

# THE PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL IN MONTREAL

*By Jurij-Myroslaw Lewyckyj*

## **The first Ukrainian settlers in Montreal**

Toward the end of the 19th century, North America — Canada and the United States — opened its doors to immigration from Eastern Europe. In 1891, poor or landless farmers from Galicia and Bukovina — then Austrian crown lands — attracted by offers of substantial parcels of virgin prairie land, began to emigrate to Canada and started to disembark in the port cities of Halifax and Montreal. The immigrants were seeking better economic opportunities in Canada, and many hoped to earn enough to be able to return to their homes and purchase enough land there for a more comfortable life.

Waves of westward-bound immigrants passed through Montreal, then the largest Canadian port and city. Montreal lies in the francophone Canadian province of Quebec, conquered by England in 1759. The majority francophone population, humbled and economically marginalized by the English, had turned inward as a strategy of self-preservation, and could not — would not — absorb the large numbers of immigrants that were arriving from Eastern Europe. So although entire waves of immigrants arrived in Montreal, only a small number of them — needed mostly in domestic service positions by the ruling anglophone minority — stayed. As the anglophone minority was concentrated entirely in Montreal, third-language immigrants such as Ukrainians became concentrated in Montreal as well, and did not disperse into the overwhelmingly francophone majority that constituted the rest of the province. For this reason, Ukrainian settlement in Quebec has a character distinct from Ukrainian settlement in western Canadian provinces.

The first Ukrainian immigrants to settle in Montreal for any amount of time were the brothers Ivan and Stepan Tiuchtij, who arrived in 1899 and stayed for several years, before moving on to western Canada. In their footsteps came a steady flow of other Ukrainian immigrants, who would stay in the city for a while before moving on. The immigrants were mostly single men, but there were women too, and occasionally entire families. The first marriage in Montreal in the Greek-Catholic rite was that of Mykhajlo Luchak in 1904, at the church of St. Gabriel on Centre Street in the Pointe St-Charles district of the city.

The first Ukrainian to settle in Montreal permanently, in 1902, was Joseph Sozanskyj, who died in 1970. The first Ukrainian immigrants in the city settled in the working class district of Pointe St-Charles, where they found employment on the railroads or at the Stelco steel smelter. Later they settled in the Frontenac district, where they worked as shippers in the port or at the shipbuilding and repair firm of Vickers, and in the so-called ‘downtown’<sup>1</sup> district, where they worked in the clothing industry as tailors or pressers. These were the poorest and most neglected parts of the

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<sup>1</sup> This was not the commercial downtown sector of the city, but a working-class, ‘ethnic’ area that formed around north-south axes of Boulevard St-Laurent (also known as ‘the Main’) and Rue St-Urbain. Its approximate boundaries were Ontario Street in the south, St-Viateur to the north, St-Denis to the east, and Park Avenue to the west.

city. Five or more persons would often share a single room. But it was the Frontenac district that became the centre of Ukrainian church life in Montreal.

The first Ukrainian liturgies were conducted by the Basilian Fathers Sozont Dydyk, Anton Strotsky, and Platonid Filas, who stopped off in Montreal on their way westward. The liturgies were conducted in two French churches, St-Charles church in the Pointe St-Charles district, and St-Vincent-de-Paul church in the Frontenac district. The Immigrant Aid Society, founded in 1904 and later renamed 'Samopomich'<sup>2</sup> invited Rev. Navkratij Kryzhanovskyj to Montreal from Winnipeg in 1907. He conducted the liturgy for Ukrainians on several occasions in 1908 and 1909. These were all ad hoc services, however, held in Roman Catholic churches. Samopomich was also then waging a (mostly successful) battle against the Protestant sect of I. Bodruga — Ukrainian Greek Catholics, not having their own church organization, were vulnerable to proselytism by numerous Protestant denominations. The need for Ukrainians' own parish was therefore pressing. It should be noted that Ukrainian monks of the Basilian Order studied at the seminary in Montreal, among them Hilary Dorosh, Orest Kuziv, and Vasyl Ladyka, who later became a bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church of Canada.

### **The Founding of the Parish of St. Michael the Archangel**

The founder of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel was the Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj, who took part in the Eucharistic Congress in Montreal in September 1910. He met with the Ukrainian residents of Montreal, and authorized them to set up a parish association. The first meeting of the association was disrupted by opponents of the parish, and police intervention was needed to restore order. The second meeting of the Greek Catholic community elected a church committee with Ivan Ziolkovsky as head. The community adopted the formal name of 'Greek Catholic Rus Church of St. Michael'. Here is how Casimir Ivan Merwicki, born April 15, 1881 in the town of Zbarazh, Ukraine, and who arrived in Montreal in 1905, described the events:

*In 1910 we received news that the World Eucharistic Congress, to be attended by bishops and archbishops from all over the world, would be held in Montreal. I checked whether any Ukrainian bishops would be in attendance. We were just a handful of Ukrainians in Montreal; we went to the St-Vincent-de-Paul church on St-Catherine Street, on the corner of Fullum. There were three nationalities there: Poles, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians. I was elected collector of the Polish Mother of God of Czestochowa parish. The Eucharistic Congress began on September 10, 1910. It was attended by our metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj, who had come from Rome and by bishop Soter Ortynskyj from the United States. What joy it was to see our Ukrainian metropolitan — today a saint — who, like Christ, searched for those of his flock who had left their native land in quest of a better life across the ocean. In Ottawa, Ukrainians were registered as Galicians, Rusyns, Russians, Uniates, Greek Catholics, etc. — the metropolitan found no evidence of Ukrainians there. But when the metropolitan visited the Jesuit church of St-Vincent-de-Paul, he was told there*

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<sup>2</sup> Self-help.

were people there would gather to celebrate Mass, but no one knew who they were. Father Brouchesi said he knew a Rusyn collector. He sent for me to meet with the metropolitan. I told the metropolitan that I knew many Ukrainians at the Polish church. He told me to call all Ukrainians to the church on Sunday for an archhierarchical service. A very large number of people came to the Mass, and cried with joy when the metropolitan introduced them to the French as his brothers and sisters. On Thursday the metropolitan led us in Eucharistic procession to a Eucharistic altar erected near Mont Royal. Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj and bishop Soter and many French priests came to my home at 26 Brown Street (today Florian), and from the balcony the metropolitan addressed those gathered on the street in both French and Ukrainian, blessing my family and entrusting to me the task of organizing a Ukrainian parish. And I fulfilled this assignment: the first meeting was held on July 30, 1911, but was disrupted by supporters of Karl Marx from Pointe St-Charles, as well as by Russophiles and radicals, and the police had to disperse them with batons. The founding meeting was held in August, with our first priest, Rev. Cyril Yermij, in attendance.<sup>3</sup>

Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak notes in his work,<sup>4</sup> relying on Merwicki's memoirs, that the first meeting was held 'in the summer,' and the formal founding of the parish and election of the church committee on July 16, 1911<sup>5</sup>. Among the other active organizers of the parish were Mykhajlo Nahirnyj, Theodor Zhyla, Theodor Humennyj, Ivan Ziolkovsky, Hryhorij Zelenyckyj, the brothers Parkhin, and Casimir Merwicki, who chaired of the founding meeting. Dr. Kelebay mentions other people as well, but I was not able to find them in the 1911 list of dues-paying members.

The first official pastor of the parish was Rev. Dr. Cyril Yermij, who accepted this post on September 21, 1911 at the behest of metropolitan Szeptyckyj himself. Nadia Hrymak-Wynnytska<sup>6</sup> gives this date as the date of the founding of the parish, on the grounds that a parish is formally founded the moment it is assigned a parish priest. The first liturgies were conducted at the Franciscan Roman Catholic church of St. Anthony (it no longer exists). Since a large number of Ukrainians lived in Pointe St-Charles, Rev. Dr. Yermij was assisted by Rev. Theodor Dwulit, who conducted liturgies for the residents of this district. By the end of 1911, 130 families — two

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<sup>3</sup> The memoirs of Casimir-Ivan Merwicki (unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak: "St. Michael's parish in Montreal" in *25 years on bishopric seat*, p. 619-632, Toronto, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Yarema Kelebay, relying in his M.A. thesis on the same source — Casimir-Ivan Merwicki's unpublished memoirs claims the date of this second meeting to have been July, 14, 1911. But July 16, 1911 — Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak's date — was a Sunday, and therefore a much more likely date for such an important meeting, the conveners of which would have had an obvious interest in drawing the highest possible attendance from among a predominantly working-class, wage-earning population, than July, 14, a Friday. Besides, we know that Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak factually saw a copy of the parish's first book of minutes — where the date of this meeting was doubtless recorded — before this book was lost, so his date of July 16, 1911 as the date of this second, founding meeting of the parish should probably be allowed to stay.

