woody shrub that grow as high as 10 to 15 feet tall, more like a small tree than a houseplant.
- December 12 is National Poinsettia Day. The date marks the death of Joel Roberts Poinsett, the South Carolina congressman credited with bringing the poinsettia to the United States from Mexico. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure recognizing National Poinsettia Day in 2002.
- California is the top poinsettia-producing state. Poinsettias are commercially grown in all 50 states. Other top poinsettia-producing states include North Carolina, Texas, Florida and Ohio.

I am sure **“you are wondering”** how the GCU is performing financially. Despite the challenges associated with the current high interest rate markets, GCU is performing well, continuing to increase assets and surplus and generating a modest net profit. Assets for the first nine months of 2023 stand at \$2.7 billion, surplus totals \$220 million with a recorded net profit of \$7.4 million. The GCU’s 2023 third quarter financial results and detailed commentary are presented on page 6 by our Chief Financial Officer Tim Demetres.

As we are concluding the first full year under the GCU’s new Fraternal Metamorphosis Program, our gratitude and thank you to each of our Constellation and Byzantine Catholic Parish Coordinators. We view this new format as a total success as we have expanded the GCU’s presence in many new communities and our Byzantine Catholic Parishes having more than doubled the number of parishes that had lodge affiliation in the past. Our special thank you to the GCU’s Fraternal/Communications Director, Basil Wahal, and his entire Staff for their efforts in assisting the coordinators. Their efforts

CONTINUED

have brought many new GCU faces to the various fraternal activities that were planned throughout the past year.

It is hard to believe as time passes so quickly, 2024 is an election year. The GCU Board of Directors are seeking candidates interested in becoming a member of the Board of Directors and meet the criteria and required qualifications presented on page 4. All candidates must submit their Declaration of Candidacy forms to the Nominating Committee by April 1, 2024. The forms are available on the GCU website in the Member Events section or can be obtained by calling GCU President/CEO George Juba at 724-495-3400 ext. 3928 or emailing - gjuba@GCUusa.com .

I recently attended the Episcopal Ordination and Enthronement of Bishop Robert M. Pipta as the sixth Bishop of the Eparchy of Parma. We wish Bishop Robert all the best as he leads the clergy and shepherds the faithful of our Parma Byzantine Catholic Parishes.

We extend our condolences to retired Board of Director Member Dorothy Foran as her husband, Deacon Lawrence Foran recently passed. I had the good fortune of knowing Deacon Larry as he was a true leader, dedicated to the teaching profession, the GCU as a former lodge of-

ficer, his community and church. May his Memory be Eternal! Vicnaja Pamjat!

In closing, I would like to leave you with one of Andy Rooney's quotes as we are in the heart of the Christmas Season.

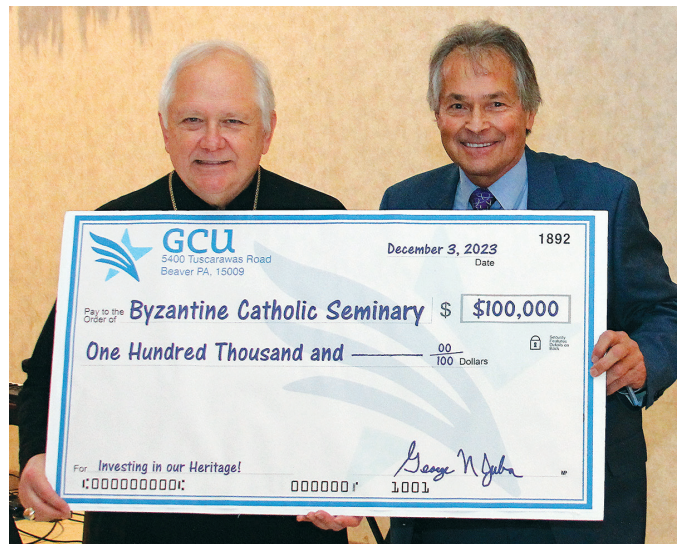
“One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly.”

My congratulations and thank you to our Board of Directors, Executive Officers, Department Directors and our entire Support Staff that has allowed GCU to navigate through another challenging but successful year! May the Birth of Our Lord and Savior and the joy of this holiday season provide to you and your family Hope, Faith, Peace, Love and Good Tiding during this Christmas Season! My best wishes for a safe and Happy Holiday Season and all the best for a healthy and prosperous New Year!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!
CHRISTOS RAZDAJETSJA!
CHRIST IS BORN!**

GCU Presents Annual Byzantine Seminary Educational Grant

On Sunday, December 3, 2023 GCU President/CEO George N. Juba presented Metropolitan William Skurla, Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh with the GCU's educational grant of \$100,000.⁰⁰. The annual grant is for the SS. Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary. The presentation took place at the Saint Nicholas Charity Celebration held at St. John Cathedral Center. With this year's presentation GCU donations, which began in 1961, now total over \$3.8 million.



Archbishop William Skurla is shown receiving the GCU educational grant for the Byzantine Catholic Seminary from GCU President/CEO George N. Juba.
Photo Nicholas Havrilla



Jeff Long
Sales Director

Life Insurance

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

With the holiday season fast approaching, it is a good time to reflect on what we are thankful for. As I take a moment, I know that I am thankful for my family, grandkids and all of my friends, my health, and I am also thankful that I am lucky enough to work for GCU, a Fraternal Benefit Society. Yes, GCU offers Life Insurance and Annuities, but we are so much more than that. We have members whose families have been part of GCU for 3 or 4 generations, some families even longer. They have stayed with GCU because they know that we will be here when they need us the most.

Let's talk about how life insurance can be the "Gift that keeps giving."

GCU offers two different whole life insurance policies that allow you to add a special rider. The two policies are the GCU Legacy Advantage and the Legacy Advantage 20. To keep things simple, I will use Legacy Advantage 20 to make my point.

Let's assume that grandparents want to buy life insurance for their 2-year-old grandson. The annual premium for a \$25,000 policy is \$205. Because they selected the Legacy Advantage 20, the policy will be paid up in 20 years, when their grandson turns 22. They also decided to add a Guaranteed Insurability Option rider to the policy, which increased the cost of the policy by \$10 more per year. This rider will allow the grandson to get additional insurance several times during his lifetime, regardless of his health. His first opportunity to get more insurance is at

We have members whose families have been part of GCU for 3 or 4 generations, some families even longer. They have stayed with GCU because they know that we will be here when they need us the most.

age 22. So, he gets another \$25,000 policy that costs him \$335 per year! He now has \$50,000 in total coverage. This new policy also is paid up in 20 years. He can also purchase more insurance at the following ages, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37 and 40. All once again because of the Guaranteed Insurability Rider. He can also use the rider if he gets married or has children.

If the grandson uses the rider to purchase more coverage 2 more times, he will have \$100,000 of whole life coverage all without needing to prove insurability. He has a great life insurance plan in place, all because of the wisdom of his grandparents. They gave him a gift that will keep on giving even long after they are gone. This holiday season, think about the gift of life insurance.

GCU Board of Directors Election Process & Declaration of Candidacy

Board Election

With the approval of the GCU Referendum in April 2018 eliminating the need for a National Convention, a new election process was developed to elect the ten (10) members of the GCU Board of Directors. Ballots will be mailed to all Adult GCU Benefit Members (18 years of age and older) on Monday, June 3, 2024. Members will have the ability to vote by mail or online, once they have received their ballot. Each vote carries the same weight and there is no proxy voting.

Candidates that meet the following criteria, may submit their Declaration for Candidacy until Monday, April 1, 2024. Declaration of Candidacy forms are available on the GCU website in the Member Events section or can be obtained by calling GCU President/CEO George Juba at 724-495-3400 ext. 3928 or emailing gjuba@GCUusa.com.

Summary of Directors' Responsibilities

As a member of the GCU Board of Directors, a Director is responsible for the effective governance of the GCU. Their main purpose is to advise, govern, set and oversee policy & direction, and assist with the leadership and general promotion of the GCU in support of its mission, strategic vision and core values.

Bylaw Requirements

As per Par. 62 of the GCU Bylaws, **all** candidates for Director must submit a Declaration for Candidacy & Resume Form for Director together with a digital photograph and comply with the following qualifications:

- (a) **A citizen of the United States of America.**
- (b) **A member of the GCU for a minimum of five (5) years as of January 1 of the election year.**
- (c) **A person of Slav origin and a Byzantine Catholic for a minimum of five (5) years as of January 1 of the election year.**
- (d) **Of good moral character, reputation and good American spirit.**
- (e) **A candidate must have attained the age of 30 prior to January 1 of the election year and not be older than age 77 prior to January 1 of the election year.**
- (f) **Any other qualifications set forth by the Directors in the Declaration of Candidacy & Resume Form for Director.**

Qualifications as set forth by the Board of Directors per Par. 62 (e) are as follows:

- **Must possess a minimum of two of the following:**
 - ❖ **Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited university.**
 - ❖ **Currently hold (or has held) an executive or C-Suite position for a minimum of five years in the insurance, annuity, financial, or fraternal industry.**
 - ❖ **Owns and operates (or has owned and operated) a successful middle market business enterprise for a minimum of five years.**
 - ❖ **Currently employed or has been employed in the financial/insurance industry for a minimum of five years or possess a financial/insurance certification for a minimum of five years.**
 - ❖ **Serve (or have served) as a Director on a professional policy, carver or governance Board for a minimum of five years.**
 - ❖ **Minimum of five years experience in human resources, risk management, cybersecurity or digital marketing.**

Expectations of Board Members

- Be committed and possess values that are aligned with the purpose and mission of the GCU.
- Solid understanding of the GCU's business.
- Contribute to the improvement of Board Governance though knowledge or skills possessed in one or more of the following areas: policy, finance, organizational strategy, technology, legal, marketing, sales, civic leadership, risk management or personnel.
- Gain understanding of the GCU's policies and procedures.
- Become familiar with the GCU's finances, budget, and financial/resource needs.
- Participate on standing committees of the Board and serve on ad-hoc committees, as necessary.
- Prepare for and participate in the discussions and the deliberations of the Board.
- Be alert to community concerns that can be addressed by the GCU's mission, objectives, products and programs. Communicate this to the entire Board.
- Foster a positive working relationship with other Board members.
- Be aware of, and abstain from, any conflict of interest.

Key Responsibilities

Members of the Board shall share these responsibilities while acting in the best interest of the GCU. Each member is expected to make recommendations based on their profession, experience, expertise and vantage point in the community.

- Organizational leadership and advisement.
- Formulation, oversight and governance of policies and procedures developed by the Board.
- Establish overall long and short term goals, objectives and priorities for the GCU.
- Recommend GCU policy.
- Prepare for and participate in the discussion and the deliberations of the Board.
- Financial oversight, including approval and oversight of the annual operating budget.
- Oversight of program planning and evaluation.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the GCU's annual business plan through a regular review of sales and budget reports as well as a review of products, programs, and services as compared to the market and competitive environment.
- Review of key departmental (finance, membership, sales, marketing, fraternal) plans, budgets and performance reports.
- Promotion, and support thereof, of the GCU's membership and mission through advertising, outreach and community networking.

Meeting and Time Commitment

- *The Board of Directors meets quarterly with a minimum commitment of 15-20 days on site annually, not including travel time.*
- In addition, Board members are to be available at the call of the Chairperson of the Board for any committee and special meetings. These meetings may be either in person or via teleconference, throughout the year.
- Board members are expected to attend GCU events and meetings.

Term

Directors are elected by the membership to a four-year term beginning on October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2028 .

2024 GCU Board Election Timeline

December 2023—Declaration of Candidacy Form available on GCU Website. Election announced in *GCU Magazine*.

February 2024—GCU Board Election announced in *GCU Magazine*.

April 1, 2024—Declaration of Candidacy and supporting documents must be postmarked and sent to GCU Home Office for consideration and approval of Nominating Committee.

May 1, 2024—All applications, upon approval by Nominating Committee, will be submitted to Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc.

June 3, 2024—Ballots mailed to members.

July 1, 2024—Balloting closes online; mailed ballots must be postmarked and returned.

Third Quarter 2023 Financials



Tim Demetres
Chief Financial Officer

As we move forward to close out 2023, the rising interest rate environment appears to have crested. The swift rise in rates rapidly reshaped one of the significant benefits fraternal organizations provide to their members, higher interest crediting rates on annuities. These benefits are designed to provide safety and security for those planning for retirement as well as creating wealth over the long-term. Crediting rates ebb and flow in unison with economic cycles.

While we carefully navigate the economic challenges in 2023, I am pleased to present GCU's financial results for the nine months ended September 30, 2023.

GCU's total assets increased \$51 million to \$2.69 billion and surplus strength was maintained increasing \$1 million to \$220.2 million. Total adjusted capital increased \$5.7 million to \$244.2 million as of September 30, 2023 compared to \$238.5 million as of December 31, 2022.

Income before net realized capital gains (losses) totaled \$8.1 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2023, compared to \$15.4 million reported in 2022. The net gain from operations was lower in 2023 primarily due to increasing annuity crediting rates and lower net investment income from increased outflows on annuity products. Net income after realized capital gains (losses) was

\$7.4 million in 2023 compared to \$18.7 million in 2022. We had \$664 thousand in net realized losses in 2023 and \$281 thousand net gains in 2022.

The increase in Total Assets primarily reflect increases in invested assets: bonds; alternative assets; cash and derivative assets.

Liabilities totaling \$2.47 billion on September 30, 2023, increased relative to life and annuity sales. The \$51.9 million increase in total liabilities is due primarily to the \$45.9 million increase in life and annuity reserves reflecting new sales, interest credits and surrender activity, a \$5 million increase in Asset Valuation Reserve (AVR), offset by and a \$1 million decrease in the interest maintenance reserve (IMR).

Total Income was \$366.0 million through September 30, a decrease of \$26.7 million compared to \$392.6 million in 2022. Annuity new business sales remain strong although lower than last year. Net investment income increased modestly to \$88.2 million.

Operating expenses, before the change in reserves, totaled \$311 million versus \$180.3 million in 2022, an increase of \$131 million 72.6%. GCU disbursed \$89.1 million more in annuity benefits for death claims, full and partial surrenders. Annuity exchanges increased \$43.2 million. General insurance expenses were \$1.1 million higher in 2023 when compared to 2022 primarily due to the timing of when certain fraternal activities are funded.

The change in reserves totaled \$46.4 million in 2023 compared to \$193.7 million in 2022. Reserve changes are a function of premiums received, death claims, annuity benefits paid and interest accumulation.

