

FEBRUARY 2023

# GCU

MAGAZINE

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George N. Juba  
President  
CEO

# New Beginnings

**T**he GCU is in the midst of celebrating its 131<sup>st</sup> anniversary as our Society was founded on February 14, 1892 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The GCU was founded upon the humanitarian needs of the Carpatho-Rusin immigrants that migrated to the United States of America, “The Promised Land,” in search of a “better life”! The majority of the Rusin immigrants labored in coal mines and steel mills, considered very dangerous and risky by commercial insurance carriers that opted not to offer life insurance coverage for these professions. The GCU’s primary focus was to provide life insurance to its members as the initial benefit upon a member’s passing was \$400.<sup>00</sup> and a \$200.<sup>00</sup> benefit for a member’s wife.

On a personal note, my Maternal Grandfather worked in the anthracite coal mines of Northeastern Pennsylvania. My family has photographs of him outside of an entrance to a mine alongside a mule that he ushered, hauling mine cars in and out of the mine to the surface, subsequently loading the coal onto railroad cars. Although he experienced no major accidents, he was diagnosed with “Black Lung Disease,” an inherent danger to all miners from the coal dust particles that were a part of their air supply. I am sure the ventilation within the mines was minimal and respirators were nonexistent at the time. Despite his hard-working life and meager wages, he supported a of family of six, his wife and five children living to the “ripe age of ninety-two”! Consequently, I may have longevity genes running on my Mother’s side of the family, but am not quite sure if my Grandpa John’s daily dose of a shot of Imperial whiskey, chewing tobacco and smoking stogies had anything to do with it!

In addition to providing life insurance to its members, the additional aims of the Founding Members in forming the GCU was to “spread love and friendship among the Rusin Greek Catholic people living in America; provide the ways and means necessary for the education of the people in national and religious requirements and of aid to churches and schools; and if financial conditions permit, the giving of aid to the injured and indigent members.” Over the past one hundred and thirty-one years the GCU has continued this mission expanding humanitarian efforts beyond individuals of the Carpatho-Rusin ancestry and Byzantine Catholics to other individuals, social services and religious organizations in need of volunteer and financial support.

Over the course of GCU’s history, in addition to the many

fraternal activities sponsored on a national level, our lodge system also played an important role in organizing the many volunteer, fundraising and social events. The lodge system’s structure, governance and purpose over the years certainly served GCU and its members well. Our thank you to all of our members that have served as officers of their respective lodges & districts and to the members that have participated in the many activities in support of their respective parish and community. The GCU has provided many memories to our members through the social & sporting activities and various volunteer & fundraising events sponsored in support of our Byzantine Catholic Parishes and communities! As I have reported, due to the many challenges that have faced our fraternal structure, the GCU is embarking on a “whole new modern look”!

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, we officially launched the new “GCU Fraternal Metamorphosis Program” that will expand our support to our all Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Parishes within the United States and expand the GCU’s presence in the communities where our members reside.

In the rebranding process of the GCU to present our Society with this more modern look and feel, we were cognizant to incorporate aspects of our past into this process. The GCU’s initial adopted emblem (*shown here*) was an eagle in flight holding an American flag in the talons of its right claw and a three-bar cross in its left claw. Directly above the head of the eagle was a brightly shining star. In rebranding our local and state lodges we have selected the “Star” to maintain our connection between the past and present. Our former state lodges will be titled “Galaxies” with our former local/parish lodges being regrouped into “Constellations” to which neighboring members will be assigned. If you have not already done so, I once again invite you to the GCU’s website – [GCUusa.com](http://GCUusa.com) – and view the video presented under [Events – GCU Fraternal Metamorphosis](#) that presents this new program.

The initial phase of this program is securing GCU members to serve in the capacity of Byzantine Parish Coordinators and Constellation Coordinators. Information on each

CONTINUED



of these positions is presented on page 3 along with a list of Constellations positions yet to be filled. If you are interested in becoming a Parish or Constellation Coordinator or have questions, please contact Basil Wahal, GCU Fraternal / Communications Director via phone at 724-683-3924 or email – bwahal@GCUusa.com. We are most excited about this new programming that will provide for more of a GCU presence and expand our humanitarian efforts within the communities our members reside in. The GCU will **“Focus on Fraternalism in 2023”!**

As I have stated in past reports, the GCU can only be strong “fraternally” as we are “financially”! The GCU now boasts the strongest financial position in the history of the GCU. **Our Society is dual rated by AM Best and KBRA with each agency assigning a financial strength rating of A- (excellent) with a stable outlook. A copy of the recent surveillance report issued by KBRA is available on the Financial Report page of the GCU website.** Our Chief Financial Officer, Tim Demetres, and his Staff are in the process of finalizing the GCU’s annual report to be filed in each of the states we are licensed in. Our initial projections indicate that GCU will have an ex-

cellent year-end report with assets totaling \$2.6 billion, a \$226 million or 9.4% increase over fiscal year 2022. Surplus increased by \$10.5 million to \$220 million along with realizing a net income of \$18.1 million. Our sincere thank you to our members and agents for your confidence and support of GCU that is the most integral part of our current and future financial success! We believe that we offer extremely competitive life and annuity products in the marketplace as our volume of premium we experienced indicates, together with a Staff that “cares” in servicing the needs of our members and agents. If you have not already done so, please “check out” our “enhanced rates” currently being offered through April 15<sup>th</sup> on our Flex 8 at 4.65% and Five Year Advantage at 4.35%!

Although our winter here in Western Pennsylvania has been fairly mild, I am personally looking forward to spring that is “right around the corner” – as Mother Nature that God has created, once again transforms from its winter slumber to an amazing landscape of life – ENJOY!

**GOODNESS IS GREAT!**

*George*

## PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE



Jeff Long  
Sales Director

# Changes to IRA RMD Rules

**T**he IRA RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) rules have changed again—here’s what you need to know.

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Secure Act of 2022. It is also known as Secure 2.0. The new law provides several changes that hopefully will strengthen our retirement system and Americans’ financial readiness for retirement. Here is a list of changes you should be aware of.

**Changes to RMDs.** The age at which IRA owners must start taking RMDs, increased to age 73 on January 1, 2023. Previously, RMDs needed to be taken beginning at age 72, so IRA owners now have an extra year before they need to make a mandatory withdrawal. It is important to note that if you turned 72 in 2022 or earlier, you will need to continue your RMDs as scheduled. If you are turning 72 in 2023, it is a good time to evaluate your withdrawal plans. Additionally, the Secure act 2.0 pushes the RMD age to 75 starting in 2033.

Another change to the RMD rules is a reduction of the

notoriously stiff penalty for failing to take your distribution. In 2023 the penalty is reduced from 50% to 25%. It can be further reduced to 10% by making the RMD and submitting a corrected tax return in a timely manner. All of this is welcome news.

It’s important to know that although the rules regarding IRAs change over time, IRAs continue to be a very important part of your retirement plan and actual retirement years. Make sure that you take advantage of making contributions and saving towards your future. If you need to know how to get started, or how much you can contribute to your IRA, please contact us here at GCU!

Although, I only highlighted changes to RMD rules it’s important to know that the Secure 2.0 act has something for almost everyone. Some of these changes relate to charitable giving, 529 college plans, higher catch-up contributions and even student loan debt. If any of the above topics are of interest to you, I recommend doing your homework or reaching out to a trusted financial advisor.