<sup>6</sup> Hrymak-Wynnytska, Nadia, *Les Eglises Ukrainiennes à Montréal*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1964.

from Pointe St-Charles, one from Lachine, five from the downtown district, six with no listed address, and the rest from the Frontenac district — had paid their annual parish dues of 25 cents per person. In the first four months of the parish's existence in 1911, the parish held nine marriages and 26 christenings.

The parish of St. Michael the Archangel was the first Greek Catholic parish in Montreal and the province of Quebec, and the fourth parish on the territory of what is now the Toronto Eparchy (the first was St. Mary the Protectress in Sudbury in 1909; the second — Transfiguration of our Lord in Thunder Bay in 1909; the third — St. Josaphat in Toronto in 1911).

The official establishing decree, issued by Bishop Nicetas Budka on April 10, 1916, called the parish 'the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Parish of Saint-Michael'. The parish was incorporated on January 16, 1917. A decree issued May 17, 1954 by Bishop Isidore Borecky renamed the parish 'the Ukrainian Catholic Parish of St. Michael'.

In practical terms, the whole of Ukrainian life in Montreal and the province of Quebec in this pioneer period was grouped around St. Michael's parish and under its spiritual leadership. Exceptions were a small group of Russophiles who joined the old tsarist Russian church of Sts Peter and Paul (which still exists), and those who followed the proselytizers of the Presbyterian Church, joining the Church of All Nations. There was also the Ukrainian orthodox parish of St. John of Suchawa in Lachine, founded by Bukovina immigrants in 1908 or 1909, who had built a small church, which burned down soon after. The church was rebuilt in 1911, but soon switched to the system of Russian Orthodox churches — it too exists to this day. These small groups quickly abandoned all forms of Ukrainian life and assimilated into their surroundings. There were also the socialists, radicals, and communists, hostile to the Church and to religion generally. They did not leave the parish but caused serious dissension and disturbances from within. More about them can be found in the studies of Iryna Melnyk<sup>7</sup> and Yarema Kelebay.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Construction of the Church**

After Rev. Dr Yermij left Montreal in June 1912, the parish was led by Rev. Dr. Adonais Sabourin, Rev. Arthur Desmarais, Rev. Dr. Ambrose Redkevych, Rev. Dr. Ivan Perepelytsia, and again by Rev. Dr. Ambrose Redkevych. It was under Rev. Desmarais that property on which to build a church was purchased on the corner of Hochelaga and d'Iberville in 1913. Another property had also been available at the time one block further north, on Sherbrooke Street, but Ukrainians in the Frontenac district thought this location too far, outside the city, 'out in the sticks.'

In 1915, during the First World War, 60 Ukrainian families, including women and children, were forcefully removed to an internment camp in Spirit Lake near Val d'Or — the parish of St Mary the Protectress was founded there in 1952. Also at this

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<sup>7</sup> Melnyk, Iryna, *Ukrainian Bilingual Education in the Montreal Public School System 1911-1945*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Kelebay, Yarema, *The Ukrainian Community in Montreal*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1975.

time some 1,500 Ukrainian men from Montreal, former citizens of Austro-Hungary with which Canada, as part of the British Empire, was then at war, were interned as prisoners of war. The resettled Ukrainians in Spirit Lake were served by Rev. Dr. Ivan Perepelytsia. An intervention by a delegation from the Ukrainian Canadian Committee of Eastern Canada, of which St. Michael's pastor, Rev. Dr. Redkevych, was a member, managed to secure the release of interned Ukrainians in the summer of 1916 and the camps were subsequently liquidated. But many Ukrainians died there in the interim.

Despite the difficult circumstances of his parishioners, Rev. Dr. Redkevych decided to go ahead with building the parish church. Until then the parish had used the church of St. Anthony for \$50 per month. On November 19, 1916 Bishop Nicetas Budka blessed the cornerstone of the church-to-be and issued ecclesiastical permission to build. The foundation and ground floor of the church, as well as a residence for the parish priest, were essentially completed by the end of 1916. The new church was festively opened Easter Sunday 1917. During the first liturgy, a group of hooligans hurled rocks at the church doors. Whether these were Ukrainian communists or local hooligans it is now impossible to determine. The church was made of stone, had no cupolas, and could fit 850 people. The church committee at the time consisted of eight members: three from the district of Pointe St-Charles, three from the Frontenac district (where the church was built), and two from the downtown district.

To build the church, \$15,000 had to be borrowed from the Credit Foncier at an interest of 7% amortized over 20 years, but it proved very difficult to pay off this debt, and the biggest and constant worry of the parish leadership was how to raise funds to retire the loan. And here it must be noted that the majority of donations for the church came from the Ukrainian residents of Pointe St-Charles, some of whom had five years earlier disrupted the very first parish meeting, and only two of whom had been members of the parish in 1911. But by 1917 the largest portion of donations for the church came from Pointe St-Charles residents. This may have been due in large measure to the efforts of Rev. Dr. Ivan Perepelytsia, who on December 13, 1913 founded the Prosvita Society in Pointe St-Charles and strove to advance national and religious awareness among the residents of the district. Prosvita at the time was a strong supporter of the church. I say 'at that time' deliberately, because later, in the 1930s, Prosvita grew increasingly secular and ceased to concern itself with the religious life of the community. It may be worthwhile to explore further the reasons behind Pointe St-Charles residents' change of heart with respect to the church.

Between September 1, 1916 and March 29, 1918, \$6,970 was borrowed directly from parishioners for church construction, of which only \$1,250 were ever repaid. Starting in 1917, a 'pew fee' was instituted for each seat in the church — in 1919, the pew fee was ten cents per seat per Sunday. The fee stayed in place until 1950. The legal incorporation of the parish cost \$1,500; Bishop Nicetas Budka declined to cover the costs of incorporation, so the parish had to cover these costs by itself.

In 1920, two lots were purchased on the rue d'Iberville for an orphanage. It proved very difficult to pay off these lots; finally, on September 3, 1921 Rev. Mykhajlo Irkha and Mr. Nicetas Buchkowskyj borrowed money and transferred the

debt to themselves. But the orphanage was never built; a parish hall was erected instead, about which more later.

### **Parish Life**

A number of different organizations grouped around St. Michael's parish — a religious sisterhood, altar boys, the Apostolate of Prayer, the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood, the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, the Ukrainian Catholic Youth, a Ukrainian school. There were secular organizations at the parish as well, such as the Prosvita Association of Taras Shevchenko, founded December 13, 1913 by Rev. Dr. Perepelytsia, and active primarily in Pointe St-Charles; the Hetman (Monarchist) Union; and sometime later, for a while, the Ukrainian Youth Association 'Plast'. The whole of Ukrainian life in Montreal was connected in one way or another with St. Michael's parish. The fact that the Ukrainian community of Montreal continues to exist and function to this day must be attributed in part to the ongoing existence and work of its founding parish.

### **The Full-Day Ukrainian School**

It is important to mention the full-day Ukrainian school at the parish. When we speak of Ukrainian schools in the province of Quebec during the first decades of Ukrainian settlement, we need speak only of Montreal and Lachine. There were no Ukrainian schools elsewhere in the province, as there were no significant Ukrainian groupings outside the island of Montreal. And to the extent that St. Michael's was the only Ukrainian parish (it also served the residents of nearby Lachine), it is correct to say that St. Michael's parish was the founder of Ukrainian schools in Montreal. It is generally accepted that the first full-day Ukrainian school in eastern Canada was founded in Montreal by Rev. Dr. Cyril Yermij in 1911-1912. The historian Mykhajlo Marunchak claims<sup>9</sup> that it was Rev. Theodor Dwulit who founded the school, but we should recall that Rev. Dwulit was only an assistant priest at the parish — there are other inaccuracies in Marunchak's work with respect to Ukrainians in Montreal.

