

## A NEW PARISH (1966 – 1971)

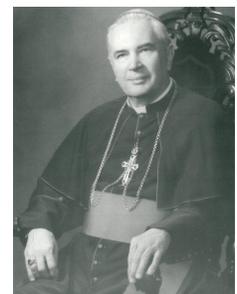
In his memoirs Archbishop Hannan noted that some Byzantine Catholics came from distances to attend the Divine Liturgy in Washington. This would influence the establishment of two more Byzantine Catholic parishes.

On October 2, 1966, the day after the feast of the Patronage of the Mother of God, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in Baltimore, Maryland. Six Byzantine Catholic families attended and became the founders of the parish in Baltimore. On February 22, 1969, Bishop Dudick, the Bishop of Passaic, named the new parish Patronage of the Mother of God Church in Baltimore. This encouraged the Byzantine Catholics living in northern Virginia who had hoped for a parish in northern Virginia to ask for a parish closer to where they lived.

One of the founders of Saint Gregory of Nyssa parish, Joseph Koshuta, and his wife Monica and their children were living in Vienna, Virginia where a new Roman Catholic parish, Saint Mark parish, had been newly established by the Bishop of Richmond. Joe Koshuta met the young associate, Father Philip Majka who was of Polish heritage and later received the honor of being made a canon of the Archdiocese of Krakow, Poland. They discussed Slavic heritage. They planned to ask the pastor of Saint Gregory, Father John Danilak, to celebrate a Byzantine Divine Liturgy at Saint Mark parish. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Saint Mark rectory chapel the feast of Saint Nicholas, patron of the Byzantine Catholic Church, December 6, 1967.

The year 1968 was a year of violence. Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy were assassinated. Following the assassination of Dr. King, riots and the burning of sections of Washington led to a curfew, limiting church ease of access. Protests against the United States involvement in the war in Vietnam created added unrest. At the beginning of the 1960's a migration to the Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs had begun already. More people left the cities and moved to the suburbs as a result of the civil unrest.

The curfew in Washington would make it difficult for Byzantine Catholics in Virginia to fulfill their obligations to attend the Divine Liturgy for holydays of obligation on weekday evenings after work and school. On Thursday, May 23, 1968, the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, and on August 15, 1968, the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Divine Liturgies were celebrated for the Byzantine Catholic faithful in northern Virginia at Saint Mark parish center, Vienna, VA to fulfill these two holydays of obligation. In the spring, Father Danilak had met with Byzantine Catholics of Northern Virginia at the home of John and Betty Markovchick. A feasibility study was initiated and was done in two parts. One was a study of land and buildings in Baltimore and the immediate surroundings in Maryland and Northern Virginia. The other was a survey by means of a questionnaire to solicit the views of the faithful concerning future plans for the Byzantine Catholics in the metropolitan Washington region.



Bishop Stephen Kocisko

The results of the survey indicated the time was propitious to begin a mission in Northern Virginia. The results of the survey were presented to the chancery office in Passaic and Bishop Stephen Kocisko, administrator of Passaic, (who later was named the first

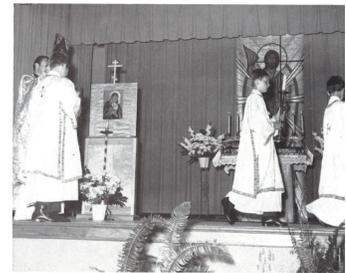
Ruthenian Metropolitan Archbishop in history) through the Vicar General, Monsignor George Durisin, granted permission for Sunday Divine Liturgies at Luther Jackson Middle School, Gallows Road, Falls Church, Virginia for a period of nine months. Following this discerning period a decision would be made whether the mission was viable to continue.



Luther Jackson Middle School

The first Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine Catholic Mission of Northern Virginia was held on October 6, 1968, followed by School of Religion classes. In 1969 the first mission picnic took place on the Knights of Columbus grounds, Annandale, VA. Bishop Michael J. Dudick had succeeded Bishop Kocisko, who was named Bishop of Pittsburgh, as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic.

On February 22, 1970 the Byzantine Catholic mission was named and on June 10, 1970 4.78 acres of property at 3410 Woodburn Road were purchased. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in a chapel established in the farmhouse on the property.



Divine Liturgy at Luther Jackson

On December 5, 1971 groundbreaking ceremonies took place for the new temporary church according to the plan of one of the parishioners, architect John Zekan. In 1972 Bishop Michael J. Dudick



Farmhouse and the temporary church under construction.

canonically established Epiphany of our Lord parish. On May 7, 1972 a performance bond and construction permit were issued and construction, largely by the men of the mission, followed from June to December 1972. The first Divine Liturgy in the new, not yet completed, structure took place November 21, 1972, the feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God in the Temple.

On April 29, 1973 the solemn blessing of the new facility took place. The upper floor would serve as a temporary church while the lower level would provide a small hall for social gatherings. The parish installed temporary trailers for religious education classrooms. A dream of the founders had come true. Yet, they longed for a permanent church, a home for God among their homes in Northern Virginia.