Surplus on September 30, 2023, increased \$0.7 million to \$220.2 million versus year-end at \$219.5 million. The changes

Summary of Financial Statistics

<i>(000's omitted)</i>	9/30/2023	9/30/2022	Change
Total Income	\$365,969	\$392,635	\$(26,666)
Total Expenses	357,695	373,991	(16,296)
Inc. Bef. Real. Gains (Losses)	8,050	18,421	(10,371)
Net Income (Loss)	7,386	18,702	(11,316)
Balance Sheet Summary	9/30/2023	12/31/2022	Change
Assets	\$2,693,160	\$2,641,749	\$51,411
Surplus (Net Worth)	220,178	219,484	694
Asset Valuation Reserve	23,895	18,876	5,019
Interest Maintenance Reserve	16,117	16,929	(812)
Total Adjusted Capital (TAC)	244,227	238,515	5,712
Solv. Ratio by Total Adj. Capital	110.0	109.9	0.1
Financial Strength Rating - KBRA	A-	A-	
Financial Strength Rating - AM Best	A-	A-	

Change in Surplus

<i>(000's omitted)</i>	
Beginning Surplus - December 31, 2022	\$219,484
Net Income	7,386
Change in Unrealized Gain/(Loss)	(63)
GCU Holding Company & Other	(982)
Changes in Non-Admitted Assets	(629)
Changes in Asset Valuation Reserve	(5,018)
Net Change in Surplus	694
Ending Surplus - 9/30/2023	\$220,178

in surplus reflect the addition of net income and unrealized gains totaling \$7.3 million offset by decreases of \$5 million to fund additional AVR and \$1.6 million for non-admitted assets and the net loss of GCU Holding Company, Inc.

Total Adjusted Capital (TAC), a risk metric used by regulators and rating agencies, increased \$5.7 million to \$244.2 million as of September 30, 2023, from \$238.5 million on December 31, 2022. TAC starts with surplus of \$220.2 mil-

lion and adds back the asset valuation reserve of \$23.9 million and one-half the dividend liability of \$155,000. The solvency ratios based on TAC were 110.0% on September 30, 2023 and 109.9% at December 31, 2022. These ratios reflect the stability of GCU's financial strength.

Have a Merry Christmas and enjoy the festive holiday season! Tim

GCU INCOME STATEMENT

Nine Months 2023 vs. 2022

INCOME (000's omitted)	9/30/2023	9/30/2022	Change
Life premium	\$ 7,212	\$ 8,586	\$ (1,374)
Annuity Premium	212,574	281,796	(69,222)
Annuity Exchanges	55,548	12,370	43,178
Accident & Health	308	347	(40)
Subtotal	275,641	303,099	(27,458)
Net investment income	88,247	87,063	1,185
Amort. of Int. Maint. Resrv.	1,203	1,469	(266)
Commissions-Reinsurance	331	699	(369)
Other	547	305	242
Total income	\$365,969	\$392,635	\$(26,664)
EXPENSES			
Death Benefits - Life Ins.	\$ 3,510	\$ 3,009	\$ 501
Annuity Benefits Paid	228,791	139,705	89,086
Annuity Exchanges	55,548	12,370	43,178
Life Insurance Surrender	941	553	388
Accident/Health Benefits Paid	301	309	(8)
Commissions	13,005	16,204	(3,199)
General Operating Exp.	8,272	7,125	1,147
Ins., Taxes, Bank & Audit Fees	419	363	56
Pension Expense	193	406	(213)
Ins., Taxes, Bank & Audit Fees	266	233	33
Subtotal	\$311,247	\$180,277	\$130,970
Changes to Reserves	46,448	193,714	(147,266)
Total Expenses	357,695	373,991	(16,295)
Net Gain/Loss Bef. Refunds	8,274	18,645	(10,371)
Refunds to Members	224	224	—
Net Gain/Loss after Refunds	8,050	18,421	(10,371)
Net Realized Gain /(Losses)	(664)	281	(945)
Net Income	\$ 7,386	\$ 18,702	\$(11,316)

BALANCE SHEETS

September 30, 2023 vs. December 31, 2022

ASSETS (000's omitted)	9/30/2023	12/31/2022	Change
Bonds	\$ 2,498,122	\$2,472,932	\$ 25,190
Preferred Stocks	16,616	18,626	(2,010)
Common Stocks	30,508	27,985	2,523
Alternative investments	63,713	55,912	7,801
Cash//Short Term Investments	31,152	15,575	15,577
Mortgages	2,523	3,473	(950)
Certificate Loans	674	630	44
Derivatives	1,010	1,115	(105)
Real Estate	15,958	15,059	899
Inv. Income Due & Accrued	31,955	29,829	2,126
Other	2,114	612	1,502
Total Assets	\$2,694,345	\$2,641,749	\$52,596
% Total Change Year to Year	2%		
LIABILITIES			
Life Reserve Fund	\$ 93,012	\$ 89,472	\$ 3,540
Annuity Reserve Fund	2,328,418	2,286,024	42,394
Accident Health Resrv. Fund	124	120	4
Employee Pension Fund	6,989	6,595	394
Symposium Reserve	—	127	(127)
Adv. Prem. & Fut. Rfnd. Resrvs.	347	356	(9)
Pending investment trade	437	—	437
Accounts Payable	2,290	1,211	1,079
Refund Accumulations & Other	2,538	2,555	(17)
Asset Valuation Resrv. - AVR	23,895	18,876	5,019
Interest Maint. Resrv. - IMR	16,117	16,929	(812)
Total Liabilities	\$ 2,474,167	\$2,422,266	\$ 51,901
Surplus Fund	220,178	219,484	694
Total Liabilities & Surplus	\$2,694,345	\$ 2,641,749	\$52,596
Solvency Ratio	110.0%	109.9%	0.1%

*Adds AVR + 1/2 of dividend liability to surplus.

Financial information is unaudited and presented on the statutory basis of accounting. Totals may vary slightly due to rounding.



Fr. Valerian M. Michlik

GCU Spiritual Advisor

Traditions & Customs

Dear Friends:
As many of you know, part of my childhood, growing up was in what we call “staryj kraj-old country.” It was there that I was given the opportunity to learn, understand, and embrace all of our venerable traditions and customs.

What comes to mind when you hear those words “traditions” or “customs”? Well, I must say that even in Pittsburgh we have traditions that make our city unique (and I mean it).

Attending wedding receptions in Southwestern Pennsylvania you admire our cookie tables which are a cherished Steel City tradition that span generations. For many individuals and families attending “First Night” to welcome the New Year has become an annual tradition, or when most amusement parks close down when the weather turns cold, many people have the tradition of going to Kennywood, which stays open for its annual Holiday Lights event. And who cannot admire the tradition of the “Terrible Towel” in action. Since 1975, thousands of fans swing that Terrible Towel as a rallying cry at Pittsburgh Steeler games, but also as a sign of being a true Pittsburgher. These are the traditions that I have embraced and learned to love for over 25 years.



Pope Francis loves the “Terrible Towel”.

But what about our venerable traditions and customs that we have had for centuries in our Byzantine Catholic Church. Do we know them? Do we understand them?

In our Holy Church, Holy Tradition is the deposit of faith given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles and passed on in the Church from one generation to the next without addition,

alteration or subtraction. That means nothing gets added, nothing gets changed, and nothing gets removed. The theologian Vladimir Lossky famously described Tradition as “the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.” It is dynamic in its application, but unchanging in its doctrine. It is growing in expression, yet always the same in its essential meaning.

Alongside Holy Tradition, we also have various customs that help us to express the Holy Tradition—these are things like how certain feast days are celebrated, the exact nature of fasting rules, or details of the Church calendar. These things can change over time, and they have in the life of our Byzantine Catholic Church, and that’s okay. What’s important is that the Holy Tradition given by Jesus Christ remains the same.



St. Nicholas and his helpers.

In several of our parishes, till this very day, we enjoy the St. Nicholas visit. In the old country, St. Nicholas on his feast day traditionally goes from house to house in the village with his “helpers”. Who are these helpers? His close helpers are the angels, but somewhere in the background you would also see the little devils trying their best to cause trouble for the children of the household. I remember as a child I was always afraid of the “devil” until I recognized one of my cousins playing that role. As part of the St. Nicholas visit he would ask you if you know your prayers, if you help around the house, or if you are good in school, and then you would receive your small gift—great memories.

Growing up Byzantine Catholic, fasting played an important role in our family. As part of our preparation for “Velija”, that is the Christmas Eve Holy Supper for years



we had to get the live “kapor-carp”. This is something I enjoyed as a boy. My sister usually freaked out walking into the bathroom and seeing the live carp in our bathtub! I took it upon myself to even feed the hungry fish, knowing well what’s going to happen on Christmas Eve. Nowadays I’m satisfied with a well-prepared tilapia.

Velija – Holy Supper was a sacred time for us. Waking up on Christmas Eve morning with the aroma of mushrooms, cabbage, pots boiling on the oven, all these family traditions that for generations that have kept Christ at the center of Christmas. Then, with the appearance of the first star sitting down at the table (with hay underneath), reading the Nativity Gospel narrative, offering prayers, singing Christmas carols and enjoying the Holy Supper that consisted of twelve meatless dishes representing the twelve

Apostles. The only part I always struggled with was the garlic. Until this day I just can’t do the garlic.

Friends, for centuries our Holy Church has given us a beautiful tapestry of Christmas traditions/customs which point to Christ. This time of the year I urge you to keep them alive in your household and in your parish family. If you are not familiar with these traditions/customs maybe it’s time for a workshop in your parish. If you visit the GCU Website and select the About GCU tab you will see at the top of the list History & Heritage. Click on this and go to the bottom of the page there is a copy of a flier about Christmas Eve traditions as well as one for preparing a traditional Easter Basket for Blessing.

It is awesome that we do have our traditions/customs, but do we understand them? Simply mimicking what people of the past did isn’t enough. We need to internalize them and make them part of who we are as Byzantine Catholics. Understanding why we keep certain traditions/customs, and how it is that they have led people in the past to God, and how they can lead us closer to God today, is absolutely essential to our faith. My friends, keep our traditions/customs alive!

This year, as we look up at the Star of Bethlehem with hope for our future, we join our brothers and sisters worldwide singing those words: “God is with us! Understand, all you nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us!”

I thank you for your love and prayers. Let us hold one another in our prayers, especially our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and Ukraine. May our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, bless you, your families, and loved ones at this blessed time of hope and grace.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Christos Raždajetsja! Slavite jeho!

GCU Home Office Hours of Operation & Holiday Schedule

The GCU Home Office (800.722.4428) is open Monday through Friday 8:30 AM to 5 PM EST.

The Call Center (855.306.0607) accepts calls Monday through Thursday from 8:30 AM to 7 PM EST and Fridays 8:30 AM to 5 PM EST.

The Home Office will be closed Friday, December 22 & Monday, December 25, 2023 in observance of the Christmas Holiday and Friday, December 29 & Monday, January 1, 2024 in observance of New Year’s Day.

5400 Tuscarawas Road, Beaver, PA 15009





Atty. John J. Urban

Lessons in the Law

When Your Will Does Not Work

Two issues ago, I wrote about how your Will may not work the way you wrote it. It prompted some questions as to whether you need a Will or not. The simple answer is yes everyone needs a Will. If you have an asset that does not have a beneficiary then your Will controls who would inherit that asset. There are many instances where people think they have beneficiaries named on everything and there may be a couple you forgot about.

Now is the time to review all of your assets and review how they are titled and whether you named a beneficiary or not. I've been recommending for years that people do this. A few years ago I decided to follow my own advice and found out that I had some assets with no beneficiaries listed. When I researched this issue, I found out that the beneficiary information was lost by the company.

The next question that was raised was should I have a

Trust instead of a Will? My answer is maybe. That is why you need to review your estate plan and determine what is in your best interests. There is a little more work in drafting a Trust which includes drafting the documents and possibly funding the Trust now. That means transferring your assets into the Trust and then the Trust controls your assets during your lifetime.

I would suggest that you make an appointment with an attorney who concentrates in this area. You don't want an attorney who specializes in personal injury cases writing your Will or Trust.

Remember a good estate plan includes a Will, maybe a Trust, a Living Will and Durable Powers of Attorneys for health and finances.

Questions, comments or ideas about future articles contact me at jurban.gcu@gcuusa.com



Elsie Urban.

Elsie Urban Celebrates 98th Birthday on December 17, 2023

Elsie has been a long-time GCU member and parishioner of St. John's Cathedral in Munhall, PA recently celebrated her 98th birthday. She and her late husband John, a former GCU Director, were very active members of the GCU and Cathedral. Elsie enjoyed working the social functions at the Cathedral Center and has many fond memories.

Elsie has been a resident of Logan Place in Lower Burrell for several years. She keeps busy with their activities and receives visits from numerous local organizations and churches. She also enjoys listening to the Sunday morning Liturgy from the Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in McKees Rocks, PA.

Elsie is the mother of GCU National Director John (Mary Rita) of Rocky River, OH, Marilyn (Sam) Fox of Chapel, PA and Lori (Joe) of Louisville, KY. They all feel that their mother is a true blessing.



Sisters of St. Basil the Great
 500 W. Main Street
 Uniontown, PA 15401
www.sistersofstbasil.org

A Pilgrimage Thank You from Sr. Susan Sisko, OSBM

Dear Friends,

What a blessed and beautiful pilgrimage, and how graced we were to be a part of it!

In thanksgiving to Our Lord and His Holy Mother, we are grateful for the sunshine, the gentle breezes (that kissed us occasionally), and for blessing us once again with our faithful pilgrims who traveled to be a part of the 89th annual pilgrimage.

Thank you all for your prayers, your participation, and your generosity. Though Mt. St. Macrina has been a bit quieter these past couple of weeks, a silent walk on the property rings aloud with the power of your prayers, and the beauty of your singing. We hear it, we feel it, and it sustains us as we plan for our 90th pilgrimage.

Children, teens, and young adults: Thank you for your energy, your enthusiasm, and your faithfulness. It was an absolute joy for us to witness your participation, spiritual energy, and enthusiasm for the Lord and Our Mother of Perpetual Help. You are the present, and you are the future of this pilgrimage, and of our Church, and we encourage you to embrace that role wholeheartedly.

To all our pilgrims, the extraordinary example of prayer and faithful participation you have shown throughout the years is the foundation of our annual pilgrimages and our church. You are the bedrock from which future generations will continue building strong and lasting faith structures. We are grateful for your continued support, and the support of all those who have come before you.

The Sisters of St. Basil have been blessed with your faithfulness and continued support of our Annual Pilgrimage. It is for all of you that we continue this ministry of love.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sister Susan Sisko, OSBM
 Provincial

Community Matching Funds

BEAVER, PA



One of the happy basket winners.

Dog Walk Around Dano Drive

The second annual Dog Walk around Dano Drive was held on Sunday, September 17, 2023, at Seven Oaks Country Club! There was a terrific turnout with over 30 dogs and 60 walkers attending. At the walk, everyone enjoyed refreshments, Brusters ice cream, a photo booth and a basket raffle. All baskets were donated by community members and local businesses. Proceeds and the GCU Match were donated to the Beaver County Humane Society. Thank you to everyone who attended the walk and donated to support the Humane Society!

