



**CATHOLIC  
HOME  
MISSIONS**

## Planting Mustard Seeds of Discipleship



By Beth Griffin

**C**atholics in one of the smallest dioceses population-wise in the United States are spread across multiple states, but they are united by a vibrant liturgical tradition. The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma is headquartered in Parma, Ohio, and serves about 8,700 people in 12 Midwestern states.

The Byzantine Catholic tradition was born in the Byzantine Empire and spread to the Slavic lands by ninth century missionary brothers Sts. Cyril and

Methodius. There are four Byzantine Catholic eparchies in the United States: Parma, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; and Passaic, New Jersey. Eparchies in the Eastern Churches are like dioceses in the Latin Church.

The Byzantine Catholic Church is the name adopted by the Ruthenian Catholic Church in the United States. It uses the Byzantine rite in its liturgies, and it is one of twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches worldwide that are in full communion with the pope of Rome and enjoy the same dignity, rights, and obligations as the Roman Catholic Church.

Eastern Catholic Churches have a unique liturgical life and canon law that reflect the national or ethnic character of their region of origin. Ruthenian Catholics generally trace

their roots to regions along the Carpathian Mountains in Central Europe, namely through present-day Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, and Romania. Today, however, the faithful of this Church in the United States come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

John Popp, administrator of the Byzantine Catholic Cultural Center in Cleveland says, “Our spirituality is different, very much in the Orthodox style but fully Catholic. We’re in union with Rome, however, unity doesn’t mean conformity—our differences don’t mean we’re in competition with one another!”

The Byzantine Catholic Church in the United States was established early in the twentieth century as Slavic immigrants settled in industrial areas of Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh. But then immigration slowed during the Second World War and the Cold War.

“We’re no longer an immigrant Church. We have become an American Church. Almost everything is conducted in English,” Popp says.

New members come to the church from many backgrounds. Popp says, “Unchurched adults are searching for something they can’t find in society. Some people who left their faith years ago are looking for something to fill the void, some come from other Catholic or Christian churches.”

“Young people and families are drawn to our emphasis on theology and liturgy, which can seem very other-worldly and mystical. It engages all the senses when you enter one of our churches,” Popp says.

Most of the eparchy’s parishes are in Ohio. The Byzantine Catholic Cultural Center was

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Teens from the Eparchy of Parma go on mission trips in the summertime, sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Cultural Center. This photo was taken on a mission trip to Logan County in West Virginia in the summer of 2014.

# Neighbors

SPRING 2016

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MISSION AMERICA

# FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear Friends,

In the Gospel, we read that the Kingdom of God is like a “mustard seed that a person took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush” (Lk 13:19).

In this newsletter you will see how the Eparchy of Parma has used a small amount of resources, small like a mustard seed, to grow into a large bush capable of welcoming so many into the love of Christ.

But this story is not unique. This is the story of Mission Territory, USA.

In this newsletter, I have provided a map for you to see how extensive our home mission territory is. It comprises nearly half of our country.

But the mustard seed of faith of the dedicated people who serve these dioceses truly does grow into a large bush! And in many ways, we have you to thank for that.

Your faithful support of the Catholic Home Mission Appeal provides the encouragement and funding that these dioceses need to grow the faith. It is through your prayers and gifts that they can keep going.

This year the Catholic Home Missions Appeal will be in many parishes on April 23-24, 2016.

Please prayerfully consider supporting the appeal in whatever way you can. When you are finished reading, pass this newsletter along! Support the collection in your parish! Pray for mission dioceses!

Thank you for sharing the message of Mission Territory, USA and helping plant mustard seeds of faith across our country.

In the Heart of Christ,

*Paul D. Etienne*

Bishop Paul D. Etienne  
Diocese of Cheyenne

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developed under the direction of Bishop John Kudrick of Parma. The center addresses pastoral and spiritual concerns throughout the eparchy and does outreach and evangelization.

“The cultural center is more of an entity than a place,” Popp says. “We create programs and events for our parishes to educate parishioners about our history and traditions, as well as highlighting current issues using a Byzantine Catholic lens.”

“Bishop Kudrick sees the cultural center as a portal to the Byzantine Catholic Church. It’s a non-threatening way to learn and experience the Church and allow the richness of our theology and traditions to excite and create interest,” Popp says.

“Beyond the parishes, we are something of a mustard seed. We welcome people for an exhibit or event they might find interesting. When they go home, the seed grows, something stirs their memory and we hope it leads to deeper discipleship and a desire to learn more,” he continues.

The cultural center hosts booths at local food and arts festivals “to insert ourselves into society in a relevant way,” Popp says.

“People are surprised to see us in those locations. We can no longer be a Church that sits on a corner and waits for people to come and learn about us. We have to take who and what we are to the public square and meet people where they’re at,” Popp says.

The cultural center also offers youth camps and adult retreats.

The Eparchy of Parma has a focus on helping youth identify their vocation, whether it be to the religious life or a secular career. Popp says programs aim to develop the ability to listen to God and to hear whatever call he has for them.

“We’ve been blessed with continual interest in religious vocations. We have priests to serve our needs,” Popp says. And in some places, Roman Catholic priests seek training and permission to celebrate the Byzantine liturgy.

The Eparchy of Parma operates on a limited budget, employing a number of

lay people and priests who fill chancery positions part-time in addition to having parish responsibilities. Volunteers contribute their time and expertise. “We all wear a number of hats and have to prioritize what needs to be done,” Popp says.