**Basil M. Wahal**  
Fraternal-Communications  
Director

# GCU Metamorphosis Begins

**W**ith the turning of the calendar on January 1<sup>st</sup> to 2023, the GCU also turned the page to a new way of connecting with our members. The GCU Fraternal Metamorphosis has seen the closing of all districts and lodges and the beginning of a totally new system.

Under the Pennsylvania Fraternal Code and GCU Bylaws, members are still required to belong to a lodge. Every GCU member has been moved to the state lodge in their State of Residence. The new designation for state lodges is Galaxies. As an example, all Pennsylvania residents belong to the Keystone State Galaxy.

On the local level GCU Constellations have been developed in communities where our GCU members live and play. The goal of the Metamorphosis is to make it easier for GCU members to have volunteer and discount social activities available to participate in and enjoy, close to home. Of course, all GCU members are welcome to participate in an activity, even when it does not take place in the Constellation where they call home.

Why Constellations? Constellations are defined as a cluster of stars in a section of the sky that have been given a definitive name. With GCU members being the stars of our organization, this was a natural designation for the communities where a larger group of GCU members call home. Constellations are areas where GCU sponsored social and volunteer activities will be planned and take place. In areas with a large contingent of GCU members a Constellation Coordinator will be assigned. To learn more about this position and the opportunity to become a Constellation Coordinator, please visit the GCU website: [GCUusa.com](http://GCUusa.com) and search GCU Metamorphosis. Constellation Coordinators will be compensated for their efforts. GCU is currently looking for Constellation Coordinators in the following areas: Denver, CO; Detroit, MI; Northern & Southern NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Hazleton, PA; Uniontown, PA and Youngstown, OH.

As was mentioned in 2022, two new positions Corporate Community Events Coordinators (CCEC) were created to assist with social & volunteer activities. Molly Kullen is the CCEC for Western PA, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, West Virginia, Colorado and Arizona. Melissa Cohen is the CCEC for Eastern PA, New York, New Jersey, North & South Carolina and Florida. Constellation Coordinators report directly to their

**The goal of the Metamorphosis is to make it easier for GCU members to have volunteer and discount social activities available to participate in and enjoy, close to home.**

respective Corporate Community Events Coordinators, who will assist with planning and coordinating of events.

In an effort to continue the GCU's connection to the Byzantine Catholic Church, every parish has the opportunity to have a Byzantine Parish Coordinator assigned from their parish to assist with GCU sponsored social events and Parish Matching Funds. Information on these positions is available on the GCU website on the GCU Metamorphosis page.

The lodge structure was a beloved part of GCU history. It began with Rusyn immigrants forming brotherhoods when they settled in the United States to share their traditions and values. In today's busy world, GCU Constellations will continue that shared feeling of community. They will allow members living near each other, to volunteer and assist local charities as well as to enjoy social activities, close to home.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to me at [bwahal@GCUusa.com](mailto:bwahal@GCUusa.com) or by phone at 724-495-3400 ext. 3924.



Mitred Archpriest  
John S. Kachuba  
GCU Spiritual Advisor

# Is Lent Practical Today?

**V**ery soon we will begin Lent, the time to pray, fast, and give alms. This is when we usually say we are going to “give up” something; candy, or sweets, or movies; the time we promise God that we are going to pray more, and give alms, whatever that means to us. BUT is Lent really practical in our modern world, or is it something that was done “back in the day” and has no value today?

Let’s begin by looking at **GIVING ALMS**. The giving of alms, in the form of money, food, etc. during the Lenten season forces us to recognize that we have been particularly blessed by God. Whenever I help others, I realize that they are just like me, except I happen to have something they do not. It may be giving someone money, or it may be changing a flat tire or shoveling the snow for those who are not able. In many ways the best “alms” we can give is our time. Time that we volunteer in our community or in our church. Time in sitting and listening to those who are alone. Time in caring for the elderly or those sick in our family. Whatever we do, it helps us see clearly that we are all equal in the eyes of God. No one person can do all that needs to be done, but everyone can help in their own way.

What about **FASTING**? Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, He was hungry. (Luke 4:1-2) Believe it or not, fasting makes us stronger. How odd is it then to fast during Lent to become stronger. After forty days in the desert our Lord then had the strength to begin his work among the people. When I fast during Lent, I’m not just giving something up, I’m giving up something of mine and inviting God to fill that space. For example, I can develop the habit of praying whenever I feel a pang of desire for what I’ve sacrificed. Whatever I would have spent in obtaining the food that I would have eaten, I can donate to the poor. Fasting from food will also help us to fast from pride, from gossip, from condemning others and from envy. We should also not boast about our fasting but do it in secret. *Fasting, while of value in itself, is not something to boast of in front of God, for it is simply a tool for training those who desire self-restraint. The ascetic should not feel proud because he fasts; but with faith in God he should think only of reaching his goal. For no artist ever boasts that his accomplishment is simply due to his tools; but he waits for the work itself to give proof of his skill. - St. Diadochos*

Fasting allows us to concentrate, be silent and listen to God speak to us. Fasting allows us to open ourselves and spend more time with God in **PRAYER**. Lent is a time for us to grow nearer to God through prayer with the help of fasting and giving alms. St. Gregory the Theologian tells us that God has infused “a divine particle” into our soul so that we can share in the Divine Nature. We develop this seed of Divine Life through prayer. Prayer is communication with God by which we grow in our relationship with Him. Even if we speak with a low voice, even if we whisper without opening our lips, and even if we speak to him from our heart, our unspoken word always reaches God and God always hears. Saint Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). One of the best ways during Lent, and in fact throughout the year, is to pray the “Jesus Prayer”: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me a sinner*”. The Jesus Prayer was developed by the Desert Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries. Thousands of men and women went out into the Egyptian and Near East deserts to pray this way. For a thousand years, the Jesus Prayer remained in the East. Then, in the fourteenth century, when Saint Gregory of Sinai brought it to Mount Athos, a renaissance occurred. The prayer was carried to Russia and other Slavic countries. Finally, because the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Faithful emigrated to the West, the Jesus Prayer spread to the Roman Catholic and Protestant Faithful. Does this prayer have value for us today? Many believe it does. We live in a fast-moving age that has already seen incredible change in social conditions and in our living habits. Most of us are under stress of one kind or another and looking for something to calm us. Many who make a practice of praying the *Jesus Prayer* report that it does.

So, what is the answer to our question: **IS LENT PRACTICAL TODAY?** We live in a world of war, of illness, of tragedy, and of personal struggles. The three basic tenants of Lent are prayer, fasting and the giving of alms. I have attempted to briefly explain what they mean. I believe during this time of the Great Lent if we spend more time in prayer, fast as much as we can depending on our health and in some ways increase our alms giving, we will know ourselves better, we will spiritually be healthier and we will grow closer to God. **IS LENT PRACTICAL TODAY – YES!**

*(Editors Note: As this issue went to press, GCU learned that Fr. John Kachuba had passed away. His obituary will appear in the April GCU Magazine. Blessed repose and eternal memory.)*



Atty. John J. Urban

# Lessons in the Law

## Are Out-of-State Wills Valid?

**R**ecently a GCU member sent me an email with a question that many people may also have. The question was “I had my Will prepared in Idaho and now I live in Pennsylvania, is my Will still valid?” The simple answer is “yes.” If the Will was valid in the state where it was executed, it is valid in all states.

The problem might be whether the state probate court where you live appoints the executor named in your Will? This answer is “maybe.” Many states will not appoint an out-of-state executor. Other states will appoint an out-of-state executor only if you are related to the testator (Will maker) if you are inheriting under the Will. All out-of-state executors are subject to having a probate executor’s bond which could be very expensive.