Molly Kullen & Casey Bush



The colorful bounce house that was at the Fall Fest.

Community Matching Funds

SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Fall Harvest Fest at Ville de Marie Academy

Saturday, October 28 was a great day for the Fall Harvest Fest event. All who attended enjoyed the hayride, bounce house, stories around fire pit and lots of games & prizes. Everyone complimented the delicious food. This event will benefit the Ville de Marie Academy with GCU Community Matching Funds.

Joanie Mahar



The large crowd pictured with the many unique baskets.

Community Matching Funds

ALIQUIPPA, PA

After Hours at the Library

On October 7, 2023, the Friends of the B.F. Jones Memorial Library hosted their annual fundraising gala, "After Hours at the Library." The evening, which is the main fundraiser for the Library, featured hors d'oeuvres, a light dinner buffet, a wine bar, a coffee and tea

bar, and desserts made by talented volunteer bakers; it also included musical entertainment from pianist Sam Pasco, a basket auction consisting of 77 unique baskets (which were donated by library patrons, library employees, local businesses, and other supportive individuals from the community) and a 50/50 raffle. The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of "Then, Now, Forever," a painting of B.F. Jones Memorial Library created by local artist Linda Barnicott, which is the newest addition to the Library's fundraising efforts.

Attended by approximately 180 guests, the event garnered many positive reviews from attendees and committee members alike. "This was my first time coming; I'm going to make sure I come every year now, and I'm bringing friends, too" library patron Robert S. said. Ed Murphy, the secretary of the Friends committee, also expressed satisfaction with the results of the night. "If it didn't set a new record, it was close," Murphy said, referring not only to the number of baskets available in the auction, but attendance, and funds raised, as well.

Kathy Kapaldo

Community Matching Funds

MINGO JUNCTION, OH

Bakeless Bake Sales to Benefit Two Causes

During the month of November, bakeless bake sales were held for two separate causes in the Mingo Junction area. One benefited the Hills School Community by purchasing coats, shoes, socks, underwear and clothes for needy children. The other was for Wyatt Planko who is a one year old with many physical and mental handicaps. This is to help with his surgeries, hearing aids and classes. Both fundraisers received GCU Community Matching Funds. Thanks to all who donated.

Carla Gasser

Community Matching Funds

CLAIRTON & MUNHALL, PA

Donations for VA Pittsburgh Health Care System

A Community Matching Funds event was held during the month of November to collect items for the Veterans Hospital specifically for homeless veterans in need. A wish list was available for ideas and parishioners from Ascension Parish in Clairton and St. John's Cathedral in Munhall, PA, along with our local community contributed over \$2,000.00 worth of much needed items. Donations were delivered before Thanksgiving and included personal care items, eyeglasses,



Trish Roberts with a Veterans Hospital representative.

paper products, sanitizers, snacks, soups, a television, socks, gift cards and so much more. The timing was perfect with the holidays and cold winter weather fast approaching.

Trish Roberts



Kim Kolesar presenting a check to Lori Corsi.

Community Matching Funds

MUNHALL, PA

Spaghetti Dinner for Lori Corsi

On Sunday, November 12 a fundraiser was held for Lori Corsi who suffered a major injury while volunteering at an animal rescue facility. She has had 6 surgeries to date with more in the future. This fundraiser assisted with her numerous medical bills and received additional income through the GCU Community Matching Funds program.



Lori Corsi at the fundraiser.

Kim Kolesar

Community Matching Funds

BELLEROSE, NY

Adelphi Breast Cancer and Support Group

All things PINK! On Monday, October 2, over 100 people attended the luncheon at Villa de Agua to increase awareness of breast cancer and to raise funds for research and support services at The Adelphi Outreach Center in Long Island, NY. The group has for many years raised funds for the Adelphi Center, with early beginnings as a garden party to a day long event with hundreds of participants.

Christine Hulak and Ann Kandratino donated pink hats, pink gloves, pink scarves, pink totes, pink tee shirts, pink ribbon key chains, pink nail files and



Rhina & Carol from Adelphi Breast Cancer Center and Marge Russell.

pink socks to show their support. The GCU also showed its solidarity with those affected with breast cancer by approving this as a Community Matching Funds event.

The funds raised at the event along with the GCU Match allowed for over \$6,000.00 to be donated to the organization.

We pray for those who battle cancer: "Dear Lord, please bless them with courage and hope; may all find solace in your loving hands. Please bless them in body, mind and spirit".

Marge Pajer Russell, Christine Hulak & Ann Kandratino

65th Wedding Anniversary of Michael & Caroline Ternoway



Michael & Caroline on their wedding day-65 years ago.

Michael Paul Ternoway and Caroline Louise (Kolano) Ternoway celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary on September 13, 2023. Their children had a lovely celebration with family and friends at the Lamplighter Restaurant in Delmont, PA.

Their children are Joyce Morgan of Ohio, Mary Anne Mariana and Janet Ternoway of North Huntingdon, PA and Michael Ternoway of Clearfield, PA. They have eight grandchildren.

Our parents gave us the ultimate foundation of a family... faith and love. Our family is a circle of strength and love, founded on faith, joined in love, and kept by God.

Congratulations! God Bless You!

Joyce Morgan



Michael & Caroline Ternoway.



Karen & Dan Churach.

Karen & Dan Churach Celebrate 50 Years of Marriage

One of their dearest friends, their “*hanoi*” sister Val flew down from Hawaii and danced a few hulas for them at the dinner. They also had friends from New Zealand, Sydney and Melbourne attend.

Karen enjoys sewing and in fact she made her dress and Dan’s shirt for their 50th anniversary party.

Dan, formerly of Pennsylvania is a huge Philadelphia Phillies & Eagles fan. Unfortunately, he does not have an opportunity to see many of the games live. He did have a recent chance to see an Eagles contest, which was the Sunday Night Game. With the 12-hour

time difference, he watched them live at 8 AM Monday, Perth time. Dan jokes that with the magic of digital downloading and cable TV allowing time-shifting, he can watch any games while sipping his morning coffee and reading the local paper.

Dan has been featured before in the *GCU Magazine* as he has authored several novels. In fact he just completed his 10th book which takes on the issues of AI in journalism (fake news), science and medicine (bogus science) and conspiracy theories. The title of his new book is “Turtles” and is available on Amazon.

Dan hid the newly delivered copies of *Turtles* from Karen so that he could surprise her at their anniversary party by reading the books dedication to her. He had written it in honor of their 50th anniversary and read it to her in front of all of their guests at the party.

Congratulations to Dan and Karen and wishes for many more happy years together.

Two of GCU’s furthest away members Karen & Dan Churach celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at Melville Glades Golf Club along with 50 friends. Dan and Karen have called Australia home for many years but encouraged everyone attending to wear Hawaiian attire. The couple has a fondness for Hawaii where they called home before moving to Australia.

They have been members of the Golf Club for over 20 years to enjoy the good food and good drink. Although neither of them are golfers, they love seeing the kangaroos all over the golf course.



Dan with his new book Turtles.

Cantor Kevin Beres Retires After 50 Years of Service to St. John Chrysostom Church

There are times when “thank you” just doesn’t seem to be sufficient. That was the case on Sunday, September 10 when St. John Chrysostom parish community celebrated the 50-year career and retirement of our beloved cantor, Kevin Beres. As one priest stated Kevin is “one of the best [cantors]” and we could not agree more. Following Divine Liturgy on September 10, Fr. Miron Kerl’-Kmec presented Kevin with the icon *Synaxis of Holy Chanters and Hymnographers*. The parish family then gathered in the social hall for a light lunch and cake and an opportunity to personally thank Kevin for his many years of service.

At the age of 14 Kevin expressed to his mother a desire to sing with the parish cantor Mr. Frank Kostilnik. She encouraged Kevin to talk with the cantor and as they say, the rest is history. Frank Kostilnik welcomed the enthusiastic teenager to the cantor’s podium, and Kevin began singing with him. He joined Michael Roman who chanted the Epistle in Church Slavonic and John “Lefty” Lopata who chanted the “Virus” – the Nicene Creed—in Church Slavonic.

But Kevin’s training began much earlier. He always loved singing along with 45s on his record player. He sang in grade school where he learned to read music. Most importantly, Kevin attended Slavonic Liturgy with his maternal grandmother, Mary Dzura every Sunday and followed along with his prayer book learning to read Church Slavonic. Thus began a devotion to the church that continues to this day.

Kevin cantored his first solo Liturgy on August 6, 1973, and received additional guidance on Holy Days with Lefty Lopata singing along for moral support. Steve Malitak from Holy Spirit, on Pittsburgh’s North Side, cantored funerals and taught Kevin the funeral melodies in both English and Church Slavonic.

A few years later Joe Matvey completed the course at the Metropolitan Cantors Institute and joined Kevin as a cantor for St. John Chrysostom. Joe’s son David would also learn to cantor for the parish. Kevin inherited the role of lead



Deacon Tim Kennedy, Cantor Kevin Beres, Fr. Miron Kerl’-Kmec and Deacon Thomas Donlin.

cantor from Frank Kostilnik. Kevin became cantor at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Greenfield) when Cantor George Gavula became ill. Kevin continued in that role until the closing of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary church. In 2014 when +Fr. Thomas Schaefer was Administrator of St. John the Baptist (South Side) and cantor Joseph Rulgovsky moved away, Kevin assumed the duties of cantor there.

As a student at the University of Pittsburgh, Kevin sang with the University’s Men’s Glee Club, traveling with them to Europe in 1990 for the group’s 100th Anniversary. He also sang with the Heinz Chapel Choir in 1989, traveling with them to California to perform. In 2019 Kevin retired from the Post-Gazette as a mailer, having started with the Pittsburgh Press in 1974. Kevin is also a life-long GCU Member.

In August 2022 Kevin announced his intention to retire in September 2023 as cantor and his wish to train a replacement. For one full year, Kevin trained two men to become cantors. Andrew Prizzi of St. John the Baptist and Eric Williams of St. John Chrysostom assumed the duties of cantor for their respective churches effective September 1. In retirement Kevin will continue to share his gift with the parish community, helping with Holy Days, funerals and an occasional Divine Liturgy, and most importantly offering encouragement and support to his successors. So, while “Thank You” may be somewhat insufficient, our gratitude for Kevin’s commitment to St. John Chrysostom and St. John the Baptist Churches and his 50 years as cantor is truly heartfelt. May God grant Kevin many more blessed, happy and healthy years. Mnohaja Litja!

Elizabeth Harbist | Beaver Constellation Coordinator

Emily Wahal & Tyler Smith Married

GCU Lodge 8344 member Emily Wahal married Tyler Smith on Saturday, November 11, 2023.

The wedding took place at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cathedral in Munhall, PA. The bride's uncle Rev. Stephen Wahal concelebrated the Divine Liturgy and marriage ceremony along with Very Rev. Andrew Deskevich, rector of the Cathedral.

The couple met when they both began working at Chick-fil-A at the Waterfront-Munhall in 2012. They became good friends and look forward to beginning their life together as a married couple.

Emily is the daughter of Barbara & Basil Wahal of Munhall. She is currently the Catering Director at the same Chick-fil-A where the couple met.

Tyler is the son of Pamela Smith of Baldwin, PA. Tyler was laid off from his position at BNY Mellon the week after their wedding. He has multiple job offers and is looking to choose the best option for them moving forward.

The wedding party included Emily's siblings Zack & Maria, sister-in-law Athena, niece Ella and Tyler's brother Aiden Harris.

The couple is planning a honeymoon in Europe in the Spring of 2024.



Tyler & Emily Smith.

May God grant Emily & Tyler Smith many happy and healthy years together!



Our Jubilarians: A Quartet of Harmony II

“Christ plays in ten thousand places, lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his.” This verse from a poem by Gerard Manly Hopkins is a celebration of

God's presence in all things, stating how everything is a reflection of God's glory. It fittingly describes our quartet of Jubilarians. In their 60 years as Sisters of St. Basil, they have reflected God's presence to countless people whose lives intersected with theirs.

Our Jubilarians continue to reflect God's glory as consecrated women being a praying, healing and life-giving presence wherever they are. Each one is active, enthusiastic and committed to the ministry and people she serves.

Father Jerome Botsko, Monastery Chaplain, conveyed this in his homily at the Thanksgiving Divine Liturgy for the Jubilarians. The Gospel reading of the Parable of the Sower in which the seed is the Word of God lent itself to a description of their lives. They represent the good soil in their faithfulness to their vocations. Over the span of their religious lives, they have produced abundant fruit for God's Kingdom. We congratulate them and give thanks to God for them. Their accomplishments are briefly described below.

Sister Margaret Ann Andrako's ministry journey has taken her to parish schools, to Religious Education in the Archeparchy and Passaic Eparchy, to organizational work in the Van Nuys (Phoenix) Eparchy, to director of the House of Prayer, as an administrative assistant at Byzan-

tine Catholic Seminary and then at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pa. For two different terms, in 1990 and in 2015, she was Assistant Provincial. In 2021, Sister Margaret Ann accepted a position in the Diocese of Erie as administrative assistant for the Office of Religious and for St. Mark's Seminary where she currently serves.

Sister Sylvia Burnett's ministry likewise took her to parish schools, then to retreat work and spiritual direction at Mount St. Macrina, the Jesuit Retreat Center in Clinton, OH and at Ecclesia Center in Girard, PA. She also worked on research, planning and development for the Community, served as motherhouse director, and Councilor and director of grounds and facilities. Sister Sylvia continues to unravel the mysteries of broken marriages in her tribunal work for the Erie Diocese where she has served since 2007 as an auditor in the diocesan tribunal.

Sister Susan Harvey devoted 29 years in the parochial elementary schools around the Metropolia serving as teacher and principal. She taught at nearly every grade level from first through eighth. Following her years in the education apostolate, Sister Susan went on to serve in Pastoral Ministry and as assistant director for the Office of Religious Education for the Parma Eparchy. Returning to the education ministry, Sister Susan served on the staff of the newly organized school at St. Gabriel's Parish in Las Vegas, NV. In 2014, Sister returned to the monastery, where she took on the position of Director of Associates while assisting with the Cemetery Ministry and the Card Shop, and various other ministries at the monastery.

Following her initial ministry as a teacher, Sister Barbara Jean Mihalchick moved on to retreat work and spiritual direction at the Retreat Center. In 1989, Sister Barbara Jean was elected to the position of Vicar General in the General

CONTINUED

Sister Christopher Celebrates Diamond Anniversary

A Legend in Her Own Time

There is nothing like a Jubilee to bring Sisters together in joyful celebration. Sunday, May 21st was such a day, for on that day, the Sisters of St. Basil in Uniontown honored Sister Christopher Malcovsky on her Diamond Jubilee of Religious Life.

