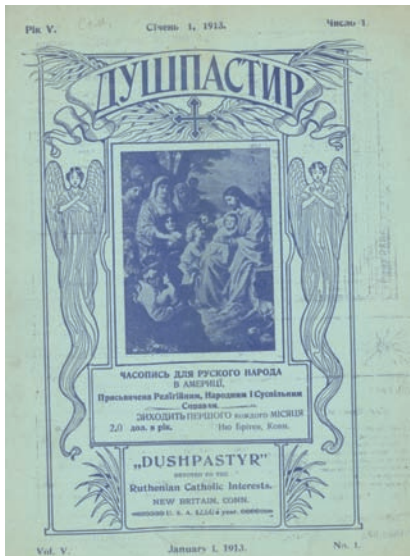


## The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

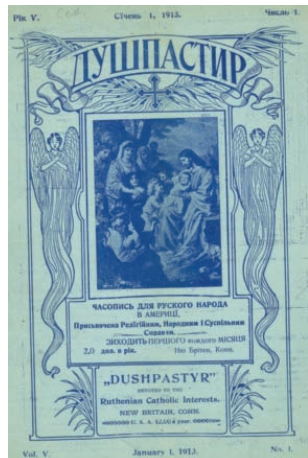
### BISHOP SOTER ORTYNSKY, OSBM, 1866-1916 by Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Bishop Soter Ortynsky, OSBM, the first Bishop for Ukrainian Greek Catholics in the United States of America. His nomination to this post in 1907 by the Vatican, was achieved through the intervention and negotiations of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky. This was indeed a major achievement for the Ukrainian Catholic Church in America.

In the late 19th century Ukrainians came to America in adequate numbers and formed themselves into communities. The Ukrainian community in Shenandoah, Pa sent a letter of appeal to Most Rev. Sylvester Sembratovych, Archbishop of Lviv, requesting priests. In reply, the Archbishop assigned Father Ivan Volansky to the Ukrainian community in Shenandoah. Father Volansky arrived in Shenandoah in 1884 and soon established a parish there, the first Ukrainian Catholic parish in the USA.

However, Father Volansky was a married priest, and this was not acceptable to the



Latin Rite clergy. Finally, as a result of numerous complaints and misunderstandings with the Latin Hierarchy, Father Volansky was recalled to Ukraine in 1889.

It is well to remember that in the five years of his work with the Ukrainian immigrant community, Father Volansky accomplished much. Although he had to deal with internal problems, e.g., Ukrainian immigrants from Galicia and those from Transcarpathia, still progress was made. Father Volansky was instrumental in bringing over from Ukraine some Greek Catholic celibate priests to help him in his work. He organized the faithful into a cohesive unit. Under his direction

parishes were established along with church choirs, evening heritage schools, cooperative general stores, brotherhoods, etc. Father Volansky was active and zealous, not only in eastern PA, but also in NJ and elsewhere.

After the departure of Father Volansky, from 1889 to 1907, there was an Apostolic Visitor, but no principal administrator for church matters; consequently, difficulties, obstacles, and misunderstandings among the parishes, the priests, and the faithful increased. The priests of the Greek Catholic Church in America appealed several times to the Vatican to assign them a Bishop, all to no avail. Finally in 1907, through the efforts of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, the Vatican named Bishop Soter Ortynsky, OSBM to be the first Bishop for the Greek Catholic Church in America.

The work of Bishop Ortynsky was not easy, because of the enmity and misunderstandings which existed among the Ukrainian faithful and priests from Halychyna and the Carpatho-Ruthenian faithful, and their priests did not abate. In addition the Russian Orthodox Church in America, generously financed by the tsarist government, did all it could to entice Galicians and the Carpatho-Ruthenians to join the Russian Orthodox Church. All this activity continually stirred up discord, controversy, and chaos among Ukrainian immigrants. Notwithstanding these numerous difficulties, Bishop Ortynsky worked tirelessly for the good of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in America, towards its administrative and organizational systematization, and successful development. Let us list just a few of his many achievements.

1. In 1908 Bishop Ortynsky purchased a Methodist Church in Philadelphia which later became the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, the consecration of which was performed by Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky in 1910.
2. In his efforts to develop parochial education, he organized in 1909 the Enlightenment Association (Prosvita) and donated a building for its headquarters.
3. From 1908 to 1914 he published a monthly magazine Dushpastyr (Pastor of Souls) dedicated to religious, national, and social aspects.
4. In 1911 he established an orphanage and school, and purchased with his own funds the required building. For the operation of these institutions he brought over from Halychyna the Basilian Sisters. For the financial support of these institutions the Bishop organized a church supply store, a bookstore, and a rug and carpet making shop. In addition to the orphanage in Philadelphia, Bishop Ortynsky purchased a

farm in Chesapeake, MD for orphan children, ages 2 to 6.

5. He established the Greek Catholic School for cantors whose additional duties were to organize parish evening schools for the teaching of Catechism, and Ukrainian history and culture.

6. In 1912 the Bishop organized a Catholic Beneficial Association named Provydinnia (Providence) and the newspaper Ameryka became its official organ.

7. He made efforts to establish a seminary and a cultural center but his untimely death did not allow him to carry out these plans. Nonetheless, his successor Metropolitan Constantine Bo-



had to endure and suffer, then these achievements are truly worthy of astonishment.

In our Ukrainian Museum and Library we have archival material which deals with Bishop Ortynsky's life and work. Among them are various publications, correspondence, pastoral letters, decrees, and many photographs.

The work of the first Ukrainian priests and of Bishop Ortynsky in the development of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

in America was difficult and extremely complicated. Nevertheless, both priests, the faithful, and especially Bishop Ortynsky, who were concerned with the permanent existence, endurance, and continuous development and well-being of our Church, worked for these aims tirelessly, often risking their own welfare. They laid a solid foundation for our Church in America, which we should accordingly and gratefully cherish, hold in high regard, and follow their good example. They overcame numerous crises, difficult predicaments, sometimes hopeless situations, but did not run away from them; on the contrary, they did their best to overcome and to solve problems which constantly came their way. We inherited from them a rich legacy from which we and a few generations prior to us have benefitted. Are we willing to act and work in the future even half as much as they did?

Our Ukrainian Museum and Library and other institutions which are still in existence, religious or civic, are truly concerned with the preservation of our heritage, and we need you to become interested in it as well. We need your concern and your financial support. A small donation from you will go a long way toward helping us to achieve our noble goal. Don't leave it to others! Begin with yourself! Always think about what legacy we shall leave for our present and future generations!

hachevsky realized and fulfilled Bishop Ortynsky's projects from 1924 onwards.

8. During World War I he was actively engaged in supplying aid for the victims of the War in Halychyna. He was especially concerned about the fate of orphans and widows, and delegated all pastors to collect funds for this purpose. By evoking patriotic feelings among his faithful, he stressed the fact that it was their duty to help their enslaved, victimized, and suffering Ukrainian brethren. To this end he coined a slogan "Let us stand all as one in giving aid".

9. From 1914 onwards he began publishing Eparkhialni visti (Eparchial News).

10. During the years 1907 to 1916 the Ukrainian Catholic Church in America grew immensely – in parishes, priests, and parishioners.

This is just a brief and superficial list of what Bishop Soter Ortynsky accomplished in the nine years from 1907 to 1916, as the Bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in America. If we consider the multitude of obstacles and impediments which he had to overcome, and the un-Christian, unjust and hostile attacks which he



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