The circumstances of Ukrainians in Quebec were entirely different from that of Ukrainians in western Canada, as Iryna Melnyk<sup>10</sup> shows. Authorities in western Canadian provinces prevaricated when Ukrainians requested Ukrainian schools, as they wanted immigrants to assimilate quickly into the English-speaking population. In Quebec, however, the call for Ukrainian schools came from the Montreal Catholic School Commission itself, with no prompting or involvement by Ukrainians at all. Leftist politics and views were spreading among Montreal Ukrainians, and growing numbers of them were transferring their children from Catholic to the more secular Protestant schools. To counteract this growing influence of socialism and communism among Ukrainian immigrants — which was then quite strong — the Montreal Catholic School Commission introduced 'Ukrainian schools' as a way of

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<sup>9</sup> Marunchak, Mykhajlo T., *Istoria ukrainsiv Kanady*, [PUBLISHER]: Winnipeg, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Melnyk, Iryna, *Ukrainian Bilingual Education in the Montreal Public School System 1911-1945*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1987.

retaining Ukrainian children in the Catholic school system. These weren't really schools, however, but merely Ukrainian classes held at the Catholic Sarsfield School in Pointe St-Charles for boys and at the Catholic school of Notre-Dame-des-Anges for girls. The children learned Ukrainian history, language, and the Ukrainian rite. The exact date these classes were introduced is not known, but it was certainly no later than 1911, because a photograph belonging to Father Josaphat Jean, showing Ukrainian teachers and pupils, bears the date June 12, 1912 (probably marking the end of the school year). The boys' teacher was Gregory Kovbel; the girls' teachers were Maria Turczeniak-Kacko, Carolina Krushelnytska, and Petryna and Nadia Szestowska. A photograph from 1921 or 1922 shows a total of 65 children. In 1927 the teaching duties were taken over by nuns. These Ukrainian classes lasted until 1936-37, when they were abolished by the school commission, due to 'a lack of children interested in learning Ukrainian.'

### **The Beginnings of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Montreal**

At a time when the new parish was struggling to survive, 14 parishioners left the parish on March 9, 1925 to organize a separate parish, Saint Sophia, within the framework of the Orthodox Church. As Nadia Hrymak-Wynnytska explains in her master's thesis:

*The roots of this phenomenon must be sought in the many complications that arose in connection with Ukrainian settlements in foreign Canadian lands. The complex life circumstances of the settlers, and the new forms of community life that developed in Canada — especially the sharp differences in how church communities were established and the methods by which spiritual leaders conducted their work — created significant problems, which it was not always possible to overcome. For although in most cases the reasons for the denominational conversion were personal ambitions or misunderstandings between priest and faithful, the reason behind the conversion to orthodoxy is given as an attempt by the faithful to win greater influence in governing the affairs of church communities. The frequent change of priests did little to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the priest and the faithful. Finally, the importation from Galicia to Canada of certain so-called radical slogans and anticlerical tendencies introduced significant tensions into local religious life, which led to the departure of some of the faithful from the church altogether, or to the founding of their own churches.<sup>11</sup>*

But with God's help the parish of St. Michael survived these difficult times and even managed to build, in 1929-30, with borrowed funds, the church of the Holy Ghost in Pointe St-Charles, as well as a hall and residence on the two lots beside St. Michael's that were originally slated for an orphanage. These additions were sorely needed by the church community.

The parish grew. In 1930 a mission was set up for Transcarpathians and Slovaks, which in 1949 became the parish of the Ascension of our Lord. In 1931, when Rev. Mykhajlo Hryhorijczuk (1925-1931) was pastor, parishioners from Pointe

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<sup>11</sup> Hrymak-Wynnytska, Nadia, *Les Eglises Ukrainiennes à Montréal*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1964, p. 52.

St-Charles founded their own parish of the Holy Ghost. At first the new parish was serviced by priests from St. Michael's, but it was assigned its own pastor in 1934. Also during the pastorship of Rev. Hryhorijczuk, a separate section of the Catholic cemetery at Côte-des-Neiges was set aside for Ukrainian use, and the building of the residence beside St. Michael's was completed.

### **The Basilian Fathers**

It was at this time that the Great Depression hit. It began to look as if nothing could save the parish, with its \$35,000 of debt, from bankruptcy. But God's providence did not let it to come to that. At the behest of parishioners, Bishop Vasyl Ladyka placed the parish under the Basilian Fathers, who with the active support of the church committee saved the church and reduced the debt substantially. On August 9, 1938 they were even able to purchase, for \$6,500, a 640-acre farm in the Laurentians and to build there a Ukrainian vacation camp, Camp Ukraina — the first such Ukrainian camp in Quebec. Between 1932 and 1947 the church committee met weekly, at times even more frequently, to discuss ways of reducing the debt. The young and energetic Rev. Paul Hewko, who became pastor in 1942, himself, walked door-to-door seeking donations. Recognition for huge efforts in this regard is due also to Rev. Josaphat Tymoczko and Rev. Josaphat Jean.

The parish continued to grow. In 1932 the mission in nearby Lachine was reopened; it had existed previously in 1913-1916. In 1935 a mission was established in Ville Emard, which became the parish of St. Josaphat in 1949; it ceased operations in 1998. In October 1951 a mission was established in the downtown district (it ceased operations in 1973). In 1949 the parish of the Ascension of our Lord was founded by Transcarpathians settlers (it had been a mission since 1936); it later passed into Slovak hands.

### **The New Immigration — Diocesan Priests**

In 1948 a new, powerful inflow of Ukrainian immigration commenced. The parish of St. Michael could not accommodate the new faithful. In 1950 bishop Isidore Boretsky formed three new parishes out of the old one: the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rosemont; St. John the Baptist in Park Extension; and St. Basil the Great in Lachine. The pastors at these new parishes were diocesan priests; the Basilian Fathers were only at St. Michael's and at the church of the Holy Ghost in Pointe St-Charles. St. Michael's parish now served only the Frontenac district, the suburb of LaSalle, and the 'downtown' district of Montreal, where liturgies were conducted from October 7, 1951. The faithful at the downtown mission were mostly members of the so-called 'third'<sup>12</sup> immigration, who worked in the district's clothing trade as tailors or pressers. Many eventually managed to work their way up to better

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<sup>11</sup> There were four immigrations of Ukrainians to Canada: 1<sup>st</sup> – before the First World War, the 2<sup>nd</sup> – in 1920-1939, the 3<sup>rd</sup> – in 1948-1954, and 4<sup>th</sup> - after 1991.

parts of the city, and the meaning of ‘downtown’ as an area of Ukrainian settlement began to fade, the downtown mission itself ending operations in 1973.

With the inflow of large numbers of the intelligentsia of the so-called *skytalshschyna*<sup>13</sup>, a Discussion Club was formed at St. Michael’s parish, which organized a series of talks on church and community life. These talks were attended by both new and old immigrants. The initiator of the Discussion Club was Rev. Dr. Ireneus Nazarko.

On November 1, 1952 the Basilian Fathers passed the parish of St. Michael back into the hands of diocesan priests in exchange for the parish of St. John the Baptist in Ottawa. The first pastor after the transfer was the native Montreal-born Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk.

### **The Completion of the Church**

Although the collection of funds to complete the building of the church (only the basement and ground level were built initially) and the development of the architectural plans for the rest of the building had been overseen by the Basilian Fathers, the church was completed under the leadership of Rev. Kushniryk. He was adept at motivating his parishioners to ever greater generosity in their donations for the construction and decoration of the church. Because of costs, the final plans for the building differed substantially from the original plans drawn up by Rev. Dr. Redkevych. Parishioners pledged a certain amount in advance, which they then submitted in weekly instalments, either at the church itself, or to volunteer collectors going door-to-door. The completion of the church cost \$165,000. The new building was consecrated by Bishop Isidore Borecky on September 25, 1954. The iconostasis — the first in a Ukrainian Greek Catholic church in Montreal — was carved by Bohdan Biloszewskij and Alfred Schröder, and blessed by the metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk on November 24, 1957, the parish feast day. During the pastorship of Rev. Kushniryk, the Ukrainian Catholic Youth, the altar boys, the Sisterhood of the Apostolate of Prayer, and the Ukrainian Catholic Women’s League were all very active at the parish. In 1962 the parish hall was rebuilt.

On December 19, 1963 Bishop Isidore Borecky formed a new parish on the island of Montreal, St. Nicholas in LaSalle, and the number of parishioners at St. Michael’s decreased yet again, even though the new parish soon ceased to exist. At the same time there began, at first a slow but ever accelerating movement of parishioners out of the working-class districts of Frontenac and downtown to newer, more affluent parts of the city, which lay outside the parish boundaries. Parish membership declined steadily. At the end of 1963, six hundred and fifty families belonged to the parish, for a total of 2,500 faithful.

On Sunday May 1, 1966 the parish celebrated the 50th anniversary of the church St. Michael the Archangel. The hierarchical liturgy, celebrated by Bishop Isidore Borecky, was massively attended. Five hundred and ninety persons attended the celebratory banquet, at which the Roman Catholic bishop of Montreal Paul

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<sup>13</sup> Roughly, ‘exile’ — the term refers to the displacement of Ukrainians by World War Two or because of political or religious persecution on lands occupied by the Soviet Union.