If you did a Will out-of-state and now live in another state, even though the Will is valid, I strongly recommend

you check with a local lawyer to see what would happen in your case.

Usually, Powers of Attorneys and Advanced Directives are state specific, and in most cases should also be updated if you have moved. It is usually best to contact your attorney. I recently contacted an online seller of Wills, Powers of Attorneys and Advanced Directives to tell them that these forms were not Ohio specific. The response from the company was, as far as their attorneys were concerned, the documents are good and valid in all states. This is not true. Buyer, be aware of what you are buying. Estate planning is not the place to try to save money and do it yourself. Please contact a local attorney that works in this area.

Questions, comments or ideas about future articles contact me at [jurban.gcu@GCUusa.com](mailto:jurban.gcu@GCUusa.com)

## GCU Home Office Hours of Operation

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

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

**The Home Office will be closed Friday, April 7 in observance of Good Friday.**

5400 Tuscarawas Road, Beaver, PA 15009



# Giving

## St. John Chrysostom Parish Expansion

**Columbus, OH.** The annual Christmas Cookie Sale at St. John Chrysostom Church in Columbus, OH has great participation from the parishioners. The event has great management in preparing for the event. Prior to the event volunteers assist in several groups: pirohi making, roll baking and a huge group of parishioners bake different types of cookies. It takes three days prior to the event for the volunteers to assemble and bag the cookies. The festively decorated parish hall where the sale takes place, allows the parishioner volunteers to interact with the customers the day of the sale. Through great advertising in local parish bulletins and in diocesan media, as well as personal contacts and past customers, the sale is a huge fundraiser for the parish. St. John Parish truly appreciates the GCU Parish Expansion Matching Funds which added to the overall financial success of the event.

**Fr. Robert Jager**



Specialty cookie trays-WOW!

## St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion



Volunteers are all smiles while making pirohi.

**Dunellen, NJ.** In the spirit of the holiday season, St. Nicholas Byzantine Church members were busy making pirohi for the Holiday Food Sale. Nut and poppyseed rolls were also available for sale. The thirty parishioner volunteers started the preparations on November 18, 2022 in the church hall. They made over 250 dozen potato & cheese pirohi. They also sold over 100 rolls. The sale was a huge success and a complete sell out! The customers look forward to enjoying these delicious treats at their Christmas Eve Holy Supper. Holy Supper is special to many families and full of tradition. The administrator at St. Nicholas Church is Rev. Father James Badeaux and the weekend assistance is Rev. Father Thomas Shubeck. Thank you to the GCU for their continued support.

**Mary Bannworth & Margot Gumerlock**



Just some of the many volunteers who made this event a success.

## St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**Nesquehoning, PA.** St. Mary BC Church in Nesquehoning resumed its annual St. Nicholas Festival on Saturday, December 3, 2022 after a three year absence. The festivities included the sale of ethnic gift baskets, raffle and bake sale. Parishioners of St. Mary, the local community and people from surrounding towns, were pleased to have the festival return.

**Mary McKee**



All ages helped at the St. Nicholas Festival.

## Parish Expansion Helps Pittsburgh Deafblind Lions Club

**South Side Pittsburgh, PA.** Pittsburgh Deafblind Lions Club and St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church again collaborated to collect and donate non-perishable foods, new unwrapped toys for children and gift cards for tweens in need. Together the total was \$2,267.<sup>00</sup> which was matched by the GCU. This money was donated back to St. John parish for further repairs in the church. Everyone is happier now that the back of the church is no long cluttered with boxes from all the collected items. Thanks to all the parishioners from St. John Baptist and St. John Chrysostom BC Churches for the very generous donations of food and toys.

**Plastic Collection.** 500 lbs. of plastic bags and wrap was collected by Pittsburgh Deafblind Lions Club, St. John Baptist (South Side), St. John Chrysostom (Greenfield), family and friends. Environment is very important to



Food and toy donation made to Brashear Association.



Fr. Miron receiving the Matching Funds check from Bev and Barb Rebovich.

the Lions. The collection was a way to decrease some pollution by recycling these plastic products, giving the weighed amount to Trex. This company uses plastic for the manufacturing of patio decks and furniture.

In return for the 500 lbs. the Lions will receive a free durable plastic composite bench. Once the Club receives the bench it will be customized with the Lion's logo and placed it in the community.

Thank you to all who helped achieve the Club's goal. Additional information is available online at Trex recycling.

**Lion Barb Rebovich**

## St. John Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion



Happy fillers and pinchers.

**Scranton, PA.** St. John's Byzantine Catholic Church made 242 dozen cheese & potato pirohi on November 15, 22, & 29, 2022. An average of 20 workers came each of these 3 days to make the dough, prepare the filling and pinch. The pirohi were then flash frozen. Each day the volunteers were treated to a light lunch. Cost to those purchasing the pirohi was \$9 per dozen, with some saying just keep the change. The parish is very thankful for the volunteers, including many from other parishes, who helped to make this project a total success. They shared friendship, laughs and a sense of purpose. The proceeds will assist with bill payments at St. John. Thank you to all those who volunteered, to those who purchased the pirohi, and the GCU for providing Matching Funds for the project.

**Joanie Roskos**

## Scared Heart Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**Livonia MI.** The Ladies of Sacred Heart BC Church thank the GCU for allowing us to participate in their Parish Expansion Matching Funds program. Maryellen Gross, the chairperson and Marianne Nagrant, the donation coordinator, presented the GCU check of \$4,674.<sup>00</sup> to Father Joseph Marquis after the December 21, 2022 Divine Liturgy. The funds will go toward the cost of replacing the heating system in Sacred Heart BC Church. Thank you to all who helped make the November 6 Luncheon and Fashion Show a success.

**Marianne Nagrant**



Check presentation to Father Joseph Marquis, Maryellen Gross and Marianne Nagrant.

Photo by Nicholas J. Nagrant

# Giving

## St. John Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**Solon, OH.** On Saturday, December 17, St. John Byzantine Catholic Parish held its annual Holiday Foods Sale, which included over 440 dozen assorted Christmas cookies, 150 pounds of fresh Hungarian kolbasz and the ever-popular nut and poppyseed rolls. This year, orders for the cookie assortments doubled. In addition to prepackaged assortments, some specialties were also sold, including St. Nicholas



Parish volunteer Mitzi Sauvinsky packages decorated chocolate covered pretzels.

cookies, Linzer cookies, chocolate peanut clusters, Hungarian Kiflis, caramel corn and pizzelles, bringing in a net profit of \$7,301.<sup>30</sup>. With GCU's Matching Funds of \$5,000.<sup>00</sup> the parish raised over \$12,000.<sup>00</sup> from the event. St. John Parish is grateful to GCU for offering the Parish Expansion Matching Funds program, which allows our small parish to put the profit to good use toward the ever-growing operating expenses of the church.

**Loretta Nemeth**



Cookie assortments packaged and ready to go with additional specialties: St. Nicholas cookies, Linzer cookies and chocolate peanut clusters.

## Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**McLean, VA.** The Ladies Guild of Holy Transfiguration have an Annual Christmas Sweets Sales. The women and some men of the church start baking delicious Arabic sweets in October of each year and start delivery at the Annual St. Nicholas Party that is held for the kids of the parish. Delivery day this year was Sunday, December 4, 2022 and sales were supposed to continue through December 18, 2022. However, this year they sold out a few days before that. In addition to being a fund raiser for church activities it also provides a place for people to get together to help the church and in doing so, make new friends.