Like all major events of the Province, the celebration began with a Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving. As is customary on this occasion and before receiving the Holy Eucharist, Sister Christopher renewed her vows. In this, she was joined by the entire community.

In his homily, Archbishop William remarked on the many levels of service and the many different roles that Sister carried out in her 75 years of service. Speaking to the time when he was Bishop of Phoenix, he noted that faced

with the enormous task of managing the apartment complex at St. Stephen's, Sister worked hard to get everything organized, and in so doing engaged others in the parish to help.

Her purpose went beyond practicalities of the buildings, and extended to spiritual counseling when needed. Sister's ministry in the Eparchy of Phoenix for nearly thirty years actually began in 1991, assisting in organizational work in what



was then the Eparchy of Van Nuys.

Sister Christopher spent her beginning years as a Basilian in the teaching ministry. Her abilities led to the assignment as Motherhouse Superior and then as Provincial Superior for two terms. In 1983, she was elected as General Superior, the highest position in the Order based in Rome. In this capacity, she touched the lives of many Sisters, particularly those still living under communism. Even at this date, she is fondly remembered for her courage in visiting those groups of Sisters during her tenure.

After completing her term of office in Rome, Sister Christopher returned to ministry in the Phoenix Eparchy where her responsibilities were mainly in parish ministry at St. Stephen's. In addition,

she also managed the 26 apartments for senior citizens on the parish campus. Besides engaging in direct ministry for the parish, Sister Christopher also organized and coordinated the Bishop's Appeal for the Eparchy, a task which she ably fulfilled over the course of her years in the West. She wholeheartedly dedicated her time, talents and energy to these many significant areas of service.

Though separated by miles, parishioners of St. Stephen Pro-Cathedral and the apartment residents still remember Sister Christopher for her prayerful and calming spirit as well as for her willingness to listen. For many of them, she is just a phone call away.

Because of health issues, Sister Christopher returned to the monastery at Mt. St. Macrina in 2018, assisting part time at the Religious Gift Shop or wherever needed. Presently, Sister Christopher is a resident at Mt. Macrina Manor where she previously offered her services as a volunteer.

At the festive dinner following the Liturgy, Provincial Sister Susan congratulated Sister Christopher and thanked her for her enthusiastic and faithful service. She then read a very special message from the Sisters in Romania who are celebrating their 75th Anniversary as a Province. Sister Christopher holds a special place in their hearts, since it was through her that the Basilian Sisters in Romania became a part of the Order. Truly, one can say that Sister Christopher has been blessed with many happy and spiritually fruitful years, and all of us are grateful to share in this blessing!

Susan McCarthy

Our Jubilarians....

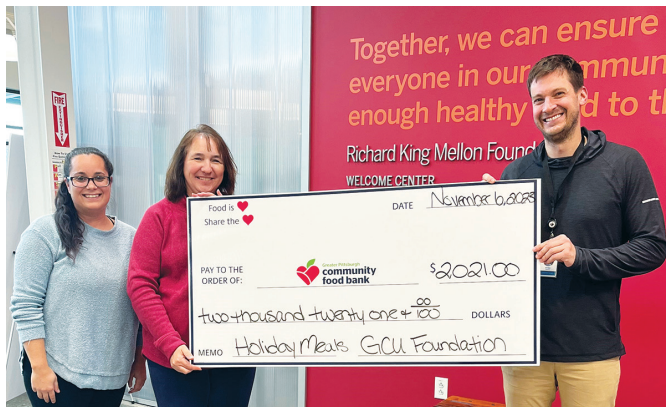
Administration of the Order in Rome, Italy. During this time, Sister traveled to all parts of the Order, but especially to Eastern Europe where Sisters were re-structuring public religious life and ministries. There Sister offered on-going formation sessions with the young professed Sisters. Sister Barbara Jean returned from Rome in 2001. Following a sabbatical year, she joined the House of Prayer staff at Mount St. Macrina where she currently serves as program director and Vocation Director for the Province. Presently, Sister is in her second term as a member of the Provincial Council.

One gift that is not listed above is the gift of listening. For a combined 240 years of religious life, each Sister has listened, empathized, sympathized or just was present as a "reflection of God's glory." That might just be the greatest gift they gave and keep giving to the world.

No Basilian celebration is complete without a special meal. At the festive dinner afterwards, Sister Susan Sisko, Provincial, and all the Sisters offered their warm congratulations to the Jubilarians. May God grant them many more happy, blessed and spiritually fruitful, years!

Susan McCarthy

Charity Golf Event Donation



GCU member Kim Kolesar (center) is shown presenting the proceeds from the GCU's Second Annual Charity Golf Scramble to Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank representatives Maria Montaro, Manager of Corporate and Community Giving and Jordan Hartman, Distributions Manager.

Home Office and Seven Oaks Staff Donates Time for Project Bundle Up



GCU volunteers and kids pose for a photo during the Salvation Army Project Bundle Up shopping event on Saturday, October 21 at the JCPenny in Beaver Valley Mall in Monaca, PA. GCU has participated in the event for several years which allows the kids to choose their own winter outerwear including coats, hats, gloves and boots. All of this is done at no cost to the families.

Holiday Generosity at GCU Home Office



Salvation Army Treasures for Children. GCU Spiritual Advisor Fr. Valerian Michlik, St. Nicholas (Mitchell Valvano) and President/CEO George Juba with the many gifts purchased by the GCU Home Office staff to assist local families participating in the Salvation Army Treasures for Children program. Thanks to all who participated in giving area children a happy Christmas morning.

“Hooray! School’s Open”



Logan & Charlie show their appreciation.

School bells ring and parents and teachers know that preparation is the key to success. Local students were awarded back-to-school gift bags with supplies to support

their school year. With the generosity of the GCU, students received notebooks, pens, pencils, backpacks, folders, binders, crayons, markers, rosaries and books, books that will encourage reading!

Mary Jean expressed her gratitude for her two girls who will be in kindergarten. Jennie marveled at the generosity of the GCU as her two elementary grandsons readied themselves for school. Barbara was delighted that her granddaughter relished all the supplies. Jing Je exclaimed that his college gift bag would assist him on his way to becoming an accountant.

So, thank you GCU for helping many students shine brightly!”

Christine Hulak



Volunteers shown with some of the items.

Donation to Fr. George’s Closet

Binghamton, NY. On October 30, 2023, a GCU GoGive grant went toward the purchase of children’s, women’s and men’s undergarments, hygiene products and socks. These items were donated to the “Father George’s Closet” at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Roman Catholic Church in Binghamton, NY. The deceased Father George Sandor (his picture is on the back wall) was a Bi-Ritual, Roman Catholic/Byzantine Catholic priest at the church, to whom this project is dedicated.

The items were given out to needy and underprivileged people in the greater Binghamton area. Thank you GCU for your generosity!

Pam Sufilita

Annual Walk



Walkers braving the rain.

Seaford Long Island, NY. St. Vincent de Paul held its annual walk on September 30, in Cedar Park. It was a tough day. Over 1,000 people were expected to be at the walk. The GCU helped the walk by providing water and refreshments. Due to the weather many people did not participate while others like myself stayed for a while but the rain and wet grounds were difficult. St. Raphael’s, part of St. Vincent de Paul, raised around \$2,000.⁰⁰. Despite the inclement weather, a nice amount of money was raised.

Marge Russell

Children Building Better Bodies & Brains

The children of NJ are getting their bodies and brains in fitness shape. These young athletes are building the basics of movement while learning to control their bodies. Activities focus on speed, agility and coordination.

Also included are running drills, yoga stretching and low organization sport games. We also incorporate Brain Fitness with trivia questions. The children are rewarded with healthy snacks, awards and stickers.

We Thank the GCU Home Office for making the Go-Give Grant available to make our NJ children healthy and fit.

Marilyn Cofnuk



Marilyn Cofnuk with the children getting an energized workout.

Corporate Community Events Coordinators



Casey Bush
Corporate Community
Events Coordinator
Western PA



Volunteers at the Project Bundle Up shopping event.

Project Bundle Up. GCU employees volunteered to assist local children find winter coats, hats, gloves and boots as a part of WTAE and The Salvation Army's Project Bundle Up. Volunteers greeted the children bright and early on Saturday, October 21 at JC Penny in the Beaver Valley Mall. It was a wonderful morning of giving back to the local community.

Sight & Sound Trip—The Miracle of Christmas. A bus trip was held Saturday, November 4 to the Sight & Sound Theatres in Lancaster, PA. GCU members and guests enjoyed a performance of the Miracle of Christmas. The singing, dancing and the beautiful story presented transported everyone back in time. The live animals were an added bonus and brought the wonderful show to life. It was amazing to see this live performance and enactment of the Nativity Story.



Casey Bush making donation to the American Legion Post 641.

Veterans Day Check Donation. The Baden American Legion, Post 641, was responsible for putting together the 2023 Veterans Day Parade. The parade was held in Beaver, PA, on Friday, November 10. In an effort to honor all past, current, and former members of all branches of the armed forces, and to support The American Legion, GCU made a contribution to Post 641 to assist with the parade. Thank you for your service!

The Center in Midland Volunteer Activity.

On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, GCU helped serve Thanksgiving Dinner to over 80 Pre-K through 12 grade students and their families. The Center has a free after-school program every Tuesday and Thursday evening where they serve students dinner and do activities. It was a great evening of service to the community!



Midland Thanksgiving Dinner.



Sight & Sound trip to Lancaster, PA.

Upcoming 2024 Events

Topgolf Outing
Saturday, January 13 2-4 PM
Topgolf, Bridgeville, PA

AvalancheXpress Tubing
Saturday, March 2
Meadville, PA

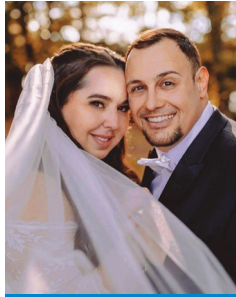
American Red Cross Blood Drive
Monday, March 25 12-5:30 PM
Seven Oaks CC, Beaver, PA

*Dates and times are subject to change.
Visit GCUusa.com for more information
on all these events
or contact Casey Bush at
cbush@GCUusa.com or call 724-683-3927.*



Melissa Jaggars
 Corporate Community
 Events Coordinator
 Eastern PA,
 NY, NJ, MD, MA, CT, DE, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL

Can you believe 2023 is almost over? This year we enjoyed some great events together and I'm so excited for 2024: even more events in more areas! Not only will I get to enjoy planning (and attending) some great events with GCU, but I'll be spending the year letting everyone know my married name of Melissa Jaggars!



Melissa & Jeremy.

Binghamton CC Daria Shierly's daughter also got married in September (one week after I did) along with Laure Marcin's niece! (Laure is GCU's Scranton/Wilkes-Barre CC).

A big welcome to Stephen Bachovin, GCU's new Constellation Coordinator for Philadelphia! Stephen is new to the CC role, but he is no stranger to GCU! I'm so happy to have you on board!

This Valentine's Day marks 132 years since GCU was founded in Wilkes-Barre, PA. We have several great events to celebrate GCU Founders' Day to start off 2024 strong.

Please be sure to reach out to me if you're interested in joining GCU's member email blast list because we may have a couple of surprises in store for 2024 and you won't want to miss out—also, be sure to find us on Facebook @gcuofusa.

I hope to see both new and familiar faces out there in 2024!

Sight & Sound Show. On Saturday, November 4, members from GCU's Binghamton, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton Constellations attended the Miracle of Christmas show at Sight & Sound Theaters in Lancaster, PA and a buffet lunch at Bird-In-Hand. Next Sight & Sound Trip: Daniel at Sight & Sound on Saturday, August 10, 2024 with MARTZ Bus Co. and lunch at the newly rebuilt Hershey Farm Buffet!

There is also a Long Island/NJ/Philadelphia area bus trip to Sight & Sound scheduled for Saturday, August 24, 2024.

CONTINUED



Sight & Sound trip to Lancaster, PA.



Upcoming 2024 Events

Northeast, PA

Wilkes-Barre Penguins vs Lehigh Valley Phantoms

Saturday, January 6 6:05 PM
 Mohegan Sun Arena
 Wilkes-Barre Township, PA

Snow Tubing

Saturday, February 10 10 AM
 Blue Mountain Resort, Palmerton, PA

Skyzone Trampoline Park

Friday, February 16 6:30-8:30 PM
 Skyzone Trampoline Park, Pittston, PA

GCU Founders' Day Celebration

Saturday, February 17 12 NOON
 River Grille, Wilkes-Barre, PA

GCU Founders' Day Breakfast Buffet

Sunday, February 18 time TBA
 Scranton Radisson, Scranton, PA

Kenny Wayne Shepherd Dinner & Show

Tuesday, March 12 7:30 PM
 Kirby Center, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Philadelphia, PA

GCU Founders' Day Buffet

Sunday, February 11 2 PM
 Randi's Restaurant, Philadelphia, PA

Binghamton, NY

Turning Stone Casino Bus Trip

Wednesday, April 17
 Verona, NY

Hudson Valley, NY

GCU Founders' Day Celebration Cheesecake Factory & Comedy Show

Thursday, February 15 5:30 PM
 Palisades Mall, West Nyack, NY

Long Island, NY

GCU Founders' Day Celebration Luncheon

Wednesday, February 14 time TBA
 Maggiano's Little Italy, Garden City, NY

New Jersey-State Theater of NJ Events

Dancing with the Stars: Live!

Friday, January 26

The Canine Stars Stunt Dog Show

Sunday, April 7

The Price Is Right: Live!

Friday, April 12

Connecticut

Monster Jam

Saturday, March 23 1-5 PM
 XL Center, Hartford, CT

Virginia

GCU Gatherings

Sunday, March 10 & Saturday, March 16 time TBA
 Madama Butterfly, Fairfax, VA

CONTINUED

Kalahari Trip. GCU members had a great first overnight trip to Kalahari Poconos, which is the third largest indoor water park in the US. Members enjoyed the 220,000-square-foot water park Friday, November 17, as well as after checkout on Saturday, November 18. There was something for everyone: lazy river, wave pool, jacuzzi, kiddie areas and water slides galore! If you missed this trip, be sure to come for our next overnight trip on Friday, August 2, 2024. Participants will be able to enjoy both Kalahari's indoor and outdoor swimming areas!



The Bannworth and Lusk families.



The group in front of the Kalahari Christmas tree.



Upcoming 2024 Events

Florida

GCU Founders' Day Lunch Buffet

Friday, February 23 11:30 AM

Blue Matisse

Located inside the InterContinental at Doral Miami

Spring Training Baseball Game

NY Mets vs St. Louis Cardinals

Saturday, February 24 1:10 PM

Clover Field, Port St. Lucie

Spring Training Baseball Game

NY Yankees vs. Toronto Blue Jays

Sunday, February 25 1:05 PM

George Steinbrenner Field, Tampa

Tickets to ALL events must be purchased in advance.