Gregoire delivered the keynote address. A commemorative booklet edited by Adolph Hladylowych, Jaroslaw Pryshlak, and Jurij Lewyckyj was published on the occasion.

### **Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak**

Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk died February 7, 1969, and Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak, a young, energetic priest and former parishioner, took his place. He oversaw the decoration of the church and the painting of the iconostasis. The iconostasis icons were painted by Wolodymyr Denysenko. The walls of the church were painted by Wolodymyr Mazepa, but subsequent water damage required the walls to be cemented over, and they remained unadorned. Only a large mural directly above the entrance doors, representing symbolically the ordination of Rev. Josyf Slipyj as bishop, was preserved.

Rev. Dr. Monczak's big achievement was to bring the parish's records of christenings, marriages, and funerals to order. Under his direction the parish began in 1971 to publish annual reports that included not only the reports of all the organizations associated with the church (The Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood, the Ukrainian Catholic Youth, the Sisterhood, the altar boy organization, the parish school) and a record of christenings, marriages, and funerals, but also and more importantly, a full financial report with detailed explanations — simple financial reports, without explanations, had been begun by Rev. Dr. Redkevych back in 1917 — and a list of parish donors. Under the careful stewardship of Rev. Dr. Monczak the parish retired the debt and even began to amass savings in the bank. He also acquired finely embroidered liturgical vestments from Ukraine for the priests of the parish.

Rev. Dr. Monczak — who at 21 years was the longest-serving parish pastor — did not concern himself only with the material needs of the parish, but also, and more importantly, with its spiritual growth. Under his leadership the church organizations became very active. The Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Markian Shashkevych held monthly meetings at which Rev. Dr. Monczak, Dr. Jurij Lewyckyj, and others gave talks on various religious, church, current, or national themes. The Brotherhood also marshalled aid for Ukrainian students in Brazil and Argentina. The Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, in addition to meeting monthly, managed the church library, planned various pilgrimages, and organized help for the needy in the parish, in the city, in Canada, and in Ukraine; it also organized all the festive receptions at the church, such as Christmas and Easter dinners. League women also embroidered the various coverings, cloths, and banners needed by the church.

In 1974 the church was enriched by a beautiful icon behind the altar, painted in a modern Byzantine style by the talented young artist Wolodymyr Denysenko. The icon represents the mystery of God's redemption of humankind. The icon was blessed by Bishop Isidore Borecky on Sunday November 17, 1974.

In the 1970s Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak was charged by patriarch Josyf Slipyj with creating a Montreal branch of the Ukrainian Catholic University. University lectures commenced December 7, 1975 in the conference hall of St. Michael's parish, as a kind of continuation of the work of the former Discussion Club. The lecturers were Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak, who spoke on eastern churches, the Vatican Council,

problems related to the patriarchate, the sovereignty of the Kyivan Church in times of schism and union, the structure and sense of the Byzantine-Ukrainian liturgy, the structure and sense of the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the intellectual bases of Christian faith, and the millennium of the sovereign Kyivan Church; and Dr. Jurij Lewyckyj, who lectured on the Ukrainian language and its dialects, and particularly on the influence of English and French on the lexicon of Montreal Ukrainians.

The lectures were on a high intellectual level and were very well attended.

During Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak's tenure as pastor the parish was visited by patriarch Josyf Slipyj and patriarch Myroslaw-Ivan Lubachivsky.

### **Married Priests**

In 1990 Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak was transferred to the parish of St. Basil the Great in Lachine, and was replaced by Rev. Ivan Chyrovsky, the parish's first married pastor. He had big plans to involve parishioners more actively in the various services, and prepared texts for all the faithful. But the poor state of his health required his transfer in 1993 to the southern United States.

In 1991 the Transfiguration of our Lord parish was founded for Romanian Greek Catholics. At first the new parish used St. Michael's church for its needs; it later took over the church of the St. Josaphat parish in Ville Emard, which had ceased operations.

In 1993 a young priest from Ukraine, Rev. Petro Dvirnyk, became pastor of St. Michael's. During his time the parish acquired a beautiful *plashchanytsia*,<sup>14</sup> made in Greece. The church committee took over all the administrative aspects of parish life. Father Dvirnyk kept in constant contact with all parishioners, despite the fact that he also serviced the mission of St. Andrew the Apostle, established on the western part of the island of Montreal in 1994.

In 2001, on the initiative of the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Rev. Markian Shashkevych, a committee was struck to mark the Year of Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj. Many key people from the Ukrainian community were invited to sit on the committee; it eventually comprised 12 people, headed by Brotherhood secretary Jurij Lewyckyj. Two other Brotherhood members were also on the committee: Methodius Kinakh and Ivan Stelmazuk.

The celebrations were held in three stages. On November 3-4, 2001, an academic conference-symposium was held at McGill University in which seven lecturers from Montreal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, and Chicago took part: Ukrainian Orthodox Church bishop Vsevolod Maydansky, Rev. Dr. Ihor Kutash, Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak, Rev. Dr. Petro Galadza, Rev. Dr. Andrij Chyrovsky, Rev. Dr. Myroslaw Tataryn, and Dr. Andrij Krawchuk. The organizers of the conference-symposium were helped immeasurably by Dr. Yarema Kelebay. A celebratory academic and literary evening was held on November 10, with Bohdanna Monczak, treasurer of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League at St. Michael's parish, as guest speaker, and with the participation of the choir of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary church, reciter Vala Golash, the students of the Metropolitan Sheptytsky Ukrainian

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<sup>14</sup> A sacred cloth depicting the crucified body of Christ, displayed in church on Good Friday.

school, and a vocal trio from the Metropolitan Szeptyckyj division of Plast. The celebrations concluded November 11 with an arch hierarchical liturgy at St. Michael's church led by Bishop Cornelius with all the Ukrainian priests of Montreal as co-celebrants. The organizing committee also issued a memorial booklet, which contained, among others, a poem by Rev. Petro Dvirnyk, a poem by Iryna Chaykivska-Pavliv, and an article by Jurij Lewyckyj on Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj's role in the organization of Ukrainian church life in Montreal. The committee also issued memorial tape recordings, which were sold at all Montreal churches. The net profit from these sales was donated to the Metropolitan Szeptyckyj Institute in Ottawa (\$275), and to the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv (\$609).

On February 21, 2003 the parish was visited by Patriarch Lubomyr Huzar. The patriarch conducted a *moleben*<sup>15</sup> in the evening, followed by a communal supper in the parish hall, attended by Ukrainian priests from across Montreal, the members of the church committee, and parishioners.

In the fall of 2003 Rev. Dvirnyk was transferred to Toronto, and the pastor of the Holy Ghost parish, Rev. Wolodymyr Vitt, was appointed temporary administrator of St. Michael's. In September 2006 Bishop Stepan Chmilar appointed Rev. Ihor Oshchipko — a young, enthusiastic priest with plans to invigorate the liturgical and community life of the parish — as pastor of St. Michael's. To date the young pastor is implementing his plans with great vigour and success.

### Church Organizations

As we have already remarked, many organizations have been active at St. Michael's parish. Among them:

The Sisters of the Apostolate of Prayer founded February 10, 1929, ceased operations February 16, 1987. On the first Sunday of each month, excepting July and August, the Sisters conducted an hour of collective prayer in the church and with donations collected at the church entrance (which were augmented by their own gifts) cared for the altar, the priests' liturgical vestments, and other material items. The Sisters also cared for the poor and visited the sick.

The Sisters of the Most Holy Heart of Christ were active at the time of the Basilian Fathers and Rev. Kushniryk. Unfortunately there is no information available on the nature of their activity.

The Children of Mary, an association for school-aged children founded in 1944. It was led by the Order of Sister Servants, who taught the children and led them in procession at the end of the May *moleben* cycle, where they gave a small concert in honour of the Virgin Mary. No further details are available.

The Association of St. Mary the Protectress, active in 1926, helped to collect funds to pay the church's debts. No further details are available.

Ukrainian Catholic Youth, founded in 1942 as 'Ukrainian Catholic Young People'. The organization was split into two sections in 1951, one for older youth, and one for younger, for both sexes. UCY members organized various events, mostly dances, donating the proceeds to the church. At UCY meetings priests gave lectures

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<sup>15</sup> A special service of thanksgiving.

on Church history and Ukrainian traditions, and encouraged the youth to take an active part in church life and the sacraments. A series of so-called 'closed retreats' was organized for them in 1951. A Montreal District executive was founded on April 10, 1960. Active UCY members were Yuri Bryniawsky, Theodor Batiuk, Gerald Konanec, Zenon Bryniawsky, Lubomyr Kvasnytsia, Donna Shmelka, Roksolana Baran, Taras Zahoruyko, Ihor and Petro Petrazhnyk, and Myron Stepan Ulczak. The UCY ceased operations in 1975.