This event allows us to help support charities and religious organizations in addition to our Parish Building and Expansion fund. In addition, the Sunday School and Youth Group also receive help for their activities, The Ladies Guild also provides assistance to the Charities fund and also helps a Pro-Life organization in VA, St.



Volunteers busy making sweets.

Nina's Romanian Orthodox Monastery in Maryland and local food banks.

We are extremely grateful to the GCU for the Matching Funds and also for the materials that Basil Wahal sends us for our St. Nicholas Party each year. The children look forward to the visit from St. Nicholas and his gifts.

**Georgianna Kostak** | GCU & Ladies Guild Member and Sunday School Director



Georgianna Kostak presenting a check to Pastor Archimandrite Mark Melone.

## St. Stephen Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**North Huntingdon, PA. Pirohi Project.** October and November of 2022 saw the restart of St. Stephen's Pirohi Project. The project was spearheaded by Fr. Vasyl Yakubych and many church members.



Above are pirohi "pinchers" engrossed in their job. At right is Ray Seech and Ann Andrejczak sampling some of the delicious items from the buffet.



While the pirohi team worked very hard making delicious pirohi, we also enjoyed good conversations, many laughs and delicious lunches. We look forward to our next project.

**Feasts Social.** Following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 18, Saint Stephen's celebrated the feasts of Saint Nicholas and the Maternity of Saint Anna with a social in the church hall.

Parishioners brought a variety of delicious food and yummy desserts for the buffet-style luncheon. After lunch, Father Vasyl led the attendees in the singing of Christmas carols. The social was truly a wonderful day of holiday fellowship.

**Connie Kacey Smith**

## Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**East Palestine, OH.** A benefit lasagna dinner was held on Saturday, December 3, 2022 in Lourdes Hall at the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes RC Church. The parish & finance councils planned, prepared and served the meals. Apostolates and parishioners provided baskets and gift cards for a successful basket raffle. A 50/50 fundraiser was also available. A special thanks to parishioner Karen Christian from Christian House (Assisted Living & Home Health) who provided the lasagna, salad and rolls for the event. The goal of 100 tickets sold was met and everyone who attended had a great time. Thank you GCU for the Parish Expansion. It will be used to help with winter heating bills.  
**Chris Chamberlain**



Parish Council members preparing to serve the meal.

## Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Expansion

**Oakland, PA.** Holy Spirit BC Church held their annual basket raffle in conjunction with the Archeparchial Choir's Christmas concert. Twenty themed prizes were awarded for children, adults, dining, cooking and entertaining. It was a successful fundraiser for building repairs. Thank you to GCU for the Parish Matching Funds for the event.  
**Mary Dzurichko**



A few of the baskets.



# Giving

## Hammer Financial Group Hosts Toys for Tots Drive



Hammer Financial staff at the drive thru toy drive.

**Schererville, IN.** Every December Hammer Financial Group hosts a Toys for Tots Drive Thru to help support the Marine Corp Reserve program that distributes toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy gifts for Christmas. The event is held outside of Hammer’s office. The entire staff, dressed in festive attire, is there to greet clients and hand out thank you gifts to all that come through. We decorate the parking lot and play holiday

music and Santa and the Grinch ensure everyone’s spirits are bright! In 2022 we collected over 600 toys and many monetary donations! It’s a wonderful event and we are so grateful to the staff and clients that support our efforts!

**Colleen Mansmith**



## GCU GoGive! Stockings for Soldiers

**McMurray, PA.** On November 15, 2022, the Lexington Court Garden Club filled 25 Christmas stockings with candies, toothbrushes & toothpaste, tissues, lotion, notebooks, pens, playing cards, granola bars and

various other items. The stockings were then delivered to the Beinhauer Funeral Home in McMurray for distribution as part of the “Stockings for Soldiers” program. This project was made possible by a GCU GoGive!

grant and with Garden Club member donations. The Lexington Court Garden Club greatly appreciates the GCU GoGive! program for supporting their project!

**Donna Danchisko**



Ladies from the Lexington Court Garden Club fill stockings.



Assembly line ready to go.

## Byzantine Catholic Newlyweds Meet Pope Francis



Robert & Diane Grip being greeted by Pope Francis.  
Photograph courtesy: L'Osservatore Romano

Former GCU Scholarship winners Robert Grip and his wife, Diane (formerly Rabiej) Grip received the blessing of Pope Francis during his Wednesday audience in St. Peter's Square on October 19, 2022.

The couple was married by Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla, D.D. at the Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel in Passaic, NJ, where Very Rev. John Custer, S.S.L., S.T.D. serves as rector.

Robert, from New Britain, CT and Diane, a NJ native and Lodge 8335 member are both life-long Byzantine Catholics.

Robert has served for many years as the public address announcer during Otpust in Uniontown, PA and is a past Chair of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary Board of Directors in Pittsburgh, PA.

Diane served numerous bishops during her time as executive assistant in the Eparchies of Phoenix and Passaic. She is active as an Associate for the Sisters of St. Basil the Great and also volunteers her time working during Otpust for the Sisters. She has also served on the Board of Directors of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary.

**Robert Grip**

**Robert Grip**

## A Reflection on Creativity-All Occasion Greeting Cards

I've always felt the urge to play with colors. The rich hues of God's beauty move my spirit. Dabbling in paints and dipping a brush into a rich gold or sublime magenta is not only a joy but an experience of losing track of everything—time, self, worries and concerns. It's almost like entering another world.

Many people say, "I'm not a creative person." Many believe that creativity belongs only to a group of artists, musicians, writers and architects. This is a fallacy. All of us are called to be creative because we are made in the image and likeness of God, the Ultimate Creator. From the moment we were called into being, this gift has been given to each of us to some degree. We are called to develop it, and to use it in the building of God's kingdom.

Creativity is an essential part of what it means to be human. It is also a difficult concept to define. Countless descriptions and quotes about creativity exist. The very perspective you have on life can be your "creative gold." This gift has to be nurtured. Some of the ways to do this are by cultivating a spirit of play and child-like wonder; living a life that inspires you; and spending time in quiet solitude. Creativity emerges from our deep inner world. Set aside some time to be still and allow ideas to simply flow.

Try something new, something different—write a brief story, bake something out of the ordinary, take a class at the local library or college, get

involved in an activity you would not ordinarily do. Creativity exists in every dimension of life. It may be as simple as arranging wildflowers for the table, creating a new recipe, cutting the lawn in a unique design, or working on a difficult equation or an innovative computer program. Teaching, managing, organizing, decorating, developing projects—all offer multiple opportunities for creativity to flourish. It may take some work, but your creative spirit will ultimately win.

The author of "The Book Thief," rewrote the first part of his very popular novel 150 to 200 times. It is obvious creativity comes with a price: a great work ethic and dedication. The reward is beyond measure and holds a deep sense of the power of the Infinite Creator working within you.

The Community requested that I select several of my paintings and create a packet of all occasion greeting cards—birthday, congratulations, sympathy and wellness. Inside of each card is an inspirational message and a verse from the Bible. VICNAJA PAMJAT! is on the back of the sympathy card and MNOHAJA L'ITA! BLAHAJA L'ITA! is on the back of the wellness card.

These all-occasion cards are sold in a package of ten. 4 Birthday (2 of 2 designs), 2 Wellness, 2 Congratulations and 2 Sympathy. Offering: \$14.50 + shipping & handling. Each card is 4 1/4" x 5 1/2". The proceeds from the sale of the cards benefit the Sisters of St. Basil. The order form can be found at <https://sistersofstbasil.org/greeting-cards/>.