Lay faithful venerate the relics of two Byzantine Catholic martyrs, both bishops in Slovakia during the communist regime, Bl. Paul Gojdich and Bl. Basil Hopko.

An ongoing strategic planning process is informed by the scripture mandate to “Go out and spread the Gospel,” Popp says.

“With our limited staff, we utilize technology to our best advantage,” Popp says. One of the efforts provides interactive live stream conferences to satellite locations accessible to parishioners. “This helped us solicit and share pastoral planning ideas with the parishes.”

The eparchy also produces Horizons, a newspaper distributed every three weeks to 3,500 households.

Bishop Kudrick has led the eparchy since 2002. He says, “The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma is a small population serving a large geographical region. With the help of the grant from the Catholic Home Missions Appeal, we have been able to communicate with each other, to educate our faithful as well as clergy, and to collaborate with other Catholic Churches’ ministries by contributing our particular experience.”

The eparchy is optimistic about the future because “Christ is our hope,” Popp says. “We know he’s always with us and wants the Churches of God to survive and thrive. He gives us the tools and grace to win souls for Christ!”



Visitors enjoy a display of stained glass windows in Cleveland, Ohio. The exhibit was sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Cultural Center.

## MISSION PROFILE: MATTHEW WILLKOM



“The Byzantine liturgy makes you feel like you’re gathered around a bonfire. It’s like a rally and Jesus is the one you’re rallying around,” Matthew Willkom explains.

He is one of a small but growing group of parishioners at the first Byzantine Catholic community in Omaha, Nebraska. Under a generous and creative arrangement, their monthly celebrations of the Divine Liturgy are conducted by local bi-ritual priests. The celebrations are held in a Ukrainian Catholic Church and the chapel of a monastery of Poor Clare Sisters.

Matthew, a program manager and producer for Spirit Catholic Radio, discovered the Byzantine Catholic Church while he was living in Minneapolis. At the time he was looking for a shortcut to work at a Catholic radio station. “I was always interested in different liturgies, but I walked in and was blown away by the beauty of the icons and the liturgy. The spirituality kept me coming back,” he says.

Matthew and his wife were also intrigued by the Eastern tradition of standing during the liturgy and moving around the church to venerate icons. He confesses the freedom of movement is a particularly attractive alternative to trying to keep their three small children quiet in a pew!

When Matthew and his family moved from Minneapolis to Omaha, they missed “that extraordinary beauty in the worship and the connection with a community that lived that spirituality,” Matthew says. In the absence of a Byzantine Catholic Church, the family worshipped at a long-established Ukrainian Catholic parish in Omaha. Matthew asked the pastor to celebrate the Byzantine Ruthenian Rite Divine Liturgy, which is chanted in English. The pastor agreed, and he and his Ukrainian Catholic bishop worked out the details with Bishop John Kudrick of Parma, head of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma.

A Benedictine monk who serves the Ukrainian and Melkite communities built Matthew’s group a Byzantine-style altar and icon table. He also celebrates the Divine Liturgy for them and has become their spiritual leader.

Now, the small community is gaining traction and hopes to reach out to others interested in the Byzantine Catholic Church, including anticipated refugees from Syria and Iraq.

The budding mission has the blessing of Bishop John Kudrick and support from the eparchy. The eparchy has provided liturgical books for the celebrant and worshippers, guidance from the outreach coordinator, and a seminar visit from Fr. Thomas Loya, a noted Byzantine Catholic pastor and speaker from Illinois.

Matthew said the young community hopes to establish a firm foundation and bring a full-time Byzantine Catholic priest to Omaha. “We want to maintain an openness to everyone, including the Ukrainian Catholics who welcomed us. At the same time, we are eager to bring forth and develop the Byzantine liturgical community in our area,” he says.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma was established in 1969. It covers Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Ohio.
- There are 8,712 parishioners in 28 parishes and four missions. Most parishes are in the Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago metropolitan areas.
- The eparchy is served by 26 diocesan priests, 15 deacons, seven women religious and three seminarians.
- Bishop John Kudrick, a Pennsylvania native, was ordained a Franciscan priest in 1975. As a Franciscan, he assisted in the parishes of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and became a priest of the archeparchy in 1987.
- In June 2014, the Vatican lifted a 1929 ban on the ordination of married men to the priesthood in Eastern Catholic Churches outside their traditional canonical territories, including the United States and Canada.
- For more information, go to [www.Parma.org](http://www.Parma.org)



About 30 women gather for the closing liturgy of an annual women’s retreat, sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Cultural Center.



*Strengthening the Church at Home*

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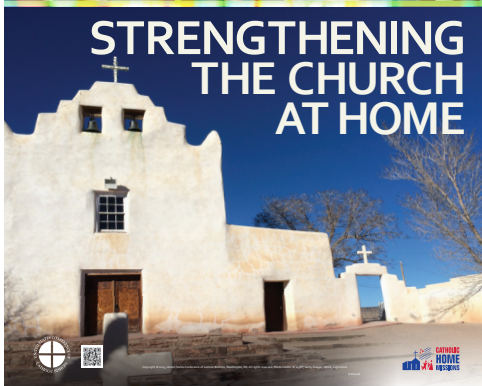
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READ ABOUT HOW THE  
faith is growing in the  
Byzantine Eparchy of Parma.



**Your generosity to the Catholic Home Missions Appeal supports essential ministries in poor dioceses across the United States and its territories.**

**THANK YOU** for being part of our efforts to strengthen the Church at home.

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