The Ukrainian Students' Society 'Obnova', formed in 1951 on the initiative of Rev. Nazarko. The first head of the society was architecture student Radoslav Zuk. In 1966 it was headed by Wolodymyr Popovych. The society held monthly discussion meetings, organized student dances, excursions, pilgrimages, etc. Protocols of the church committee show that in 1968 Obnova was 'no longer active as an organization.'

An altar boy organization was formed in 1944. Altar boys' main task was to serve at the altar during various services. Altar boys also read the Epistle on Sundays and on feast days. Due to a shortage of boys, girls were allowed to join as of 2003. The size of the organization varied from period to period — there were 18 boys in 1966, 23 in 1971, and one boy and five girls in 2008. The spiritual leader of the organization was either the parish priest or one of his assistants. The first head of the organization was Vasyl Mandziuk; in 1966 it was Ivan Fenchak; in 1970 Wolodymyr Bugera; in 1971 Daniel Kocur; in 1972 Andrij Monczak; in 1973 Orest Wagner. Active members were Stepan Cymbalista, Orest Wagner, Serge Dyda, Lida Dyda, Petro Ulychnyj, and the Pavlo, Andrij and Taras Figol. The objective of the altar boy organization was to nurture friendships and Christian spirituality. But as the boys and girls became dispersed throughout the city it proved difficult to hold regular meetings during the school year, when members attended state schools five days a week and Ukrainian school on Saturdays. Parents were also reluctant to send their children long distances alone in the evenings, especially to the older part of the city where the church is located. Meetings of the organization have therefore been held mostly on school holidays. Some members attended summer courses in Rome (costs were covered by the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League), as well as a youth congress convened by the Pope. Before Christmas and Easter altar boys and girls would sell Christmas and Easter cards for the convenience of parishioners and to raise funds. In 1976 funds collected by the altar boy organization paid for the purchase of 12 deacon vestments; the rest were purchased by the Sister Servants. One altar boy, Andrij Figol, became a priest. In the parish's 1978 annual report we start to read about subdeacons, *chetsi* (readers), and *svichkonostsi* (candle carriers), functions more compatible with the eastern rite than altar boys.

The Association of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, known to have been active in the downtown district in 1927. The association helped administer the parish. There is no further information on this group in parish archives.

A group of Scouts — the Ukrainian Scouts Troop of St. Michael's — was active at the parish. Its long-time leader was Stefan Paliy, who died in 1961. The troop is mentioned in the 1949 protocols of the church committee. Among the Scouts'

duties was to serve at the Sunday liturgy. With the arrival of *skytaltsi*<sup>16</sup> and members of Plast,<sup>17</sup> the Ukrainian Scouts Troop disappeared.

Mutual Aid, Branch 19. A parish association, renewed in 1946, that helped the parish raise funds to pay its debts. The fate of this association is unknown.

The Reading Group of Ivan Franko had its own building with a hall on Frontenac Street, where regular and extraordinary parish meetings were held in 1921-1922. Parish documents provide no information on what happened to this organization.

The Sich Society and the Hetman Union. A branch of the Sich Society was organized at the parish in the 1930s. The organization was founded May 25, 1924 in Toronto by Ukrainian immigrants after the First World War. The chief promoter of 'Sich' and its ideas in Montreal was Walter J. Bossy.<sup>18</sup> The central leadership of the organization was in Winnipeg. The main aim of the Montreal Sich organization was to work for the good of the parish. From December 13, 1936 it was allowed to use the parish hall for its needs. But the central leadership in Winnipeg increasingly began to emphasize the hetman (monarchist) principles on which the Sich organization had been founded and to promote monarchist ideas. This alienated a part of the membership, causing a split in the Montreal branch. One group of members, under the name of 'Zaporizhian Sich', began to work with the church Brotherhood of St. Sophie, while the rest changed their name to the Hetman Union. The Hetman Union was formally founded in Canada in July 1931. Its members were well educated, and many held university degrees. Although the Union was not officially a parish organization, it held its meetings in the parish hall and assisted with parish fundraising events. Its head was Theofil Olijnyk. In 1941 the Hetman organization had its own wardrobe at the parish hall, where it stored its hetman dresses. The parishes of St. Michael's and the Holy Ghost in Pointe St-Charles were very active in organizing *hetmanyach*<sup>19</sup> Danylo's visit to Montreal in 1938. A liturgy was celebrated at St. Michael's parish along with a service for the fallen. The *hetmanyach* was everywhere attended by an honour guard of Union members in Sich uniform. *Hetmanyach* Danylo was welcomed gladly everywhere; he was seen as a Ukrainian 'ambassador of good will.' The Hetman Union was one of the founders of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee. The motto of the hetman idea was 'With God for the Fatherland!' The Union's standard is still at the parish, even though the Montreal branch no longer exists.

It should also be noted that nationalist organizations, such as the Ukrainian National Federation or the later League for the Liberation of Ukraine, were not connected to St. Michael's parish, although individual members of these organizations played an active part in the parish's life.

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<sup>16</sup> Displaced persons, exiles, political and religious refugees arriving in Canada after World War Two.

<sup>17</sup> A Ukrainian scouting organization founded by Olexander Tysovsky in 1911, based on, but not identical with, the Scouting organization founded by Lord Baden-Powell.

<sup>18</sup> The grandfather of famous hockey player Mike Bossy.

<sup>19</sup> *Hetmanyach* – Danylo Skoropadskyj, the son of Last Hetman of Ukraine in 1918.

The arrival of the third wave of immigration transformed the character of the Montreal Ukrainian community. New organizations sprung up. Some of them, like Plast, used the church's premises for a time for their meetings. Plast's chaplain was St. Michael's pastor Rev. Dr. Ireneus Nazarko; SUM's founding meeting was held in St. Michael's parish hall.

But let us look more closely now at two of the strongest organizations at the parish, the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood.

### **The Ukrainian Catholic Women's League**

The beginnings of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League (UCWL) at St. Michael's parish can be traced to 1934, when a women's auxiliary of the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood was created. This auxiliary became the Organization of Ukrainian Women in 1945 and a parish branch of the UCWL in December 1949. The branch celebrated its 25th anniversary in October 1970.

The heads of the branch have been: Olha Fedoryk (1949-1950), Maria Hrytsiuk (1951), Katherine Werbycka (1951-1961), Sofia Mandziuk (1961-1963, 1972-1974), Sylvia Savchuk (1963-1965), Katherine Kravets (1965-1969), Maria Samborska (1969-1972), Maria Kharkhalis (1974-1980), Ludmyla Lewycka (1980-1990), and Julia Tucka (1990-2004).

The branch held monthly meetings, often with guest speakers. The branch organized the parish's Epiphany Eve suppers and other feast day meals. It also held bazaars for various charitable purposes, including Ukrainian refugees from Poland. It organized annual festivities to mark the end of the academic year of the parish's Saturday school for as long as the school existed. It organized frequent pilgrimages to various holy places in Quebec. Justine Jablonska taught an embroidery course, providing members an opportunity not only to learn this beautiful craft, but to get together each Wednesday for some pleasant and useful work. In the weeks before Easter, Maria Murij taught the parish youth how to write *pysanky*.<sup>20</sup>

Intensive efforts were undertaken from the very beginning to set up a kindergarten for the youngest members of the parish. The main obstacle was the lack of suitable premises. A part-time kindergarten was set up in 1952 for two days a week in the parish hall, run by Jaroslava Bryniawska and Maria Solonyinka, and once a week at Plast's premises in the downtown district, run by Natalia Brodowycz. Despite parent demand and the ready availability of volunteers, the various obstacles to a permanent, full-time kindergarten, which included strict government requirements, proved insurmountable in the end. This was due primarily to the geographical dispersal of Ukrainians in the large city, which made bringing children to the centre difficult. The kindergarten folded after only one season, ending with a children's concert. The kindergarten had been staffed entirely by volunteers.