**Sister Seraphim Olsafsky, OSBM**



# Corporate Community Events Coordinators



**Molly Kullen**  
Corporate Community  
Events Coordinator  
Western, PA

## Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Jr.

GCU members attended the Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Jr. show at Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center on Saturday, December 3! The performance was spectacular. After the show, members were invited to go onstage to see behind the scenes, and to take photos.



The Grimm Family.



Communicycle.

with unloading donated bikes, doing bike repairs, and organizing their bike part inventory. The bikes that were repaired will be given to local children in Beaver County. GCU's Corporate Community Events Coordinator, Molly Kullen presented a \$300.00 donation check to Communicycle on behalf of the GCU.

## 2023 Ski Outing.

The GCU ski outing was on Saturday, January 28, 2023, at Peek-n-Peak Resort in Clymer, NY! Over 40 members attended.

Members enjoyed skiing, snowboarding and snowtubing. The outing ended with a pizza party! It was a fun-filled winter day.



Ski Outing group.

[View more photos: GCUusa.com](http://GCUusa.com) [About GCU](#) [Comm. Goodness](#)



## Upcoming Events

### Special Olympics Unified Bocce Event Volunteer Activity

Thursday, March 9, 2023 9 AM-2 PM  
Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA

### World Vision Volunteer Activity

Saturday, March 11, 2023 9 AM-12 NOON  
World Vision, Sewickley, PA

### Mod! the Musical & Dinner

Saturday, March 18, 2023 Show begins at 7:30 PM  
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center  
Dinner before at Seven Oaks CC, Beaver, PA

### American Red Cross Blood Drive

Monday, March 27, 2023 12 NOON-5:30 PM  
Seven Oaks Country Club, Beaver, PA

### Private Cooking Class Event

Friday, April 28, 2023 6 PM-8 PM  
Thyme In Your Kitchen, Sharon, PA

### Madagascar the Musical

Friday, May 12, 2023 Show begins at 7 PM  
Benedum Center, Pittsburgh, PA

### Spring Golf Classic

Monday, June 5, 2023  
Seven Oaks Country Club, Beaver, PA

### Greater Pittsburgh Comm Food Bank Volunteer Activity

Saturday, June 10, 2023 9:30 AM-12 NOON  
Pittsburgh King School, Pittsburg, PA

### Pittsburgh Pirate Game - Kids Day

Sunday, June 11, 2023 Starting at 1:35 PM  
PNC Park, Pittsburgh, PA

*Dates and times are subject to change.*

*Visit [GCUusa.com](http://GCUusa.com) for more information on all these events  
or contact Molly Kullen at  
[mkullen@GCUusa.com](mailto:mkullen@GCUusa.com) or call 724-683-3927*



Play it Forward volunteers.

## Play it Forward Volunteer Event.

GCU members volunteered at Play it Forward's annual toy distribution at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on December 17, 2022. Play it Forward collects gently used toys, and then distrib-

utes them to local families who are in need. Members assisted with organizing toys, helping community members carry their toys and cleaning up.

**Holiday Pops Concert.** GCU members saw the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops performance on Saturday, December 17 at Heinz Hall. It was an amazing show featuring everyone's favorite holiday tunes!



Judy Teeter & guest.

**Topgolf Outing.** The GCU's Topgolf outing was on Saturday, January 14 in Bridgeville, PA!

Over 40 members and guests attended. It was a fun afternoon filled with golf, friendly competition and food.



The Wasik family at Topgolf.



Special Olympics.

## Allegheny County Special Olympics Bowling Tournament.

Several GCU members

spent their morning on Sunday, January 15 volunteering for the Allegheny County Special Olympics Bowling Tournament at AMF Lanes in Mount Lebanon, PA. Volunteers were responsible for recording the athletes scores, and for cheering them on! GCU's Corporate Community Events Coordinator Molly Kullen presented a \$300.00 donation check to the Special Olympics on behalf of the GCU—truly investing in the goodness of helping others!

**Communicycle Volunteer Activity.** GCU members spent their Thursday evening on January 19 volunteering for Communicycle at their shop in Monaca, PA! Members assisted



**Melissa Cohen**  
Corporate Community  
Events Coordinator  
North Eastern, PA

**Introducing GCU Constellation Coordinators.** I am pleased to announce that both Daria Shierly (Binghamton, NY area) and Laure Marcin (Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, PA area) have joined us as GCU Constellation Coordinators. They are no strangers to us here at GCU, but keep in mind that we welcome any member and fresh faces to apply to CC positions. There are still plenty of CC openings in my coverage areas of Eastern PA, Hazleton, PA, Philadelphia and South Eastern PA, NJ, the NY metropolitan area, CT, FL, NC, GA and more. Please reach out if you have questions on how to put your name out there for GCU CC opportunities.

**Jerry Seinfeld at The Kirby Center.** Christmas came early for some GCU members who were able to snag the highly coveted tickets to see comic icon Jerry Seinfeld, at The Kirby Center in December. Tickets to the show were sold out everywhere almost immediately, but members were able to purchase tickets directly from GCU. (Knowing tickets would sell out quickly we announced to members that they would go on sale at exactly 10 AM on a set date). Sure enough the tickets sold out on GCU's website within the hour. If you missed it this round definitely join the GCU email list, so you don't miss out next time!

**Lackawanna Holiday Angels.** Julie Bower is a 12 year old who started Lackawanna Holiday Angels with her mom Pearl Yanick and sponsor Tomasina Evans (*pictured here*). The non-profit coordinates gift donations during the Christmas season to families in need. It was truly amazing to see how many individuals in the community stepped up to donate gifts to others. GCU was proud to sponsor this truly grassroots effort to help families in need directly in the communities we serve. Local efforts like this wonderful non-profit truly shows that we can make a difference together one little bit at a time.



Angel volunteer Tomasina Evans.



K&J's Kitchen.

**GCU Teams Up With K&J's Kitchen in Forest City, PA.** GCU has teamed up with K&J's in the past for a street festival so it was wonderful to once again partner with them to give back as a team for the Christmas season. GCU made a donation so free pizzas could be picked up or delivered from K&J's Kitchen in Forest City, PA. Gifts were also donated and families in need were able to discretely come by and pick up some presents. K&J's also made generous donations to the community and we are thrilled to continue to make true "Main Street" connections in the communities we serve.

**Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins Teddy Bear Toss Night.** The anticipation ran high as fans anxiously awaited the Penguins to score their first goal against the Hershey Bears. Finally, the Pens scored and teddy bears flew

through the air for the famous Teddy Bear Toss. Fans entered the stadium with new cuddly teddy bears for the cherished tradition of tossing them onto the rink simultaneously. The teddy bears are donated to charities in the area. GCU members enjoyed wonderful lower-bowl seats at a discounted price for the game. If you missed it this time, don't worry because you're in luck—another GCU night with the Wilkes-Barre Scranton Penguins is scheduled on Friday, March 17, 2023. Purchase your tickets online or contact me with questions before they sell out!

**Festival of Lights.** GCU offered discounted tickets to the Festival of Lights in Broome County, NY at Otsiningo Park. Members could enjoy the beauty of thousands of Christmas lights from the comfort of their vehicles. Whether you have trouble walking around other holiday attractions or you just wanted to take a ride with friends and family in your pajamas, this was the perfect Christmas season activity.



Light display.