Visit GCUusa.com for more information on all these events or contact Melissa Jaggars at mcohen@GCUusa.com or call 878-207-2327.

Constellation Coordinator Opening. GCU still has several Constellation Coordinator opportunities for members living on the East Coast.

Want to plan fun, exciting events in the NJ area? Contact me to find out more information about becoming a GCU Constellation Coordinator for New Jersey.

Invested in Education



2023-2024 GCU Scholarship Programs

Applications for scholarships **MUST** be completed and submitted online in one session by 11:59 PM EST on December 31, 2023

GCUusa.com

Constellations



Albina and Joe Senko enjoyed dancing.

Beaver & Pittsburgh Constellation

Captains Dinner Cruise on the Gateway Clipper

In spite of a chilly, rainy Saturday (October 14), the GCU group met on the dock of the Monongahela River in Pittsburgh to board the Duchess, a mid-size sailing vessel and part of the Gateway Clipper Fleet. Dinner, dancing and a bit of sight-seeing along the three rivers of the city was the plan for the evening. Misty rain and some fog added to the ambiance of a spooky fall boat ride with the lights of the city in the background. Everyone enjoyed the cruise, especially Joe & Albina Senko. Joe shared that he and his wife have done many cruises on the Pittsburgh rivers, but this was by far the most enjoyable. He and Albina, married 68 years, were caught slow dancing to the tunes. After all those years, their romance still has that spark!

Elizabeth J. Harbist | Beaver Constellation Coordinator



John Harbist was easy to spot!

UPCOMING BEAVER CONSTELLATION EVENTS

Adult No-Tap Bowling Tournament

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Bowlers report by 2:30 PM

Dinner 6 PM - Cash Bar

\$40 Members

\$50 Non-Members

Bowling followed by Dinner at Seven Oaks

Center Lanes

3084 Brodhead Road, Aliquippa, PA

Seven Oaks Country Club

132 Lisbon Road, Beaver, PA

Contact: Elizabeth Harbist at 412-913-1446 or etharbist@yahoo.com for more information.



A few of the members and guests who enjoyed the Captains Dinner Cruise.



Seneca Niagara Casino Bus Trip

Monday, June 17 thru Tuesday June 18, 2024

2 Pickup & dropoff locations:

Chrysostom BCC, Greenfield, PA at 6 AM

GCU Home Office, Beaver, PA at 7 AM

GCU Members (per person)

\$294 Single Room

\$202 Double Room

\$198 Triple Room (only 2 beds)

Non-Members (per person)

\$369 Single Room

\$277 Double Room

\$273 Triple Room (only 2 beds)

Cost includes transportation, overnight accommodations, \$50 free slot play and \$20 dining dollars.

Travel by Lenzner Coach

Overnight accommodations at Seneca Niagara Casino

Reserve your spot ASAP-expected to fill up quickly!

Contact: Elizabeth Harbist at 412-913-1446 or etharbist@yahoo.com for more information.

Laurel Highlands Constellation

Cake Decorating Class

On Saturday, October 7 members attended a cake decorating class held at the Cambria County Public Library in Johnstown, PA. The class was instructed by Lambcakes Bakery. All enjoyed the event.



Cake decorating class showing off their beautiful cakes.

Ornament Concert

On Saturday, November 18, twenty-five GCU members and guests attended and enjoyed Ornament, The Music of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra at the Arcadia Theater in Windber, PA.



Ornament concert goes.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing

On Saturday, November 25, a total of 8 GCU members volunteered to ring the bell for the Salvation Army at the Galleria Food Court in Johnstown PA. The GCU Constellation was also able to provide a \$250.00 donation to the local Salvation Army for their Christmas Programs.



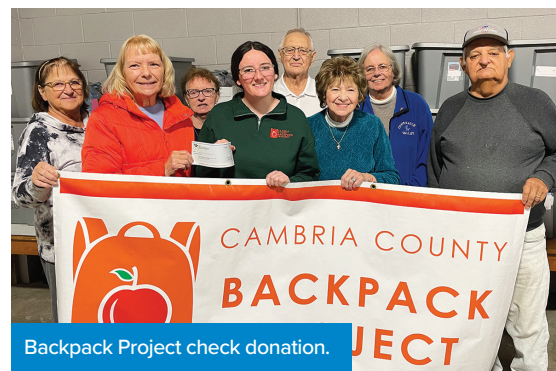
Manning the kettle is Bill & Georgene Dubovecky, Kathy Russin and Mary Dubay.



Georgia Lehman is shown presenting Major Kathleen Waddell a donation to the kettle drive.

Cambria County Backpack Project

On Monday, November 20, seven volunteers assisted the Cambria County Backpack Project, located at The Learning Lamp in



Johnstown, PA. Volunteers helped pack weekend meals and snacks for school students in Cambria County. A total of 403 bags were packed for the week of November 27. In addition, a check for \$250.00 was presented to project coordinator Codi Norman. The Laurel Highlands Constellation's next volunteer event for this organization will be April 1, 2024 and we will be looking for eight (8) volunteers.

Family Christmas Party

The first ever GCU Laurel Highlands Constellation Family Christmas Party was held Saturday, December 2, at The Mirage at Asiago's in Johnstown, PA

Members enjoyed a buffet dinner, cash bar and an evening of fun with a Santa Exchange. In addition, members brought personal hygiene items (toothpaste, toothbrush, shower gel,

etc.) that were donated to the local Women's Help Center.



Members and guests at the Christmas dinner.



Women's Help Center items.

Thank You

As 2023 draws to a close, I would like to thank the Board of Directors and staff of the Home Office for affording me the opportunity to serve as a parish and constellation coordinator. This year has been a challenging and learning experience for all of us. I am thankful to those GCU members and guests who participated in the events and volunteer opportunities I organized this year and I look forward to providing different activities in 2024. I hope to provide a detailed calendar of events for the Laurel Highlands Constellation in the February *GCU Magazine*. Thank you and have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

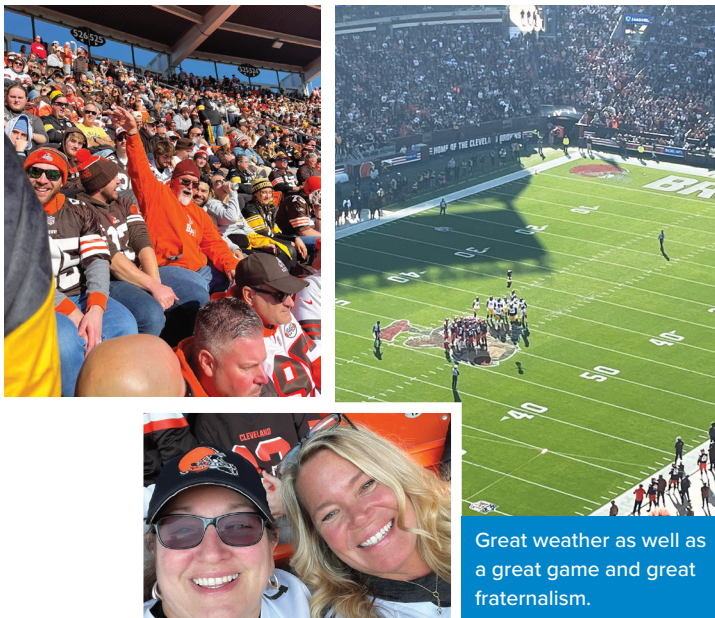
Georgia Lehman | Laurel Highlands Constellation Coordinator

Northeast Ohio Constellation

GCU Day at Cleveland Browns vs Pittsburgh Steelers Game

GCU members and guests enjoyed a thrilling finish as the Cleveland Browns won a tightly matched contest with a game-winning field goal with 2 seconds remaining on a gorgeous, sunny autumn afternoon by the shores of Lake Erie. The enthusiastic crowd was treated to a flyover by the Air National Guard during the National Anthem and many, many people made a day of it as tailgaters were in the stadium vicinity from dawn's early light.

Dean Scouloukas | Northeast Ohio Constellation Coordinator



Great weather as well as a great game and great fraternalism.

Shannon Valenti and Dawn Myers.



Quad-Parish Picnic.

Philadelphia Constellation

Quad-Parish Picnic

On Sunday, September 17, 2023 OLPH, HT, St. Mary's in Trenton, and St. Nicholas in Roebing came together for a Quad-Parish Picnic. Everyone enjoyed food, fun & games at this wonderful family event.

Stephen Bachovic | Philadelphia Constellation Coordinator



Parish Matching Funds



Volunteers of all ages helped with the fundraising dinner.

Ascension Byzantine Catholic Church CLAIRTON, PA

Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser

A spaghetti dinner fundraiser was held on October 15 at Ascension of Our Lord Byzantine Church to benefit the parish. On the day of the dinner, students from local high schools and colleges volunteered to serve and bus tables. A basket raffle, gift card raffle and strip tickets were available for purchase and a single serving bake sale had a wide variety of homemade cakes and cookies for guests to choose from. Nicholas Tomkowicz provided dinner music during the event. The church was open for guided tours. Cindy Schlessinger provided a history of the church and the icons. This was also a GCU Parish Matching Funds event.

Trish Roberts | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

FLUSHING, MI

Ethnic Dinner

On Friday, September 23, an ethnic dinner of pierogi, sausage & sauerkraut, halushki, cucumbers and nut roll was served to 150 people. GCU members, Knight of Columbus Council member Paul Gojdic and fellow parishioners served up a delicious dinner. Music and visiting was enjoyed by all. The event received GCU Parish Matching Funds to double its financial success for the parish.

Pat Chartier | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Landon Zimmerman.

St. George Byzantine Catholic Church

BAY CITY, MI

Annual Stuffed Cabbage Dinner

The 54th Annual Stuffed Cabbage Dinner took place on Sunday, October 29 at St. George BC Church in Bay City. The delicious cabbage rolls provided smiling faces all round. With old and new parishioners volunteering to help serve and mingle with the community as they ate a wonderful fall dinner. Thanks to GCU for the Parish Matching Funds for this event.

Anne Thompson | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Check donation made to Very Reverend James Batcha by Parish Coordinator Anne Thompson.

Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church

ANAHEIM, CA

Anaheim Craft and Vintage Fair

On Saturday, September 16 approximately 30 vendors rented booths to sell craft and vintage items; while the parish sold food and baked items in the parish hall. Most parishioners pitched in to help out and many people from the community attended this GCU Parish Matching Funds event.

Deacon Gregory Gath | Byzantine Parish coordinator



Volunteers who spent many hours organizing the event.



Fr. Vitalii Stashkevych accepting check from Arleen Jama.

Ss. Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church

BRADDOCK, PA

Check Presentation

GCU Parish Coordinator Arleen Jama, presented Fr. Vitalii Stashkevych, pastor of Ss. Peter & Paul Church with their \$3,000.00 GCU Matching Funds check from the multiple raffles that were held throughout this past year.

To all those who contributed, volunteered and supported our cause, please accept our sincerest thanks.

Once again, thank you to GCU for your unwavering support. We are all truly fortunate to have GCU standing alongside us.

Arleen Jama | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church

DUNELLEN, NJ

Pierogi Fundraiser

St. Nicholas parish with the help of parishioners, family, friends and the local community were able to make 270 dozen pierogis. The event continues to create a sense of community which allows for a successful fundraiser. The event also received GCU Parish Matching Funds to supplement the income earned by the event.

Margot Gumerlock | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Youth volunteers help make pierogi.

SS Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church

DUQUESNE, PA

Spaghetti Dinner & Check Presentation

The Parish Club of SS Peter & Paul held their annual Spaghetti Dinner on Sunday, September 17, 2023. Patrons could also purchase tickets to win a variety of auction



Mary Ann Dowler (left) and her sister GCU member Arlene Polivka (right) selling raffle tickets.

baskets and a 50/50 raffle. The dinner was a wonderful opportunity to socialize and enjoy a pleasant afternoon.

GCU Byzantine Parish Coordinator Connie Kacey Smith, presented a \$3,000.00 GCU Parish Matching Funds check to Father David Abernethy, administrator of Ss. Peter & Paul Church. The check matched the income from the Parish Club's Spaghetti Dinner.

Thank you to the GCU for their support to our Byzantine Churches. Their Matching Funds make a huge difference in our fundraising efforts.

Connie Kacey Smith | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Parish Coordinator Connie Kacey Smith presenting check to Fr. David Abernethy.

Ss. Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church

ENDICOTT, NY

Shoe Drive Fundraiser

For over 4 months, gently worn, new & used shoes, sneakers, sandals, boots, and other footwear were collected, sorted, rubber-banded together, and put in clear plastic bags. With the help of Rev. Fr. Roman Isayskyy, Mark, Miriam and Luke Isayskyy a truck was loaded with 800 pairs of shoes on a rainy Saturday morning. A GCU Parish Matching Funds check was received for \$322.40.



Bagging shoes for pickup.

Daria Shierly | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Christ the Bridegroom Monastery

BURTON, OH

Bridegroom's Banquet

The Bridegroom's Banquet is the annual fundraising dinner for the nuns of Christ the Bridegroom Monastery, in the Eparchy of Parma. This year's event took place on Saturday, November 4. The nuns premiered a video about obedience at the event entitled "Be It Done unto Me: Reflections on Obedience." Almost three hundred people were in attendance and the nuns well exceeded their fundraising goal. Thank you to the GCU for the additional funding through the Parish Matching Funds program.



Mother Gabriella | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Joseph Byzantine Catholic Church

BRECKSVILLE, OH

Reverse Raffle

On Saturday, September 9, 2023 about 200 parishioners and friends enjoyed an evening of food, fun and cash prizes and helped raise much needed funds for the church. Thanks to the GCU for the Parish Matching Funds.

Nancy Fredrick | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



The large crowd at the Reverse Raffle event.



Check presentation.

St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

HERMITAGE, PA

2023 Chinese Auction (46th Annual)

On Sunday, October 8, over 275 people attended the parish's 46th Annual Chinese Auction. Tickets were purchased and placed in buckets for 175+ gift baskets, 14+ door prizes and 12 grand prizes. Refreshments and sandwiches were sold and a 50/50 raffle was held. With tremendous help from parish volunteers and the SMART team the parish realized a net profit of \$11,548.⁵⁶. A special thank you to all of the parishioners and local businesses who donated items and gift cards for the gift baskets and the GCU for the Parish Matching Funds.

Parish Coordinator Bill Dzuricko presented pastor Fr. Kevin Marks with the GCU Matching Funds check. In addition to altar servers from the Gibbons and Sieracki Families, pictured from left to right are, Alyssa Vasil, Frank Wahal, Joan Walker, Deacon Candidate Dr. Randy Tomko, Fr. Kevin Marks, Bill Dzuricko and Lucy Mallick.

Bill Dzuricko | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Annual Rummage Sale items.