In 1954 a children's theatre group 'Veselka' was organized in the parish under the UCWL's care. The manager and director was Bohdan Biloshevsky, with Daria Sawka responsible for costumes and choreography, and Roman Nehrebetsky for the

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<sup>20</sup> Ukrainian Easter eggs. *Pysanky* are not painted, but 'written'.

musical accompaniment. The first performance of the group, together with children from the parish school, was on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj. It was called 'The Children's Bow to the Great Metropolitan.' Later the children's theatre put on a series of performances: Hans Christian Andersen's tale 'The Little Match Girl'; 'A Forest Feast' performed on the traditional Ukrainian eve of Ivan Kupalo; a spring festival which included a children's choir, ballet, and national dances; a Christmas *kutia* for all the children of Montreal, at which the group gave three short performances — Ukrainian carollers, 'Christmas in the Forest,' and 'The Mitten' — the event was later repeated at St. Basil the Great parish in Lachine. The theatre group consisted of over 40 children. It ceased operations in 1955 following a traffic accident in which director Bohdan Biloshevsky sustained injuries that left him crippled and from which he later succumbed. The 'Veselka' theatre was reconstituted in 1973, but no longer at St. Michael's. In 1957 a 'Young Theatre' organized by Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk performed 'The King before the Icon,' which Rev. Kushniryk had written himself. The theatre disbanded after the performance.

Individual UCWL members visited sick members of the parish at home or in the hospital, brought to them presents, and saw to it that liturgies and prayers were offered for their recovery. They helped and comforted the needy. The UCWL organized festive lunches on the feast day of the Sts. Peter and Paul chapel at Camp Ukraina. UCWL members adorned the chapel with embroideries. They also embroidered the church banners at St. Michael's.

In concert with a renewed Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Markian Shashkevych, the UCWL branch at the parish launched 'Friendly Discussion Hours' for both young and old; the first such hour was held on February 17, 1975. These 'Hours' were to be held each Tuesday afternoon. However, apart from a few brief presentations on the topic of Mother's Day and the screening of some films and slides, the 'Hours' failed to grow, and soon ended.

In 1976 the UCWL branch acquired new embroidered sacerdotal vestments for the parish, and embroidered four church banners. But it was the branch's charitable work that was of the greatest importance to its members. The third Sunday of each month UCWL members would collect money at the church entrance for charitable aims. In the 1950s and 1960s aid was sent in the first place to emigrants still in Germany. For example: in 1953 the branch sent aid in the sum of \$573; in 1955, \$972. In the 1970s the branch began to send clothes packages to all parts of the globe: to Ukrainian invalids in Austria, to monasteries, seminaries, and schools in Argentina and Brazil, where Ukrainian families were in great need. The branch sent aid to Poland as well: for the construction of a theological seminary in Bilyj Bir, a school in Peremyshl, a lyceum in Legnica; for the Foundation of St. Vladimir in Cracow; for a monastery in Gorlice; to nuns in Peremyshl and Czechoslovakia. In the 1980s Ukrainian students began to arrive in great numbers from Poland, and the branch gave them one-time assistance — the entire proceeds from a bazaar. The branch also sent food packages to priests for distribution to their faithful.

Towards the end of the 1980s a spiritual centre for Ukrainian youth commenced construction in Bosnia (then Yugoslavia), and Rev. Petro Ovad<sup>21</sup> turned to church communities throughout the world for assistance. The UCWL branch at St. Michael's responded, and UCWL member Bohdanna Monczak was present in Prnavor when the new centre was blessed. In 1982 the branch donated funds for the consecration of a newly constructed church in Lourdes and continued to help Rev. Pryjma<sup>22</sup> for the duration of the branch's existence, for example: in 1981, \$784.08 in aid; in 1985, \$1,541.00; in 1986, \$2,644.33; in 1987, \$1,698.90; in 1988, \$1,715.65; in 1989, \$2,085.00.

When in the late 1980s the Soviet Union was undergoing its period of *perestroika*, the branch dedicated much time and effort to sending copies of Holy Scripture and other religious texts to Ukraine. In one year alone the branch forwarded \$1,085 worth of literature. Following Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 the branch assisted financially with the rebuilding of monasteries (such as the monastery of the Fathers of Studite Order in Univ), churches (the church of St. Mykola of Podil in Kyiv, a cathedral in Zarvanytsia), orphanages, and publishing houses (the Fathers of Studite Order at St. Michael's church in Lviv and the publishing house 'Kind Heart' in Drohobych).

The branch's cultural-educational activities in its first years were probably the most successful. This was a time when people gladly gathered for various occasions. The branch paid particular attention to figures of heroic women. At its meetings the branch read the evangelically-themed stories of Natalena Koroleva and the memoirs of metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj's mother, there were lectures on the literary and artistic work of Lesia Ukrainka and Taras Shevchenko, on the world-famous soprano Solomia Krushelnytska, on the American founder of the Sisters of Mercy Elizabeth Seton. The branch also observed the memory of dissident Ukrainian poets such as Vasyl Marchenko, Vasyl Stus, Oleksij Tychy, Yuri Lytwyn, Stephanie Shabatura, Oksana Meshko, Iryna Senyk, and the 500 women prisoners crushed by Soviet tanks in Kingiri.

Much time and effort went into setting up a library. The core of the library was 420 books by Ukrainian writers that the branch had acquired over many years. The library was managed by Oksana Czartorynska. On Sundays after Mass during the cold winter months the library offered the parishioners a hot breakfast, especially before the lectures of the Montreal branch of the Ukrainian Catholic University.

But with time branch ULCW membership declined. Older members passed away, and were not replaced by younger members, while those who remained grew old. The activity of the branch dwindled. The parish's annual reports from 2002 and 2003 no longer include any reports of the branch's activity, only a financial accounting. Finally, at the General UCWL Meeting of December 12, 2004, after 71 years of very active and beneficial work for the parish, the branch closed.

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<sup>21</sup> Rev. Petro Ovad was a pastor of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Prnavor, Bosnia.

<sup>22</sup> Pastor of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Lourdes.

## **The Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Rev. Markian Shashkevych**

The Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood (UCB) of Rev. Markian Shashkevych at St. Michael's parish existed from the very beginnings of the parish, although its name changed several times in the parish's history. Its oldest name — the Reading Room of Markian Shashkevych — was later changed to the Markian Shashkevych Society. The society's banner is preserved at the parish to this day. There were times throughout its existence when the activity of the Brotherhood declined, but it always picked up again. The society was renewed on March 18, 1933 with Illa Pereyma as chair, who was the brains and soul of the Shashkevych Society for a long time.

The Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood was formed on March 4, 1934. In 1936 it was headed by Stepan Yarema. It merged with the Markian Shashkevych Society on August 17, 1937 to form a single organization, the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood (UCB) of Markian Shashkevych, with Illa Pereyma as head. The Brotherhood's frequent reincarnations led to frequent modifications of its name. UCB youth were very active at the time, and organized many entertaining and educational events. In 1950 the UCB became the Ukrainian Catholic Union. The Union was responsible for founding a Ukrainian school at the parish for children of elementary and high school age. There were also a dance ensemble, a mandolin orchestra, and a church choir.

The UCB's activity was renewed on April 22, 1956 on the initiative of older Montreal students (the 'Obnova' Society), with a new administration headed by Konstantin Kelebay. The Brotherhood hosted speakers on such topics as the people — the nation — the state; the Catholic world view; the Brotherhood's patron saint Wolodymyr the Great; and the Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj. It also organized various cultural events. The renewed Brotherhood was active until the late 1950s, when its activity ebbed once again, but it was never disbanded. In 1966 the Brotherhood existed under the name of the Organization of Young Catholic Men, headed by Prof. Bohdan Bachynsky.

The Brotherhood was renewed once more on January 25, 1976, under its final name, the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Rev. Markian Shashkevych. Together with the local UCWL branch it hosted 'Friendly Discussion Hours' each Tuesday afternoon. The first event organized by the renewed UCB was the screening, first at St. Michael's parish and then at other Montreal parishes, of a full-length film on patriarch Josyf's visit to Canada.

The leaders of the UCB at this time were Konstantin Kelebay (from January 22, 1956), Eustachio Ilczyszyn (from December 11, 1977 to December 13, 1981), Vasyl Brodowycz (1981-1985), Jurij Lewyckyj (1985-1996), and Methodius Kinakh (1996-2004).

The UCB branch usually met on the second Sunday of the month. It also collected donations each Sunday at the church entrance for such aims as the parish fund, its own organizational needs, or the Committee in Defence of Valentyn Moroz. On the UCB's initiative a mixed choir was formed at the parish.

The UCB branch also helped with the distribution of the journal *The Patriarchate*, edited by Ivan Komarnyckyj.

The UCB branch was part of the Eparchial UCB, which in turn was part of the UCB of Canada. The local UCB branch at the parish awaited directives from the

Eparchial UCB and the UCB of Canada, but for the most part it worked on its own initiative. It held monthly meetings at which, apart from administrative matters, there always were speakers on religious, church, or national matters. The lectures were open to all members of the parish, and they were well attended. Speakers included Bohdan Klymowskyj, Ihor Pryshlak, Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak, Dr. Jurij Lewyckyj, Lubomyra Brykowych, Jaroslaw Pryshlak, Jaroslaw Sokolyk (from Toronto), and Vasyl Brodowycz.