**Brunch With Santa.** Ordie Price, his daughter Lauren Price Ficarro and her family came out to enjoy Brunch with Santa at Hotel Anthracite in Carbondale, PA. A brunch buf-

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE

*View more photos: [GCUusa.com](#) [About GCU](#) [Comm. Goodness](#)*



## Upcoming Events

### Montage Mountain Winterfest

Friday, March 3 & Saturday, March 4, 2023 All Day  
Montage Mountain Resorts, Scranton, PA

### MLB Spring Training in Florida Game-Rays vs. Mets

Sunday, March 12, 2023 1:10 PM  
Clover Park, St. Lucie, FL

### Wilkes Barre Scranton Penguins vs. Rochester Americans

Friday, March 17, 2023 7:05 PM  
Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre Township, PA

### Topgolf Outing

Saturday, April 15, 2023 7-9 PM  
Mount Laurel, NJ

### World Wish Day & American Dream Mall Outing

Saturday, April 29, 2023  
East Rutherford, NJ

### Sight & Sound Theater Bus Trip to see Moses

Saturday, June 3, 2023 11 AM  
Includes round-trip bus trans., show ticket, buffet lunch  
Pick-ups in Wilkes-Barre, PA & Hazleton, PA  
Sight & Sound Theatre, Ronks, PA (Lancaster)

### Byzantine Family Day at Knoebels Park

Sunday, June 11, 2023 10 AM  
Elysburg, PA

### Spring Helping Hands Day

Saturday, June 17, 2023 8 AM  
Holy Annunciation Monastery, Sugarloaf, PA

*Visit [GCUusa.com](#) for more information on all these events*

*or contact [Melissa Cohen](#) at [mcohen@GCUusa.com](mailto:mcohen@GCUusa.com) or call 878-207-2327*

# District 5

## Annual St. Nicholas Brunch & Scholarship Awards Program

The District's 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual St. Nicholas Brunch & Scholarship Awards Program was held at The Greens at Irem Country Club, Dallas, PA on Sunday, November 27, 2022. Eight scholarships were



Chris, Topy and Barbara Zayac.

awarded at the event. Five recipients were able to attend. Macrina Dolinish, daughter

of Tanya & Edward Dolinish, is a student at Marywood University majoring in Elementary Education. Demetrius Dolinish, son of Tanya & Edward, is a student at Penn State-Scranton majoring in Nutrition. Maura Gallagher, daughter of Kristen & Mark Gallagher, is a student at the University of Scranton majoring in Physical Therapy. Jared Grossman, son of Joan & Lloyd Grossman, is a student at Paul Smith College majoring in Forestry/Agriculture. Evan Jenner, son of Jennifer & Terry Jenner, is a student at Kings College majoring in Economics. Sara Kumpon, daughter of Janet & Richard Kumpon, is a student at Niagara



Gina Keil, Stephan Prodanets, Jared Grossman, Demetrius Dolinish, Macrina Dolinish, Maura Gallagher, Janet Kumpon, Jennifer Jenner, Dr. John and Colleen Evans.

University majoring in Actuarial Science. Stepan Prodanets, son of Pani Ivanna & Rev. Mykhaylo Prodanets, is a student at Penn State-Wilkes-Barre majoring in Electrical Engineering. Joseph Slusark, son of Elaine & Joseph Slusark, is a student at West Chester University majoring in Marketing. Congratulations to all of the recipients.

Dr. John & Colleen Evans were scholarship co-chairpersons. Thanks to the Home Office for the grant, the scholarship portfolios, certificates, calendars and pens.

Thirty-seven people attended the brunch.

Gina Keil | President

## Melissa Cohen CONTINUED



Price Family with Santa.



Lightwire Show.

fet, festive music and Santa playing a ukulele, what more can you ask for? Lauren commented that they haven't been to a GCU event in years and really were happy to see something local pop up in their backyard. Our goal is to continue making that happen for our members! As always, feel free to reach out to me directly with any new and exciting event ideas we can bring to your area.

**Lightwire Theater Show at The Kirby Center.** Who says that the opera is only for adults? The kiddos got to enjoy a beautifully choreographed theater presentation of lit up giant sized costumes. The entire musical was in the dark—guests young and old enjoyed the show put on by the America's Got Talent alumni.

**Santa Express.** Members boarded the Santa Express in Flemington, NJ on Saturday, December 3, 2022. GCU offered discounted tickets to this highly popular attraction with limited tickets. Mary Shutack, Laura Como



Santa Express.

and their friends & family had a blast. There's nothing better than meeting Santa in person!

**Glo-Bowl Night.** It was bargain bowling night with GCU on Friday, January 13, 2023. We kicked off 2023 with the bargain bowling price of just \$5 for bowling, shoes, and a late-night snack for the night owls who bowled with us until midnight at Chacko's Family Bowling Center in Wilkes-Barre. Brian Kasarda, Cat Ozovek, Georgeann Frey and Sheryl Hupczey and their friends and families enjoyed a great night out.



Glo-Bowl Night.

# Lodge News



Front row: Pani Oksana, Dominic and Rev. Eduard Shestak, Madge Lesneski. Back row: Diane Notari, Ed, Macrina & Tanya Dolinish, Gina Keil, Demetrius Dolinish and Ed Keil.

## Lodge 17

OLD FORGE, PA

### Appreciation Luncheon & Recognition Ceremony

Lodge 17 held its Appreciation Luncheon and Recognition Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, December 14, 2022 at Arcaro & Genell's Restaurant, Old Forge, PA. The luncheon was held for lodge members who have helped out with the lodge's various projects throughout the year.

After a two-year hiatus, the lodge returned to acknowledging its outstanding members who contributed their time and money in service to the lodge. Sixteen recipients had their names engraved on a plaque that hangs in St. Nicholas Social Center. This year, the recipients were Maria Calogero, Demetrius Dolinish, Ed Dolinish, Jr., Ilona Dolinish, Macrina Dolinish, Tanya Dolinish, Ed Keil, Gina Keil, Olga Korpita, Linda Mokay, Mike Mokay, Pat Oliver, Marion Savinelli, Fr. Eduard Shestak, Pani Oksana Shestak and Joe Sopp.

Thanks to the GCU for the pens, pocket calendars,

sticky calendars and especially the Fraternal Grant. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter meeting was held immediately after the luncheon to discuss the disbursement of the rest of Lodge 17 funds.



St. Nicholas Christmas Party attendees.

### Annual St. Nicholas Feast Day Celebration

The annual St. Nicholas Feast Day Celebration was held on Sunday, December 11, 2022 at St. Nicholas Social Center. Church members and guests from St. Nicholas and St. Mary parishes attended. All enjoyed a catered luncheon, a visit from St. Nicholas and a basket raffle. The children were entertained with games and songs.

GCU Lodge 17 members assisted parishioners with decorating the hall for this event, coordinated the basket raffle and provided supervision for the children's games. Some of the games included Musical Chairs, Pin the Nose on a Snowman, a Hula Hoop Contest and tissue wrapped snow people. Thanks to the GCU Home Office for the Fraternal Grant, pens, calendars, activity books and crayons.

Macrina Dolinish | Publicity Director

## Lodge 47

BINGHAMTON, NY

### Salvation Army Angel Tree Project

Several hundred families were visited by the Salvation Army with toys and other gifts for Christmas as part of their annual Angel Tree Project. On Wednesday, December 16, 2022, Janet Kumpon and Daria Shierly felt like elves when they delivered a car and trunk full of Angel Tree gifts from Ss. Peter and Paul and Holy Spirit BC Churches to Heather Main, Emergency Family Assistance Director at the local Salvation Army. None of the bags were the same and each was filled from a specific child's wish list.