St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

BUTLER, PA

Ladies Guild Rummage Sale

On Friday, September 29, St. John BC Church's annual Rummage Sale event brought in over \$3,000.⁰⁰ for the church. Ethnic food, a 50/50 raffle and lots of gently used items all combined for a most successful sale. Thank you to all who made the sale a success and the GCU for the Parish Matching Funds.

John Pocchiari | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church

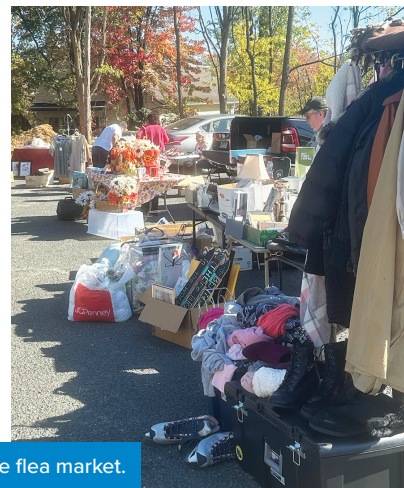
EAST BRUNSWICK, NJ

Flea Market

After several rain outs Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in East Brunswick was able to hold their flea market on October 28 and November 4. Fr. Korostil, Pani and their children along with members of the parish worked hard to make it a great success. Thank you to all who supported this event.



Items for the flea market.



Maryann Szticza | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Herminie Car Show.

Herminie Car Show

On Saturday, September 9, a car, truck and bike show was held on the streets of Herminie. A parish sponsored food booth in front of the church sold haluski, pirohi and baked goods and pick-up orders were available in the church hall. Close to \$1,000.⁰⁰ of profit was made.

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

HERMINIE, PA

Irwin Fall Craft Show

This year the Irwin Fall Craft Show was held on September 16 on Main Street and St. Mary Church had a booth selling candles.



Irwin Craft Show.

St. Agnes Vendor Fair

On Saturday, November 4, St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church held their annual salad bar lunch and vendor fair at which St. Mary was one of the vendors selling handmade candles.



Homemade candles at St. Agnes Fair.

Pre-Thanksgiving Haluski and Pirohy Sale

The Church Ladies sold haluski, pirohy and kolachy for Thanksgiving.

All of these events were eligible to receive GCU Parish Matching Funds.

Michael J. Pochan | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church

NORTH SIDE PITTSBURGH, PA

Bakeless Bake Sale and 50/50 Raffle

In October Holy Ghost parish kicked off fund raising for their Tower Bell project. A bakeless bake sale and a 50/50 raffle was held for Thanksgiving. Both events received GCU Parish Matching Funds.

Barbara Stecko | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Ed & Mary Francis Spontak selling tickets.



Check presentation to Fr. Miron by Parish Coordinator John Niskach from the Steeler Tailgate event.

St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church

PITTSBURGH, PA

Steeler Tailgate Party

The 20th Annual Steeler Tailgate Party was held on Sunday, November 19. Over 140 people enjoyed watching the Cleveland Browns take on the Steelers on 3 big screen tv's. There was lots of food and plenty of raffle baskets to benefit many of projects at St. John Chrysostom Church. Thanks to GCU for the Parish Matching Funds that increased the income form the event.

John Niskach | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Sacred Heart Byzantine Catholic Church

LIVONIA, MI

Annual Luncheon & Raffle

The Ladies of Sacred Heart Church held their annual Luncheon and Raffle on November 5, 2023. The theme for this year's event was "Gratitude Gala." They were joined by women from their own parish of Sacred Heart plus friends from St. Basil the Great in Sterling Heights, MI; St. Nicholas in Clinton Township, MI and St. Stephen in Allen Park, MI and other friends for an afternoon of good food, fellowship, and a chance to win prizes.

Marianne Nagrant | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



GCU member Irene Nosakowski checking to make sure that the baskets were in the proper order. GCU members Margie Swanney and her mom, Suzanne Swanney were among those in attendance.

St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

LYNDORA, PA



Ladies Guild President Stephanie Dano and Secretary Liz Pocchiari are shown presenting the GCU Matching Funds check from the rummage sale to Fr. Radko Blichar.

Shrine of Mariapoch BURTON, OH

Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Mariapoch

On Sunday, August 20 the annual pilgrimage to the Our Lady of Mariapoch Shrine took place. The pilgrimage attracts several hundred people for services, confession, religious gifts and food. The Shrine relies solely on donations. Thanks to the GCU for the Parish Matching Funds for the event.

Deacon Gregory Loya



Annual Pilgrimage.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Eastern European Food Festival

The OLPH Food Festival was held on a beautiful warm sunny Saturday, November 4. Favorite foods offered include kielbasa, holupki, pirohi, haluski and borscht. Six varieties of kolachi, as well as homemade-baked goods, cakes and cookies were also available. Church tours were also offered. Approximately 150 guests attended the event. Thanks to GCU for the Parish Matching Funds.

Joseph Bernard | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Eastern European Food Festival.



Deacon Lawrence Worlinsky, Fr. Andrii Dumnych and John Barilla.

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church SWOYERSVILLE, PA

St. Nicholas Piggie/Holupki Sale & Check Presentation

The St. Nicholas BC Church Piggie/Holupki sale was a three-day event that started with the preparation of the cabbage and onions. Day two was preparing the meat, stuffing the cabbage and cooking a good portion of the orders. Parishioners were able to pick up their orders on the second day. The orders received from the public were prepared, cooked and picked up on the third day which was October 28.

A GCU Matching Funds check for \$2,683.³⁷ from the event was presented to Deacon Lawrence Worlinsky and Father Andrii Dumnych by GCU Byzantine Parish Coordinator John Barilla.

John Barilla | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



The volunteers who made the piggie/holupki sale a success.





October Fest event.

St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

MERRILLVILLE, IN

Bake Sale

Altar & Rosary Society of St. Michael BC Church held a bake sale on October 14 to raise funds for Altar cloths and liturgical supplies.

St. Apostolate October Fest

On Sunday, October 15, St. Nicholas Apostolate raised funds for parish shut-ins and community outreach.

Jeanne Lazor | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

HILLSBOROUGH, NJ

Tricky Tray Event

St. Mary Church hosted their annual Tricky Tray event on Friday, October 6. Many church parishioners donated items and volunteered to make this a fantastic and successful event which was spearheaded by long time parishioner, Marge Pavol. Great prizes, tons of fun and delicious food was enjoyed by everyone!

John Kichura | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



The many baskets that made the Tricky Tray event a success.



Check presentation to Fr. Roman by Walter Rogal.

St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church

NORTHERN CAMBRIA, PA

Fall Basket Auction & Check Presentation

The Fall Basket Auction was held the weekend of October 8th and 9th at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church. Everyone had a good time getting together for this annual event, which also received GCU Parish Matching

Funds. Fr. Roman is shown receiving the Matching Funds check with Walter Rogal. Thank you GCU for all your help and generosity.

Sandy Ferrance | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Baskets at the fall auction.

Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church

JESSUP, PA

Annual Stuffed Chicken Breast Dinner

Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church held its 16th Annual Stuffed Chicken Breast Dinner on November 5, 2023. Thanks to all the help and donations from GCU members, parishioners and local businesses, 444 people were served takeout and drive thru meals. In addition, 15 dinners were donated to the senior high rise center and needy families in the community. This was a GCU Parish Matching Funds event. THANK YOU ALL!

Michaela Mancak | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



From left to right: Gregory Dick, John Wasilnak, Richard Covaleski, Donna Pegula, Michaela Mancak (parish coordinator), Rev. John Cigan (pastor), Tim Keller, Crystal & Gregory Vladika, Richard Maybock and Ronald Mancak.



The crowd at the Carpatho-Rusyn Celebration.

St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church

UNIONTOWN, PA

41st Annual Carpatho-Rusyn Celebration

On Sunday October 29, St. John the Baptist Parish in Uniontown held their 41st Annual Carpatho-Rusyn Celebration. It was a great success. Everyone enjoyed great food, music, crafts and baked goods. Childrens events and ethnic demonstrations were also available for all to enjoy. The event was a GCU Parish Matching Funds event.

Stephen Petruska Jr. | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

WEIRTON, WV

Check Presentation

Byzantine Parish Coordinator Marilyn Charnie presented Fr. Brian Norrell with a \$3,000.00 GCU Parish Matching Funds check from the Lenten fundraisers. St. Mary Church is very grateful for all that the GCU does to support the Byzantine Catholic Churches.

Marilyn Charnie | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Marilyn Charnie presenting check to Fr. Brian Norrell.

Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church

HOMER GLEN, IL

Super Bowl Pool

One of the first fundraiser held each year at Annunciation parish is the 100 block pool for the Super Bowl. Prizes are awarded for the first 3 quarter winners and the final score.

Basketball March Madness

The March Madness fundraiser allows for 64 participants. Each receives a randomly drawn team for the tournament. Prizes are awarded to the final four team "owners" left at the end of the tournament. Thanks to GCU for the Parish Matching Funds for both of these events.

Ken Krown | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

MCADOO, PA

Spaghetti Dinner

St. Michael BC Church held a spaghetti dinner fundraiser on Sunday, November 12 for their parish feast day. This was a Parish Matching Funds event for the church and a fun social event for all.

Margaret Sheeto | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Volunteers help with the dinner.



St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

POTTSTOWN, PA

St. John's Chinese Auction

On Friday, October 20, the annual Chinese Auction fundraiser for St. John Church was held. All gifts and food for Chinese Auction were donated. This was a GCU Parish Matching Funds event. Many thanks to the GCU for the \$3,000.⁰⁰ match. The GCU does much good for this and many other parishes with their support. Please consider the GCU for your life insurance and annuity needs.

Alex Riebe | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Ss. Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church

PORTAGE, PA



Fr. Roman and his family.

Ethnic Festival

The annual Ethnic Festival at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Portage was held on Sunday, July 9 and was open to the public. The parish hosted hundreds of people who came to hear the bands and

enjoy lots of delicious ethnic food. This was a GCU Parish Matching Funds event.

Deacon Daniel F. Perich | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Theresa Byzantine Catholic Church

ST. PETERSBURG, FL

Oktoberfest 2023

The annual parish Oktoberfest at St. Theresa BC Church was held on Sunday, October 29 for adults and children alike. All enjoyed the fellowship and the kids enjoyed wearing their Halloween costumes.



Parish children in costumes.

It was a great way to raise funds for the parish. Thanks to the GCU Parish Matching Funds program for the additional boost to the income from the event.

(Charles) Allan Hunt | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

GCU Supported Parish Events



All ages enjoyed the Thank You dinner.

Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church PITTSBURGH (OAKLAND), PA

Volunteer Thank You Dinner

On Sunday, November 19, Holy Spirit Parish thanked all volunteers with a catered dinner for their time and talents this year. Projects included landscaping, plumbing, painting, bookkeeping, fundraising and cleaning. It was a festive parish gathering and we thank the GCU Parish Social Grant for providing the funds!

Catherine Warhola | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Ss. Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church BRADDOCK, PA

Blessing of Thanksgiving Bread/ Coffee Social/Suprise Visit Bishop Nil

On Sunday, November 19, the last coffee/donut social of the year and annual blessing of Thanksgiving bread took place at Ss. Peter & Paul Parish. The event was made extra special with a visit from Bishop Nil of the Ukraine. The visit brought together Fr. Vitalii, who hails from Ukraine and Bishop Nil—they concelebrated a beautiful Liturgy.



Fr. Vitalii and Bishop Nil.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to GCU for their unwavering support throughout the year. Their contributions made numerous enjoyable parish socials possible and of course, Fr. Vitalii indulged in his favorite cream-filled donuts as always. Here's to continued cherished moments and community gatherings!

Arleen Mae Jama | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church SCRANTON, PA

Parish Meeting

On October 8, a meeting was held with Fr. Leonard to discuss ideas for funding for the Church. Refreshments were provided through the GCU Parish Social Grant program.

Barbara Shimkus | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church

LORAIN, OH

Parish Picnic

St. Nicholas Parish held their annual parish picnic on Sunday, September 10. The parish GCU members volunteered their time to play games with the children in attendance and provided prizes for the winning kickball team, and egg drop race winners as well as participants who challenged their skills at corn hole throwing and the bucket challenge. Afterwards everyone was treated

to an ice cream sundae bar, which has become somewhat of a staple throughout the last few



years. This year's picnic was held at the church hall where everyone enjoyed good food, music, raffles and above all fellowship. Thank you to the GCU Parish Social Grant for the financial support.

Anne Dillon | Byzantine Parish Coordinator
Article by Kathy Knick

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

HERMINIE, PA

Patronal Feast of St. Mary

The Feast of the church's patron, the Theotokos Mary, was held Sunday, October 1, 2023 in the church hall. Family members and friends of the church shared in this special day. The brunch was catered by Lunch Ladies on Wheels from Irwin, PA. The GCU Parish Social Grant program provided financial support for the event.



Michael J. Pochan | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church

HOMER GLEN, IL

Esther Thomas Party

A party was held for our oldest parishioner and GCU member who was moving to Florida. We wish her good health and happiness in her new home.

Saint Thomas Adventure Hunt

Easter eggs were hidden on the church grounds and after collecting the eggs the children received a gift and treat bag.

Agape Luncheon

On Sunday, November 26 an after church social luncheon was held. The event was well attended.

All three events received funding from the GCU Parish Social Grant program.

Ken Crown | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

OLON, OH

Chicken Paprikas Dinner

On August 27, the first ethnic food event hosted by St. John in Solon took place in a very long time. The dinner was well attended by parishioners and local community supporters. A beautiful day of comradery was provided by several new parishioners who contributed their cooking skills. Thanks to all who supported this event and to the GCU Parish Social Grant program for providing the financial assistance.

Daryl Hannes | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

AMBRIDGE, PA

Blessed Theotokos Feast Day Luncheon

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church celebrated the Blessed Theotokos with a Feast Day luncheon on Sunday, October 1. Father Geoffrey Mackey celebrated Divine Liturgy with church members from St. Mary and St. George parishes attending. After Divine Liturgy there was a delicious luncheon with chicken, sandwiches, a variety of salads and of course cake and desserts.

Kathy Kapaldo | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Luncheon Group.



Fr. Geoff & Tom Klacik.

St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

POTTSTOWN, PA

School of Religion/ECF First Day of Class

The students of the ECF/School of Religion program at St. John Church in Pottstown had their first day of class on Sunday, September 10, 2023. The GCU Parish Social Grant supplied special treats (donuts and water) for the students and catechists. There are 24 students and 18 catechists involved with the program. Rev. Nicholas de Prospero is pastor at the parish. Fran Petro and Alex Riebe are ECF/SOR co-coordinators and GCU members.

Alex Riebe | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church

BALTIMORE, MD

Ice Cream Social

On July 9, 2023, Patronage Church in Baltimore parishioners celebrated the 4th of July with a parish ice cream social. The ice cream was a welcome relief for a hot summer Baltimore day. Many thanks to the GCU Parish Social Grant for providing some “treats” for the celebration.