From 1977 the UCB organized festivals at Camp Ukraina and provided overall assistance to the camp. In the weeks before Easter 1977, the UCB cleaned the church's walls, and from 1979 took over from the altar boy organization the sale of Easter and Christmas greeting cards.

From 1985 the UCB took over the collection of donations for scholarships for needy Ukrainian students in Brazil and Argentina. In 1985-1987 alone the UCB collected and forwarded over \$22,010.00 in scholarships; in 1991, \$4,184.96.

In 1990 the UCB sent 50 copies of the prayer book *The Christian Family*, 70 copies of Holy Scripture, five copies of the book *Christ Is Passing By*, and a few songbooks, to Ukraine.

On November 22, 1998 UCB member Jurij Lewyckyj was inducted into the order of the Knights of St. Wolodymyr. The induction was conducted by Bishop Cornelius. On March 10, 2002 UCB member Methodius Kinakh was inducted into the order as well.

In 2001, on the UCB's initiative, the parish grandly observed the Year of Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj.

But with the time UCB membership declined. Older members passed away, there was no influx of younger members, and those who remained grew old. The work of the branch dwindled. The branch held no general meeting after 2002 due to the illness of its head. Finally, at the Annual Meeting of December 12, 2004, the branch was formally disbanded, ending many active years of very beneficial work for the parish and the broader Ukrainian community.

### **The Parish School**

The parish ran a 7-grade elementary-level Saturday school for the parishioners' children, where the Ukrainian language, rite, religion, and art were taught. There is no information on when the school started. The school year ran from September to May, with classes held Saturdays from 9:00 to 12:00 in two rooms of the church residence building. The classes were taught by the Sister Servants, who arrived in Montreal in 1936. Later, Wolodymyr Kuplowsky taught Ukrainian language at the school, Petro Kushnir taught art, while religion and the Ukrainian rite were taught by school director Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk, and later by Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak.

The school was managed by a parents' committee, elected at a parents' meeting. Tuition in 1970-71 and 1971-72 was \$6 per month per family.

The number of children at the school varied greatly over the years. Thirteen children were registered for the 1970-71 school year; only 10 children completed the 1971-72 school year. Only six children were registered in 1972-73. Because of

decreasing enrolment, the church committee decided not to reopen the school for the 1973-74 sessions — April 1973 was therefore the last month of the parish school's existence. What students remained transferred to the Andrej Szeptyckyj School.

From 1950 the parish also ran the Metropolitan Andrej Szeptyckyj School for students of high-school age. After a few years, the school passed under the patronage of the deaconate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

### **Camp Ukraina and Summer Camps**

On August 10, 1938 the parish purchased a 640-acre farm in the Laurentian Mountains, 100 kilometres north of the city, for \$6,500. The property was intended for children's summer camps. It was christened 'Camp Ukraina'. A special committee was elected on May 13, 1943 to take care of the camp's administration.

At the time of purchase a number of buildings were already standing on cleared sections of the property. The parish built a few more, including a large two-storey structure for children; with a kitchen and dining room on the ground floor and sleeping quarters upstairs (today it is known as 'the red building'). The first children's summer camp was held in July 1939. But the building proved too small as the number of children grew sharply with the arrival of *skytaltsi* after World War Two. In the 1950s Camp Ukraina was also used by the youth association Plast for its summer camps, before it acquired its own camp 'Baturyn' in the Eastern Townships.

So in 1952 the parish erected a new building on the property for the Ukrainian children of Montreal, at a cost of \$14,800. The building was consecrated on July 20, 1952. The children's camp was administered solely by St. Michael's parish. The camp usually ran three weeks, beginning the first Sunday in July. The number of campers varied year to year. In 1969 there were 50 children at the camp (21 boys and 29 girls), ranging in age from 7 to 17. The wide range in campers' ages forced the 1970 camp to be divided into two separate camps: a younger children's camp for the 7-13 year olds, with 30 participants, running from July 5 to July 26, and a teenager camp for 13-17 year olds, which ran from July 26 to August 9 with 20 participants. In 1971 only the younger children's camp was held, as there weren't sufficient numbers for an older children's camp.

The camps were led for the longest time by Vasyl Bryniawsky. Other leaders were Orest Cap (1969), Ivan Korol (1971), Oleksij Fenyk (1972), Vasyl Kostyk (1973), Oleksij Sydor (1975), Josyf Macuk (1976), and Hryhorij Oshchypko (1977).

Counsellors at the camp included Jaroslava Bryniawska, Luba Lewycka, Bohdan Biloszewskyj, Ivan Brykowych, and Matvij Sochotskyj. In 1969 the boys' counsellors were Taras Zahoruyko, Richard Mesys, Mykhajlo Stepanchak, Vasyl Mandziuk, Roman Kostiuk; the girls' counsellors were Sofia Ulychna, Ola Kulish, Olena Nestoruk, and Vira Kaluzhna. In 1973 the boys' counsellors were Danylo Kocur, Stepan Bilas, and Oles Kostyk; for the girls, Martyna Kocur and Lesia Atamaniuk. In 1975 the counsellors were Orest Wagner, Stefan Cymbalista, and Martyna Kocur. In 1976 the counsellors were Stefan Cymbalista, Orest Wagner, and Julia Pichur. In 1977 the counsellors were Orest Wagner, Vasyl Slavych, and Myroslava Cymbalista.

The cost per person for the three-week camp was \$60. This was raised to \$90 in 1975 and to \$105 in 1977. For those unable to pay, costs were covered by the church committee's Mutual Aid Society, the UCWL, the Ukrainian Catholic Young Men's Union, or by individual parishioners. The camps were run on a not-for-profit basis.

In 1973 Camp Ukraina administrators provided neither a profit and loss statement for the camp as a whole, nor a financial report for the children's camp. This led to serious tensions between the church committee and the camp administration, the latter headed by Dr. Stepan Klemchuk. Although there was a children's camp in 1974, there is no financial report for it.

With the growth of summer camps run by other youth organizations, such as Plast and SUM, the number of participants in the parish's camps declined, and in 1978 the camps ceased to be held. The last camp was held from July 10 to July 31, 1977. The children's building, half-empty during the camps, and unused entirely during the rest of the year, was rented out to vacationing parishioners. The parish decided that unless at least 50 children expressed an interest in a camp, the premises should be used for other purposes.

### **Cantors**

We should note that in the parish's early days, to the usual duties of a cantor were added not only the conducting of the church choir and the preparation of concerts and other performances, but all the caretaking duties at the church, including the heating. In other words, the cantor was also both sexton and caretaker, and the job a full-time one. But at a stipend of only \$30 per week, not many could afford to take it on. The first cantor at the parish, until 1918, was Ivan Ziolkovsky. He was followed by Julian Pielukh. M. Wojcyszyn was cantor until 1920. Mr. Petrykanyn (first name unknown) was cantor for one month in April 1923, and was followed by Julian Pielukh, with Mr. Pryputnyckyj (first name unknown) as sexton. In 1925 the cantor was Mr. Czornobaj (first name unknown), and in 1926, Mr. Waseczko (first name unknown). Mykhajlo Golembiovsky was a temporary cantor in 1927, and was followed, once again, by Mr. Czornobaj. In 1928-1930 the cantor was Julian Pielukh; in 1930-1935, Petro Bahrij, who also directed the choir. In 1936 Mr. Waseczko was temporary cantor, and then, for a short time, Philip Basa, followed by Ivan Didukh as cantor and choir conductor from October 9, 1936 to December 1941. From March 1 to November 30, 1942 the cantor and conductor was Prof. Philip Basa. He was followed, on a temporary basis, by Mr. Gandziuk (first name unknown), and later by Mr. Ostachuk (first name unknown). From January 1943 to December 31, 1949 the cantor was again Ivan Didukh, followed by Vasyl Bryniawsky (later to become a priest). In 1971 there were two cantors: Olexander Fenyk was the main cantor, while Oleksij Petrazhnyk was assigned to duties downtown. From 1977 to November 8, 1987 Oleksij Petrazhnyk was sole parish cantor, with Ivan Komarnyckyj assisting. The duties of sexton were performed for a long time by Anastasia Cymbalista. From 1987 on (though officially only from April 23, 1990) the cantor is Jurij Lewyckyj, with Ivan Komarnyckyj continuing as assistant until his death, upon which he was replaced by Ivan Stelmazuk, who was followed by Marko Bednarczyk.