Lodge 47 has participated in Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program for many years and was proud to continue the tradition. Whether you took an Angel off the tree, shopped and returned your gift, chose an Angel and then



### What's Next?

Lodge 47 ended 2022 with thankful hearts and begins the new year with peace and faith. Members recall fond memories and are grateful for traditions passed from generations and from founders of the parishes. There is a sincere appreciation for all the volunteers, GCU lodge members, parishioners, families and friends who made and continue to make events a success.

As the GCU moves forward with the new fraternal programs, we are reminded of the hard work and perseverance of past benefactors. Through the years, a combination of sacrifice, talent and the efforts of many working together accomplished meaningful goals. Lodge 47, along



Emergency Family Assistance Director Heather Main, Daria Shierly and Janet Kumpon.

asked an elf to shop for you or kept all the Angels in your prayers this season, thank you! The lodge is sincerely grateful to everyone for sharing the spirit of the season with others in the community who are less fortunate and lack the resources to provide for their families. THANK YOU very much for helping create joy for all these children at Christmas.

The lodge also wants to recognize the GCU Home Office for approving this project as a Community Matching Funds project and their generosity and unending support.

with all GCU lodges, closed at the end of 2022. Lodge 47 officers respect and appreciate the time and sacrifice past leadership and members put into serving the churches and are thankful for the loyalty, commitment and dedication everyone extended. Thank you for the unselfish contributions year and year.

With the introduction of new Constellation Coordinators and Byzantine Parish Coordinators, we look forward to planning future parish and community events and activities. We are excited to move forward together. Everyone is welcome and invited to participate!

Daria Shierly | Secretary-Treasurer

## Lodge 69

POTTSTOWN, PA

### St. Nicholas Day Luncheon

The Lodge 69 St. Nicholas Day celebration was held on Sunday, December 4, 2022. There was a covered dish luncheon along with a play and singing of carols by the School of Religion children. A cookie walk was also a part of the celebration.

Nancy Harding | Secretary



School of Religion children during Christmas play.



Above is the Cookie Walk. At right is Lorenzo with St. Nicholas.



ECF students with St. Nicholas and Fr. Andrew.

## Lodge 77

LORAIN, OH

### Annual St. Nicholas Day Dinner

On Sunday, December 4, 2022 St. Nicholas Parish held its annual St. Nicholas Day Dinner. The day was filled with delicious food, a short program presented by the ECF children, a Christmas carol sing-a-long and a visit from St. Nicholas himself. Stockings filled with fruits, nuts and toys were given to each child along with a small icon, all courtesy of GCU Lodge 77. The hall was filled with much happiness, laughter and true Christmas spirit as the

parishioners and lodge members celebrated their patron St. Nicholas.

Kathy Knick | President



Lodge members happy to give the treat filled stockings out to the kids.



## Lodge 81

UNIONTOWN, PA

The holiday season proved to be busy and worthwhile for St. John GCU members and parishioners.



Bonnie Balas and Fr. Vasyl loading car with groceries for St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry.

### Community

President Marcia Harrer planned several charitable activities with ECF students and parishioners. A Thanksgiving Food Drive to benefit St. Vincent de Paul Food pantry, an “Angel Tree” gift project to benefit the Salvation Army and needy children, and a Toy Drive to go to Uniontown City Mission. Each one was met with an overwhelming response of donations by St. John parishioners. Julia Pillar and Bonnie Balas used the nearly \$300.00 donated to Shop for the Food Pantry. Marcia Harrer, Krysten Vensko, Cindy Tercho and Bonnie Balas delivered the “Angel Tree” gifts, while Gerry Dorobish and Bonnie Balas took the donated toys to the City Mission. Each entity was very appreciative of the outpouring of generosity from St. John Parish.

Many St. John parishioners including Father Vasyl Symyon and other local Catholics participated in a Rosary gift for David Slusarick, a seminarian from the Greensburg Diocese. Over 100 Rosary intentions were offered for David.

As part of continuing to spread Christmas cheer, Gerry

Dorobish and Marcia Harrer arranged for The ECF students and parishioners to sing Christmas songs for the Sisters of St. Basil at



Singing at the Monastery.

Mount St. Macrina Monastery on December 18. There was socializing between the Sisters and the families. A collection of \$465.00 from the parish was presented to Sister Susan Sisko. The Sisters in turn provided light refreshments and treat bags for the children.

Another visit to Mount St. Macrina for the House of Prayer Open House took place on Sunday, January 8. Gerry Dorobish, her sister Linda Zungri, Julia Pillar, Joan Bridges and Bonnie Balas gave support and enjoyed the wonderful treats, beautifully decorated mansion and hospitality provided by Sister Barbara Jean and Sister Carol.



Cheat Lake water blessing.

Bonnie Balas | VP & Publicity Director



St. Nicholas visit.

### Parish

The yearly Christmas Craft & Bake Sale and Nativity Display held on December 3 & 4 was a huge success. GCU members donated delicious baked items which were an added attraction to the crafts and raffles available. The ECF students engaged in St. Nicholas activities, visited the Nativity Display and even had a visit from St. Nicholas, portrayed by Stephen Petruska.

Sunday, December 11 was a very active day for the parish. A baptism and December birthday social followed the Divine Liturgy. The baptism of Beatrice, daughter of Matthew & Courtney Minerd was paired with December birthday celebrants which included Marcia Harrer. At 2 PM, a day of Reflection for the Mon Valley Presbytery was held which



Group at Reflection Day Social with Fr. Stephen.

included an Emmanuel Moleben, confessions and a very inspiring talk by Father Stephen Wahal. Cathy Phillips, Bonnie Balas and other social ministry members hosted a light meal following the service. Many GCU members from surrounding parishes in the Mon Valley Presbytery were in attendance.

For Theophany not only was holy water blessed in the churches, but also the waters of Cheat Lake, WV were blessed. Father Vasyl Symyon, Father James Fraser, Father Aaron (Local Maronite Catholic), and other local clergy took part in this blessing service. Some even entered the lake to try to find the cross used in the blessing.

The parishioners and GCU members are looking forward to Great Lent and are busy planning the upcoming 16<sup>th</sup> Egg Eggstravaganza to be held at St. John Church on Sunday, March 26, 2023 from 12 NOON to 4 PM in the Church Social Hall.

## Lodge 92

JESSUP, PA

### St. Nicholas Party

After a two-year hiatus, GCU Lodge 92 held its Parish/Community St. Nicholas Party. We had a nice crowd over 125 people. Max, a therapy dog in training helped St. Nicholas welcome everyone.

While children enjoyed the crafts, games, and sing along, the adults enjoyed the camaraderie and basket raffle. We hope this is again the start-up of many years to come.

Michaela Mancak | Secretary-Treasurer



St. Nicholas with "MAX."



Children enjoying the sing-a-long led by cantor Joyce Covaleski.

## Lodge 109

LYNDORA, PA

### Theophany Eve Supper

St John the Baptist BC Church held its annual Theophany Eve supper following the evening Divine Liturgy. The GCU supplied the fish and parishioners brought meatless side dishes and desserts. A check for \$1,668.<sup>00</sup> was presented by Patty Kosar to Fr. Radko Blichar.

Janet Uram | Secretary-Treasurer



Deacon Paul Simko presenting the winning check to Mary Troyan from the GCU St. Nicholas 50/50 raffle on Sunday. As luck would have it, the winning ticket was drawn by her grandson.



Fr. Radko Blichar & Patty Kosar.



Kids with St. Nicholas.



Theophany Eve Supper.



Marge Russell presenting Matching Funds check to Deacon Bob Knapp.