Veteran’s Day Celebration

On November 12, 2023, Patronage Church celebrated a Divine Liturgy for the intention of parish living and deceased military veterans. Afterwards, parishioners enjoyed both red velvet and chocolate cake, along with ice cream. We thank all veterans for their service to our country! Many thanks, as always, to the GCU Parish Social Grant for providing the cake and ice cream.



50th Anniversary Celebration

On October 1, 2023, a celebration took place for the church’s 50th Anniversary, which coincided with the parish feast day, the Protection of the Theotokos. Parishioners enjoyed a buffet dinner and the cake was supported by the GCU Parish Social Program. Afterward, Very Rev. Vasyi Symyon, parish administrator, celebrated a Panachida at Holy Trinity Cemetery where some parishioners are interred. A special thank you to the GCU for their support!



Kids making cards for shutins.

Thanksgiving Cards for Homebound Parishioners

Children in our Eastern Christian Formation Program made custom-themed Thanksgiving cards

for homebound parishioners to let them know that they were thinking of them during this holiday. Many thanks to the GCU for providing the supplies to make these cards and helping to bring joy to our homebound parishioners.

Dennis Kotula | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church

BINGHAMTON, NY



After Liturgy Social.

Halloween Hospitality 2023

Coffee, Tea & Treats were served on Sunday, October 29th when members of Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church gathered to chat, share stories, celebrate and catch up after Liturgy.

It is a pleasure to host coffee hour when people enjoy smiles, friendship, caring, hospitality and fellowship.

Church Festival Serves Slavic Foods, Fun and More!

The Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church hosted a Slavic Festival on Sunday, September 24, 2023. Crowds enjoyed a variety of ethnic foods, baked goods, basket raffles, 50/50 drawings, kids' games, live music by Joe Stanky and The Cadets, and more. Church Tours highlighted its history and tradition.

Planning began weeks prior when church trustees formed a committee to organize and start preparations.

Veteran volunteers operated like a well-oiled machine and the crew made a total of over 3,400 pirohy and holubky. With these and many other favorites on the menu, Holy Spirit Church Festival is certainly known to be one of the area's favorites.

We are grateful to everyone that contributed to the festival's

success. We also express a sincere thank you to the GCU Home Office. Their willingness and commitment to helping us and our community is truly appreciated.

Dinner is Served

Faith in Action Volunteers, a program of the Broome County Council of Churches, has been assisting older adults in the community for over 20 years. Helping seniors stay independent as they get older can be challenging. This is an important part of Faith in Action.

Providing the needs of older adults and seniors with non-medical services such as grocery shopping, transportation to medical appointments and companionship, is vital. Fighting food insecurity and isolation affects seniors who may consume fewer calories and nutrients.

As the senior population grows, so does the need for funding the services provided by Faith in Action.

The 17th Annual Dining for Dollars fundraising dinner for the Council of Churches took place on Thursday, October 19 in Endwell, NY. A delicious meal was served by local singing clergy, who collected tips that were added to the event proceeds, which also included basket raffles, a cash bar, and live musical entertainment.

Daria Shierly | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

Benefit to Forget Alzheimer's Bernie Fest 2023

We all know someone whose life has been affected by Alzheimer's Disease. The 8th Annual Bernie Fest was held in honor of Bernadine M. Tuthill, who was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia in 2010, and then lost her 5-year fight on February 28, 2015.

The family-friendly memorial benefit was established to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association—to aid in finding a cure or to prevent other families and friends from suffering the pain of watching a loved one slip away. The event featured basket raffles, 50/50 drawings, door prizes, live music from 10 different bands, delicious food, and much more.

A special thank you to Janet Kumpon, Daria Shierly, and those who donated baskets, volunteered their time and attended Bernie Fest. We also express a sincere thank you to the GCU Home Office for supporting the Alzheimer's Cause by printing memorial benefit materials, flyers and posters!



Thank you to our photographers:

Carol Dey, Janet Kumpon, Dianne Metzlar and Daria Shierly



**Holy Trinity
Byzantine
Catholic Church**
CONEMAUGH, PA

**50th Wedding Anniversary
Celebration**

On October 15, 2023, a Divine Liturgy celebration was held to commemorate the 50th wedding anniversary of GCU members John & Kathleen Russin. Following the Liturgy, a social hour was held to celebrate the happy occasion.



John & Kathleen Russin.

Upcoming Events

On December 24, following evening Divine Liturgy, a covered dish will be held in the church social hall. This annual event is hosted by the parish GCU coordinator and members are asked to bring something to share. The GCU Parish Social Grant program will provide sandwiches and drinks for the event.

As 2024 approaches, Holy Trinity Parish will once again hold its annual Cash Bash, Matching Funds Event on April 13, 2024, from 6-9 PM. More information about this event will be in the next edition.

Georgia Lehman | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Veterans Day recognition.

Ascension Byzantine Catholic Church
CLAIRTON, PA

Veterans Day Recognition

Veterans from Ascension Church in Clairton were honored on Sunday, November 12. After Liturgy, Father Ivan Mina invited John Berchok, Donald Buchina, Michael Sowko, William Kerr, Michael Cherepko, John Glegyak and John Kohan to come forward for a special blessing. The children from the ECF classes prepared readings to thank them for their service. Nicholas Tomkowitz closed the program by playing Taps on his trumpet. Everyone was invited for cookies, coffee and soft drinks. Each veteran was presented with a thank you card and gift card for Eat-n-Park Restaurant.

Trish Roberts | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



**St. Michael Byzantine
Catholic Church**
MERRILLVILLE, IN

Queen of Angels Picnic

On a beautiful sunny Sunday, September 10, parishioners from St. Michael Parish enjoyed a parish picnic.

Thanks to GCU for their support.

Jeanne Lazor | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

**St. Michael Byzantine
Catholic Church**
HERMITAGE, PA

Election Day Bake Sale

On Tuesday, November 7 the St. Michael Social Center served as a voting site in the city of Hermitage in Mercer County, PA. The parishioners organized a bake sale in hopes that the voters would appreciate some fresh baked goods. Parishioners contributed a wide variety of delicious items including: biscotti, apple, pumpkin & banana breads, pumpkin rolls, cherry pie, apple dumplings, a large variety of cookies, cupcakes and much more! A group of church volunteers worked the bake sale from 7 AM until 7 PM and raised \$900.00! Congratulations to leaders Donna Volsko, Bob & Mary Ann Polochak and all of the helpers who contributed to the successful bake sale!

William Dzuricsko | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Wonderful baked goods.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Labor Day Weekend Picnic

After Liturgy on Sunday, September 3, OLPH invited parishioners and local neighbors to enjoy a picnic. Thanks to the GCU Parish Social Grant program, the parish provided hot dogs, hamburgers, buns, condiments and paper goods. There were even samples of Pennsylvania kielbasa for guests (preview of the menu for the parish's November Festival). Many brought side dishes. Reader Joe Bernard gave church tours to neighbors who



had not previously been in a Byzantine church. It was a great opportunity to let neighbors learn more about us, and to have fun together.

Joe Bernard | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



St. Pius X Byzantine Catholic Church

PITTSBURGH, PA

Halloween Breakfast Social

After Liturgy on October 29, a Halloween themed breakfast social was held for parishioners and friends. Games were also played and prizes awarded. The GCU Parish Social Grant program provided funding for the breakfast.

Kim Kolesar | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Anne Byzantine Catholic Church

CLYMER, PA

Parish Picnic

St. Anne BC Church in Clymer held their annual parish picnic on September 17, 2023. Good food, fun and games were enjoyed by all parishioners and their guests. Thanks to the GCU Parish Social Grant for assisting with the event.

Janet Petro | Byzantine Parish coordinator

St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

LYNDORA, PA



Kids Halloween Party

ECF students and parishioners enjoyed a Halloween party after the Liturgy on October 29. Thanks to the GCU Parish Social Grant program for providing funds to purchase the candy.

John Pocchiari | Byzantine Parish Coordinator



Kids enjoying the Halloween Party.



St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

NEW YORK, NY

Weekly Coffee Social After the Divine Liturgy

The GCU Parish Social funding is used to subsidize the weekly coffee social of St. Mary BC Church in New York City. The social is the highlight of the week for many people and parishioners who spend as much as 90 minutes after the Liturgy visiting and enjoying each other's company.

Fr. Edward G. Cimballa | Byzantine Parish Coordinator

St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

FLUSHING, MI

Getting St. Michael Grounds Ready for Winter

On Wednesday, November 1, St. Michael parishioners in Flushing, MI along with the Garden Club members worked together to winterize the Church. Wrapping the cedar trees around the church for winter was a priority. The wrap protects the trees from the tough winter weather and deer & other wildlife.

Pat Chartier | Byzantine Catholic Coordinator



St. John Byzantine Catholic Church

TRUMBULL, CT



Kolbasi making.



Children's Faith Formation with a special blessing for the children for the start of the school year with their backpacks.



Christmas in July tea party.



Announcing the
GCU

2024 ART & PHOTO CONTEST!

This year's theme:
"Invested in family fun!"

**If you're 12 or younger,
enter your artwork!**

Submission must be original on
paper or art board maximum size 12"x18"

Include short description of your art, name,
age, address, phone number and email on
the back of your submission.

If you're 13-UP enter your photo!

Include short description, name, age, address,
phone number and email with your submission.

Photos that include identifiable people require
a model release. The model release form is
available for download at GCUusa.com/events.



Deadline:
April 8, 2024



SPORTS



Pittsburgh

**MAY
17-18
2024**



Bowlero
PITTSBURGH

(formerly AMF Noble Manor Lanes)

BOOK ROOM
DOUBLE TREE - GREENTREE



Deceased Members

(State Lodge-Member-City-State)

- 8302 Spencer Albert, Scottsdale, AZ
8344 Marie H. Baehr, Hatboro, PA
8337 Yvonne Baranowski, Goodyear, AZ
8358 Caryl M. Baril, Kimberly, WI
8326 Laurene F. Barnes, Traverse City, MI
8333 Aemon Beckman,
San Luis Obispo, CA
8305 Danjela M. Belo, Aurora, CO
8360 Richard Belza, Gilbert, SC
8344 David Birchok, Oakdale, PA
8341 Irene Blike, Barberton, OH
8302 Jeanie Blow, Mesa, AZ
8344 Margaret A. Bobish,
Beaver Meadows, PA
8344 Joan Bodnar, West Mifflin, PA
8344 Madeline Brandon, Monroeville, PA
8358 Sally J. Bremmer, Marshfield, WI
8348 Ronald Buddie, Lexington, TN
8344 Lawrence E. Buksa, Johnstown, PA
8358 Norman L. Burgoyne, Weston, WI
8306 Doris Burns, Seymour, CT
8344 Sarah Caccese, Harleysville, PA
8341 Lillian Cawley, Cleveland, OH
8315 Marcia Cepko, Crown Point, IN
8344 Marvin Clemmer, Telford, PA
8315 Donald R. Collenbaugh,
Worthington, IN
8359 Elizabeth V. Crowther,
Winston Salem, NC
8341 Patricia D. Czopor, Hubbard, OH
8344 Paul D. Danisavich, Barnesville, PA
8344 Frank Dankovich, Greensboro, PA
8358 Charles Day, Fond Du Lac, WI
8344 Robert Deak, Greensburg, PA
8344 Pauline DeLuca, Aliquippa, PA
8344 Nicolos J. DiMaggio,
Burgettstown, PA
8344 Rose Marie Dirda, Uniontown, PA
8326 Edward Dorich, Oakland, MI
8358 Connie Duren-Giacalone,
La Valle, WI
8344 Andrew W. Durkit,
McSherrystown, PA
8341 Joseph Dzurisin, Cleveland, OH
8344 David Egyed, Oakdale, PA
8344 Ernest J. Esposito, Johnstown, PA
8344 Julia A. Falepains, Tarantum, PA
8344 Emily Fedoris-Gunstrom,
Jefferson Hills, PA
8344 Robert A. Fenner, Ridley Park, PA
8344 Edythe Ferencz, Belle Vernon, PA
8344 Theodore R. Fernes, Harleysville, PA
8358 Joseph Finnegan, Coloma, WI
8344 Donald E. Fisher, Ellwood City, PA
8344 Mariano Floro, Sewickley, PA
8344 Michael R. Forbes,
Schuylkill Haven, PA
8341 James R. Frederick, Zanesville, OH
8335 Anna Gibas, Hillside, NJ
8344 Mary Ann Gilbert, Freedom, PA
8344 Edward C. Glenz, Beaver, PA
8344 Erna Goetter, Telford, PA
8358 Barbara M. Gosda, Janesville, WI
8344 Mildred Gregory, West Newton, PA
8315 Robert Gring, South Bend, IN
8341 Sandra Grocky, Seven Hills, OH
8309 Robert Grossman, Naples, FL
8302 Albert Hawck, Sun City West, AZ
8302 George M. Hayes, Conyers, GA
8344 Arthur Heintzinger, Allison Park, PA
8344 L. Jane Howard, Ligonier, PA
8344 Jane Huha, Beaver, PA
8359 Gene A. Humphrey, St. Pauls, NC
8327 Donna C. Jackson, Elk River, MN
8344 Barbara J. Jaquis, Birdsboro, PA
8341 Bennett Jones, Youngstown, OH
8344 Josephine June, Morrisville, PA
8344 Timothy A. Kacsur,
McKees Rocks, PA
8313 Lois J. Kallas, Des Plaines, IL
8344 Thomas Karam, Orangeville, PA
8344 Richard Kelsey, Johnstown, PA
8344 Phyllis J. Klara, Zelienople, PA
8344 Elizabeth Kleinert,
Huntingdon Valley, PA
8309 John E. Kokinda, Tallahassee, FL
8344 Evelyn M. Kondas, West Mifflin, PA
8344 Robert Krisovenski, McDonald, PA
8326 Rose Marie F. Kujawski,
Chesterfield, MI
8313 Phyllisteen Landers, Alton, IL
8302 Joseph G. Lawlor, Sun City West, AZ
8327 Marvin H. Leiding, Mankato, MN
8344 Betty Long, Danville, PA
8358 Keith Long, Menasha, WI
8358 Susan Lonzo, Suring, WI
8344 Margaret R. Lupine, McDonald, PA
8309 Edward Marcisak, Margate, FL
8344 John C. Martin, Harleysville, PA
8344 Samuel Martin, Indiana, PA
8344 Michael Matus, Whitaker, PA
8344 Mary McFeely, Eighty Four, PA
8302 Roberta A. McQuiston,
Sun Lakes, AZ
8344 Melissa Renee Meese,
Brownsville, PA
8324 Robert C. Metz, Baltimore, MD
8344 John T. Meyers, Johnstown, PA
8344 Norma J. Mikula, Aliquippa, PA
8341 Regina M. Miller, Youngstown, OH
8344 Michael Motsko, Whitehall, PA
8302 Gladys M. Mundt, Tempe, AZ
8344 Robert L. Murdock, Monessen, PA
8315 Geraldine A. Nemcek, Highland, IN
8344 Dolores Niedzwiecki, Eynon, PA
8344 Mary Ann Novak, Perryopolis, PA
8324 Viola J. O'Ferrall, Parkville, MD
8344 Genie R. O'Kelley, Lansdale, PA
8344 George Oleksa, Johnstown, PA
8358 Kay F. Olson, Rhineland, WI
8344 Nunzio Orsini, Moon Twp., PA