## **The Church Choir**

In 1932-1935 the church choir was led by the cantor Petro Bahrij, who also organized concerts in the parish hall. The duties of conductor were continued by subsequent cantors. The finest church choir was under cantor Vasyl Bryniawsky, a graduate of the Theological Academy in Lviv and later ordained a priest. The choir performed at Christmas and Easter concerts broadcast by the CBC.

The parish also had a men's church choir, conducted until 1966 by Roman Nehrebetsky and until 1969 by Rostyslaw Kulish. This was under the pastorships of Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk and Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak. The choir dissolved in the summer of 1969. In the fall of 1972 the church committee tried energetically to start a new choir, but it wasn't until just before Easter 1976, on the initiative of the parish branch of the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood, that a mixed church choir was formed at the parish with Stepan Harasymowycz as conductor. Members of the choir administration were Stepan Chaban and Oleksij Sydor. However, due to the lack of new members, the choir dissolved on November 19, 1989, when it sang one last time at a festive liturgy. Since then the faithful have been led in song by the cantor.

A small wind orchestra had been organized at the church in 1935, led by Rev. Jean, who taught parishioners how to play the instruments. The orchestra performed at various parish functions, such as feast-day lunches, and took part in the city's annual St-Jean Baptist parade.

## **The Chapel of Sts. Wolodymyr and Olha at Camp Baturyn**

The parish of St. Michael the Archangel is closely associated with the chapel of Sts. Wolodymyr and Olha at Plast camp Baturyn in the Eastern Townships. Its construction was overseen by a special chapel committee, chaired by a member of St. Michael's parish (the committee continues to this day), although members from the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary have sat on the committee as well. Both the architectural plans for the chapel and the supervision of its material construction were the responsibility of St. Michael's parishioner Myron Monczak. All the theological aspects of the chapel — its form, adornment, liturgical texts — were overseen by St. Michael's pastor Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak. All the embroideries for the chapel's consecration on July 29, 1979 by Bishop Isidore Boretsky were loaned by St. Michael's parish. For many years, Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak served as chaplain.

## **The Priests of St. Michael's Parish**

The history of priests at St. Michael's parish may be divided into three periods:

- 1911-1932 — the period of eparchial priests
- 1932-1952 — the period of the Basilian Fathers
- 1952-today — the return of eparchial priests.

The First Period — Eparchial Priests

Pastors	Years
Rev. Dr. Cyril Yermij	September 1, 1911 - June 25, 1912
Rev. Adonais Sabourin	June 25, 1912 - October 20, 1912
Rev. Arthur Desmarais	October 21, 1912 - August 5, 1913
Rev. Dr. Ambrose Redkevych	August 7, 1913 - September 28, 1913
Rev. Dr. Ivan Perepelytsia	October 19, 1913 - July 1, 1915
Rev. Dr. Ambrose Redkevych	July 1, 1915 - February 1921
Rev. Lev Sembratovych	February 1921
Rev. Mykhailo Irkha	March 1921 - April 1922
Rev. Dr. Josyf Zhuk	May 1922
Rev. Vasyl Gegeyчук	May 1922 - August 1922
Rev. Mykhailo Olenchuk	August 1922 - September 1922
Rev. Dr. Ambrose Redkevych	November 1922 - August 1, 1925
Rev. Mykhailo Hrvhoriiczuk	August 15, 1925 – December 1931
Rev. Josyf Bala	January 1932 - July 31, 1932
Assistants	Years
Rev. Theodor Dwulit	1911-1912
Rev. I. Dumych	1913
Rev. Andrij Kraykivsky	1916-1917
Rev. Kryzhanivsky	1927
Rev. Ivan Holovka	1927-1928
Rev. Joseph Jean	1930-1931
Rev. Vasyl Charny	1931
Rev. Ivan Kalutsky	1932

The Second Period — the Basilian Fathers

Pastors	Period
Rev. Josaphat Tymoczko, OSBM	August 1, 1932 - September 17, 1940
Rev. Josaphat Jean, OSBM	September 17, 1940 - October 12, 1942
Rev. Paul Hewko, OSBM	October 12, 1942 - February 1944
Rev. Josaphat Tymochko, OSBM	February 1944 - October 1946
Rev. Sebastian Shevchuk, OSBM	October 1946 - September 1948
Rev. Josaphat Tymoczko, OSBM	September 1948 - September 1951
Rev. Myron Daciuk, OSBM	September 1951 - October 31, 1952
Assistants	Period
Rev. Josaphat Jean, OSBM	1933-1935; 1937-1939
Rev. Vasyl Kameneckv	1933
Rev. Andrij Truch, OSBM	1935-1937
Rev. Mykhailo Horechko, OSBM	1936
Rev. Paul Olensky, OSBM	1936
Rev. Martyn Wintsentaylo, OSBM	1938
Rev. Isidore Kohut, OSBM	1940-1941
Rev. Petro Kotovych, OSBM	1941-1945
Rev. Matvih Cianchuk, OSBM	1942-1945
Rev. Ireneus Protsentij, OSBM	1943
Rev. Khrystofor Kondratiuk, OSBM	1943-1945
Rev. Theodosij Greb, OSBM	1946-1949
Rev. Dr. Irvneus Katrih, OSBM	1950
Rev. Vasyl Kamenetsky, OSBM	1951

Rev. Petro Hewko, OSBM	1952
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### Third Period — Return of Eparchial Priests

Pastors	Period
Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk	November 1, 1952 - February 7, 1969
Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak	June 1, 1969 - September 20, 1990
Rev. Ivan M. Frevishvn-Chvrovsky	September 20, 1990- May 25, 1993
Rev. Petro Dvirnyk	May 25, 1993 - September 1, 2003
Rev. Wolodymyr Vitt	September 1, 2003 - September 1, 2006
Rev. Ihor Oshchipko	September 1, 2006 - today
Assistants	Period
Rev. Taras Harasymchuk	November 1, 1952 - 1959
Rev. Edward Yarema	1959-1960
Rev. Josyf Kutny	1960-1962
Rev. Mykola Markiv	1952-1958; 1962-1966
Rev. Stepan Koliankivsky	1958-1965; 1968-1973
Rev. Serge Gar	1965-1967
Rev. Flavian Kalba	1966-1968
Rev. Augustine Porodko	September 1, 1969 - May 15, 1972
Rev. Wolodymyr Werbycky	July 15, 1972 - September 30, 1972

### Summary

In summary it can be said without exaggeration that the Montreal parish of St. Michael the Archangel is the immediate and intermediate maternal parish of all Ukrainian parishes in the city, be they Greek Catholic or Orthodox, as their parishioners, or their parishioners' parents or grandparents, had at one time been members of St. Michael's parish. And servant of God Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, as the founder of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel, should rightly be considered the founder of Ukrainian religious and church life in Montreal.

A large number of single people, among them older widows and widowers, have clung to the maternal parish. Younger couples, not having the long-time personal attachment to the church of their parents, choose the parish closest to them when they move to other parts of the large city. Nevertheless, many faithful from distant new districts or from the old 'downtown' still willingly overcome difficulties and inconveniences and travel some dozen kilometres, passing other, closer churches along the way, in order to worship at 'their' church. The parishioners of St. Michael's are much more dispersed and difficult to characterize geographically than those of other parishes.

Because of the several partitions of the original parish and the migration of younger generations from the poorer, working-class districts of their parents to more modern, affluent neighbourhoods 'uptown', and due to the passing away of older parishioners, parish membership has been declining: the donors list of 2009 lists only 170 names. Once numerous and very active parish organizations, such as the Sister Servants or the Ukrainian Catholic Youth, have ceased to exist. The Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood both ceased operations December 12, 2004. Perhaps most disappointingly, very few members of

the so-called ‘fourth immigration’ have joined the parish — to attract them is an absolutely essential task for the parish, because on them depends the parish’s continuing existence. But we believe that parish life will be invigorated soon, primarily as the result of the energetic and self-sacrificing work of our current pastor, Father Ihor.

In the 100 years of existence of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, 5,570 children have been baptized at the parish, 2,646 couples have been married, and 1,293 individuals<sup>23</sup> have been buried.

Finally, it should be noted that St. Michael’s parish has produced six priests: Rev. Nicolai Kushniryk, Rev. Dr. Modest Gnesko OSBM, Rev. Flavian Kalba OSBM, Rev. Dr. Ihor Monczak, Rev. Roman Kravets OSBM, and Rev. Andrij Figol. The parish has also produced three Sister Servants: Sister Theofilia, Sister Eleanor (Lenore), and Sister Karina.

The grand celebration of the parish’s 100th anniversary is planned for October 29-30, 2011.

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