8344 Helen Osborne, Lilly, PA
 8344 Bernard B. Page, Perryopolis, PA
 8344 Cheryl A. Parks, Pittsburgh, PA
 8344 Raymond L. Petcovic, Conway, PA
 8313 Frank Pfeffer, Lombard, IL
 8358 Sharon E. Philipp, Fitchburg, WI
 8344 John Pifko, Loretto, PA
 8344 Adrienne Pixler, Aliquippa, PA
 8315 Thomas E. Pnakovich, West Field, IN
 8344 Marian H. Reifinger, Harleysville, PA
 8344 Dorothy Resconich, Portage, PA
 8358 Keith Robinson, Appleton, WI
 8344 Eleanor Rogers, Hazleton, PA
 8306 Barbara Romboni, Mystic, CT
 8305 Joyce A. Ross, Englewood, CO
 8304 Loretta A. Rule, Cerritos, CA
 8344 Bonnie J. Rusnak, Portage, PA
 8335 Anna Sausnock, Linden, NJ
 8358 Donna Rae Schreiber, Appleton, WI
 8313 Arnold Schumacher, Elmhurst, IL
 8344 David Scott, Donora, PA
 8344 Barbara A. Secunda, Butler, PA
 8344 Robert Sharples, Archbald, PA
 8344 Nevin E. Sheppard, Indiana, PA
 8359 Carolyn Sherwin, Southport, NC
 8324 Estelle O. Slivka, Potomac, MD
 8344 Joseph Springer, Surprise, AZ
 8344 Carol Staley, Pittsburgh, PA
 8344 Val Stefanowicz, Telford, PA
 8327 Raymond M. Stromstad,
 Beltrami, MN
 8359 James C. Stroupe, Charlotte, NC
 8341 Rolland Thompson, Marietta, OH
 8344 Margaret Tihey, Pittsburgh, PA
 8341 Janice Travagliante, Parma, OH
 8344 Almerig Tunno, Beaver Falls, PA
 8344 Harvey Turner, Warrington, PA
 8359 Elwood Tyler, Clinton, NC
 8358 Kenneth W. Udelhofen, Lancaster, WI
 8344 Mary Martha Uhrin, Berwick, PA
 8349 Venetia E. Valiga, San Antonio, TX
 8344 Alexander Vargo, Clarks Summit, PA
 8344 Patricia Vargo, Murrysville, PA
 8344 Michael Vladika, Eynon, PA
 8344 Robert J. Vladika, Lake Ariel, PA
 8344 Margaret Walor, Greensburg, PA
 8344 Francis Warner, Portage, PA
 8344 Barbara Waszyn, Aliquippa, PA
 8358 Marvin Wierzba, Wittenberg, WI
 8344 Paul Wilczynski, Yardley, PA
 8313 Mark B. Wilder, East St. Louis, IL
 8344 Elaine J. Williams, Williamsburg, PA
 8344 Jeddie M. Wirth, Beaver, PA
 8326 Bernard Wisner, Rochester Hills, MI
 8309 Nancy H. Wozniak, The Villages, FL
 8315 Betty A. Young, Highland, IN
 8344 Thomas Zakuciya, Johnstown, PA
 8302 Robert Zelinsky, Tuscon, AZ
 8344 B. Esther Zook, Martinsburg, PA

Remembrances

George Oleksa

George Oleksa, 96 of Richland Twp., PA, formerly of East Taylor Twp.-Johnstown, PA, was taken home by our Lord to be with his loving wife for all eternity on Sunday, August 27, 2023, surrounded by his loving family.

Born April 18, 1927 in East Conemaugh, PA son of the late Michael & Suzanna (Gera) Oleksa. He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 68 years, Catherine "Kitty" (Husla); brothers Michael, John, Steve and Paul Oleksa; sisters Mary Sokach, Sue Barczak, Anna Zapotechne and Irene Harr; brothers-in-law Michael Sokach, Leo Barczak, Edward Zapotechne and Kenneth Harr and sister-in-law Miriam Oleksa.

George is survived by sons George M. (Robin) Oleksa, Hendersonville, NC; Gary S. (Nancy) Oleksa, Johnstown, PA; David A. Oleksa, Aliquippa, PA; and Kevin J. (Chris) Oleksa, Johnstown, PA. He is also survived by brother Rudy (Carol) Oleksa of Lancaster, PA and sister-in-law Helen Oleksa of Johnstown, PA; six grand-

children Tracy (Wayne) Nardecchia, Melinda (Carlos) Perez, Brian (Kim) Oleksa, Anthony Oleksa, Nicholas (Jen) Oleksa and Michael Oleksa and many great grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

George was a proud member of the United States Navy serving in World War II in the South Pacific Theater including Saipan, Iwo Jima and Tokyo, Japan and the Korean War serving onboard the aircraft carrier USS Wasp in the Atlantic Fleet. After being honorably discharged, George used the GI Bill to receive his bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1957. He began working for the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (PA OVR) as a social security disability examiner in 1957. He then went to night school to receive his master's degree from St. Francis University in Loretto, PA in 1967.

After 35 years with PA OVR, he retired in 1992.

George was a life member of the American Legion, VFW and the Knights of Columbus. He was also a long-time member of GCU Lodge

625 and District 4 serving as a lodge & district officer for over 25 years. He was installed into the District 4 Hall of Fame, along with his son David, past D4 president and present GCU Board member, in 2008.

During retirement, George enjoyed collecting and displaying his Lionel trains, playing pinochle, listening and dancing to Polka music and traveling with his wife. He was a fan of the Pittsburgh Pirates, Penguins and an avid fan of the Pitt Panthers and Pittsburgh Steelers football. George was very proud to serve as a Byzantine Catholic cantor in the church for over 65 years.

George was a member of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Johnstown where the Funeral Liturgy was held by Msgr. Raymond Balta on Friday, September 1, 2023, with committal at Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in East Taylor Twp., with military rites by the Marine Corps League.

Eternal memory and blessed repose. Vicnaja Pamyat.

Margaret “Marge” Osifchin nee Chanda June 9, 1926 - October 26, 2023

Margaret “Marge” Osifchin nee Chanda, age 97, a devoted, loving, caring and generous wife, mother and grandmother fell asleep peacefully unto the Lord in the early evening of Thursday, October 26, 2023 at her home. She was married for 70 years to the late Michael Osifchin, Jr. who passed in April 2021. Margaret was a woman of strong character and anchored in her faith. She was infused with love, compassion, humor and selflessness. Foremost in Margaret’s life was her dedication to her family providing a loving environment for her children and grandchildren. She unselfishly passed on to her children the admirable values of generosity, respect and non-judgement of others and encouraged us all to be independent and tenacious.

Margaret was born and raised in Brainards, NJ. Born on June 9, 1926, she was the daughter of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants, Michael & Maria (nee Youpa) Chanda. Taught by her parents, she was fluent in Ruthenian, the language of her ancestors. She was an excellent cook and baker. Her pierogies and apple pie were a family favorite. She had a tender and loving character, however, when faced with adversity such as breast cancer, Margaret was firm and never surrendered. She was a 46 year breast can-

cer survivor. It could be said this was due to her dogged determination to sustain and care for her family.

In her younger years, Margaret was employed at Tuller McClure Textile located in Martins Creek, PA. She was a member of the GCU and SS Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Phillipsburg, NJ. Margaret loved dancing and music, especially music from the 1940s and 50s. Her smile could light up a room. She will be remembered eternally by her family for the love and commitment she gave to them. She will be truly and sadly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Margaret was predeceased by her parents; sisters, Mary Seip, Jay Turano and Sue Mainhart; brothers, Nick, Stephen, Joe and Andy; as well as, siblings who died in their infancy, Michael, Veronica, Anna, Katherine, Mike, Elizabeth and an unnamed infant.

She is survived by her daughters, Susan Connochie and her partner Lloyd Hayes, Donna Voag and her husband Patrick Conley, both of Bethlehem, PA; sons, David; Steven and his husband David Wentz of Culpeper, VA; Gary and his husband Wesley Wolfe of Chicago, IL; beloved daughter/granddaughter, Paige and her fiancé Andrew Durholz of Harmony, NJ and great-granddaughter Isla Margaret Durholz; beloved grandsons,

Christopher Voag of Bethlehem, PA and Daniel (Julie) Connochie of Detroit, MI and great-granddaughter Blair Elaine; sister-in-law Olga Donat; brother-in-laws, Edward Osifchin and Robert (Sandra) Osifchin. She is also survived by her beloved nephew Butch (Jennie) Chanda and other nieces and nephews.

A special thank you to her dedicated neighbors and friends, including Kevin & Denise, Joe, Kristi; Ennoble Hospice; and her live-in care givers Maria, Lubusa and Lenka.

A graveside service was held on Thursday, November 2 at SS Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in Alpha, NJ.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions to the Alzheimer Foundation of America, www.alzfdn.org or National Breast Cancer Foundation www.nationalbreastcancer.org would be appreciated.

Remembrances

Sister Joesetta Kriss

Patiently waiting for the Lord Jesus to call her home, Sister Joesetta (Angela) Kriss quietly fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday morning, November 18, 2023 at Mt. Macrina Manor. She awoke from her life's journey to be welcomed to her new home in the Kingdom.

Sister Joesetta was born in Canonsburg, PA, the daughter of the late Charles & Susan (Hoady) Kriss. She entered the community from St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in Canonsburg, PA on September 15, 1956 and made her Final Profession of Vows on August 26, 1962.

From 1960 to 1995, Sister Joesetta's years of ministry were devoted to educating children both as teacher and principal in the schools of the Archeparchy and of the Eparchies of Passaic and Parma. In 1994, she was elected to the Provincial Council, and in 1996, she was appointed as the Province Treasurer. Upon completion of her term of office, Sister Joesetta was reappointed as Province Treasurer, a position she held until her appointment as manager of the Byzantine Seminary Press. Sister Joesetta returned to the monastery in 2010 willingly helping at the Gift Shop or in the Card Shop Ministry. Due to a decline in health, Sister Joesetta spent several peaceful years at the Manor. Her time at the Manor was marked by her gentle spirit and

gracious manner to all who cared for her or came to visit.

In her personal file, Sister Joesetta noted that she simply wanted to be remembered as a Sister of St. Basil. This simple wish encompasses all that Sister Joesetta was and all she held dear. Among the gifts she possessed and used was her love of music. Sister cherished her heritage of liturgical music from her father who was a cantor for many years. This became an important aspect of her teaching ministry. In several schools, Sister Joesetta established a children's choir to sing at the Divine Liturgy and at other events. In the monastery, she also took her turn as cantor for the liturgical services.

At her Golden Jubilee celebration, Sister Joesetta expressed feelings of being truly blessed for her years as a Sister of St. Basil. She was quick to express her warmest gratitude and prayers for all those who had loved and supported her along the way.

In his homily, Metropolitan William alluded to the Gospel reading from St. John in commenting on Sister Joesetta's life. The concluding verse reads thus, *"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation but has passed from death to life."*

Sister lived by that Gospel injunction in her various ministries. She was for many a source of formation and

guidance, and she taught them skills to get through life. Following her in any of her ministries, one could be sure that all would be in order. Her relationships with others and in the community reflected this same assurance. Archbishop concluded his homily by noting that with great dedication and without faltering, Sister entered into the kingdom of God one step at a time. All of us would do well to be challenged by her journey.

Sister Joesetta was preceded in death by her parents, her sister Carol and an infant sister Anna Helen. In addition to the members of her community, she is survived by her devoted sister Margaret V. Popp and cousins Donna Szott, Robert Kriss and Andrew Mastic.

Relatives and friends were received at the Monastery on Friday, November 24. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Metropolitan Archbishop William Skurla on Saturday, November 25 in the Monastery Chapel. Very Rev. Andrew Deskevich and Rev. Jerome Botsko were the concelebrating priests. Rev. Wesley Mash was in attendance.

Interment followed in the Dormition Section of Mount Macrina Cemetery.

For Your Information

Available

GCU Culinary Chronicle Cookbook

The GCU Culinary Chronicle Cookbook was first published in 1985 as a fund raising tool for the proposed construction of a wooden church



on the GCU property in Beaver, PA. The dream was realized with the completion of the GCU St. Nicholas Chapel in 1992. The cookbook, over 270 pages of favorite family and ethnic recipes, has

continued to be very popular. The proceeds from sales now benefit the GCU Foundation with \$1 from each book sold going directly to the GCU Cause of the Quarter. The cookbook is available in its original printed version for a cost of \$20 (\$10 plus \$10 for shipping) or in a downloadable version (PDF) for the cost of \$8. Order and pay with a credit card at GCUusa.com/GivingBack/Cookbook.

Hand Painted Thank You Cards

Designed by Sr. Seraphim Olsafsky, OSBM. 12 cards per package-4 different designs, the inside is blank for your message. Offering: \$15.95 + shipping & handling. Questions? please call 724-439-8644. Visit the Sisters website at sistersoftbasil.or/greeting-cards/ to order. Christmas and Easter cards are also available.



Carpathian Cookery Cookbook

Having sold nearly 20,000 copies, the cookbook has entered its 20th printing and was requested by the Library of Congress to be in their ethnic cooking collection. The 330-page cookbook has a new look and features a protective plastic cover. The book includes sections on Christmas and Easter customs and recipes, traditional Rusyn and Slavic foods, other ethnic dishes, and many other tried-and-true recipes of St. John's parishioners. There is a variety of paska bread and kolachi (filled roll) recipes, as well as meatless dishes and Lenten recipes, suitable for the Great Fast, as well as the Pre-Christmas Fast. The cost of the cookbook is \$14.⁰⁰ plus \$5.⁰⁰ postage and handling (\$19.⁰⁰). If ordering from Canada, please send a \$30.⁰⁰ U.S. Postal money order payable in U.S. dollars to reflect the difference in the exchange rate and postage cost. To order please send a check or money order to: Ethnic Craft Club, St. John Byzantine Catholic Church, 201 E. Main Street, Uniontown, PA 15401, call 724-438-1382 (M-F 9 AM-3 PM please leave a message) or email carpathiancookery@gmail.com.



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Wishing All of You a
Blessed Christmas and
a Happy & Healthy New Year!

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