## Lodge 151

NEW YORK, NY

### Annual Prosfora

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church hosted their annual Prosfora, "the bread" Divine Liturgy, in January. "Glory to you our God, Glory to You. Heavenly King, Comforter, and Spirit of Truth." A meal of meatless dishes was prepared by the Ladies Guild—varenyky, halupchi with kasha, haddock and corn soufflé. Members of Lodge 151 bought tickets for a raffle of baskets filled with wine and surprises.



Parishioners Lesia Wolczuk and Christine Hulak at Prosfora.

Proceeds assisted the church in undertaking projects to maintain the church hall. The event provided much fellowship and camaraderie!!

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## Lodge 151 CONTINUED

### Final Lodge Meeting

In December, Lodge 151 held their final meeting as a lodge at Chef Wang. Marge Pajer Russell gifted everyone with a Christmas poinsettia. Members reminisced about past GCU events and members who worked so diligently to create exciting events as well as members who have passed away.

Lodge 151 was always family oriented, a generational legacy. The Pajers, Mikulas, Michnyas, Sikoryaks, Hulaks and Dietzs were mainstays of GCU Lodge 151 over the years.

Christine Hulak presented Marge with a gift of luminous “diamond” earrings and a bracelet (on behalf of Christine, Ann Kandratino and Laura Muhlfeld) as well as the following thank you—“Celebrating Marge.” Christine recalled, “I remember the very Sunday in St. Mary’s Church hall when my uncle Charles Sikoryak, who had been the past president for many years, passed the gavel to Marge. My Uncle Charles was president for many years and Marge wore the mantle for many years after.”

And what has the lodge accomplished over these many years?



Luncheon for newly ordained priests.



Final lodge meeting.

Support of many local charities—Breast Cancer Hotline; St. Raphael Food Pantry, LIC; St. Vincent de Paul; St. Francis House; The Byzantine Seminary; Veterans and the following churches: Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Andrew, St. Nicholas, Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord, Resurrection, and St. Raphael. There were also many memorable trips—Vermont bus tour(2); Washington, DC; Sight & Sound Theater and Belmont Race Track. And of course the other varied activities—Jeopardy; America Says; Haiku writing; Virtual Golf and

poetry Readings. The lodge also sponsored many prayer services for present and past members. Thank you Marge for your many years of leadership and thank you for your friendship. A heartfelt thank you for all the stars in our new Constellation.

### Christmas Gathering

Early December provided an early Christmas gathering at Vincent’s Italian Bistro in Roosevelt Field. Chrissy LoBello presented all members and friends with Christmas treats and plans for future visits. Lodge 151 is a family that promotes faith, fellowship and strengthens the local communities.

Christine Hulak | Treasurer  
Marge Pajer | President



The Sikoryak/Hogan families, all GCU members, celebrate GCU member Katherine Sikoryak’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Katherine is the wife of former president of GCU Lodge 151 Charles Sikoryak.



Sister with the children celebrating the Birth of Christ.



From left, Row 1: Amelia Nesgoda-Angel Gabrielle, Guilianna Saltamacchia-Head Angel, Olivia Saltalamacchia-Angel, Catarina Saltamacchia-Angel, John Kurilla-The Little Drummer Boy, Ivanna & Antonina Prodanets-Angels, Father Mykhaylo Prodanets, Colleen Evans-Shepherd and Sophia Nesgoda-Shepherd. Row 2: Paul Seasock-King, Thea Seasock-Mary, Matthew Zuppo-Joseph, Ivan Prodanets-King, Andrew Kurilla-King and Steven Tribus-St. Nicholas.

## Lodge 182 KINGSTON, PA

### Annual Christmas Pageant

The annual Christmas Pageant was held on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2022 prior to the start of the Divine Liturgy at St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church.

The pageant depicts the events surrounding the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It has become the highlight of the Christmas season at St. Mary. Members of Lodge 182, their children, the ECF

students and their parents have all participated in this annual event. Special thanks to Mary Ann Evans for being the original playwright many years ago and to Kristina Williams and Jason Marcin for adding to and evolving this play into what it is today. Thanks to the ECF teachers Laure Marcin, Lora Seasock and Marlene Williams for continuing this beloved tradition.



From left, Row 1: Antonina Prodanets, Sophia Nesgoda, Amelia Nesgoda, Andrew Kurilla and John Kurilla. Row 2: Ivan Prodanets, Ivanna Prodanets, Lora Seasock, Nicole Nesgoda, Steven Kurilla, Theresa Kurilla, Meghan Williams, Colleen Evans, Laure Marcin and Marlene Williams. Row 3: Stepan Prodanet, Rich Nesgoda, Steve Tribus and Dr. John G. Evans. Missing from photo: Dorianna Williams.

### Helping Hands Day

Lodge 182 in conjunction with the ECF children and their parents, and the trustees of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church held Helping Hands Days on December 17 and 18, 2022. Everyone pitched in to help decorate and then clean the church in preparation for the upcoming Christmas services. The workers were then rewarded for their efforts with a pizza party including desserts and refreshments in the school hall.

### Annual Holiday Party

Lodge 182 held their annual Holiday Party and meeting on December 30, 2022 at Theo's Restaurant, Kingston, PA. The meeting was followed by dinner. Everyone enjoyed an evening of delicious food and great camaraderie. It was a wonderful way to close out the holiday season and begin a hopefully happy & healthy new year.

Laure Marcin | Secretary



Annual Holiday Party. Row 1: Vincent Latona, Father Mykhaylo Prodanets, Ivanna Prodanets, Mary Ann Evans and Bernie Shinko. Row 2: Mary Ann Savage, Dorianna Latona, Laure Marcin and Bernie R. Shinko. Row 3: Cristian Triana, Kristina Williams and Jason Marcin. Row 4: Colleen Evans. Missing from photo: John G. Evans and Marlene Williams.

## Lodge 250

STERLING HEIGHTS, MI

### Annual Wreath Sale

In December, the St. Macrina Guild of St. Basil the Great, along with Lodge 250, held their annual wreath sale. This has been a popular event with friends and parishioners as they begin preparing for the Christmas holiday. Fresh wreaths, poinsettias, porch pots of fresh greenery and gift cards were sold. Proceeds from this sale received GCU Parish Matching Funds from the Home Office, which helped make the fundraiser even more successful!

Anita Cipa | Treasurer



Guild President and Lodge 250 Treasurer Anita Cipa, Event Coordinator Lynn Geletka and Guild Treasurer Mary Kay Slaby.



Coffee and doughnut social.

### Coffee & Doughnuts

Every Sunday morning after the 9 AM Divine Liturgy at St. Michael BC Church parishioners meet for coffee and doughnuts and for friendly social time. Bob & Mary Ann Polochak organize the weekly event by picking up the doughnuts early Sunday morning and keeping the regular and decaf coffee brewing for all to enjoy. Parishioners are asked to make donations to help sustain the activity. It's a great time for the ECF students and staff to grab some breakfast before heading over to the Social Center for Religious Education. It's also a good time to share fellowship and plan activities like pirohi pinching with the adults of the parish. Thank you Bob and Mary Ann!

## Lodge 258

HERMITAGE, PA

### Pirohi Making

The St. Michael Social Center was alive with activity on Monday, January 16 as parishioners met and made 88 dozen sauerkraut pirohi, which will be sold during the upcoming Ethnic Food Sale on March 1. Bob Polochak and Diane Hrishenko, with help from her husband Michael and their daughter Alyssa, were the organizers and leaders of the event. Parishioners helped with cracking the eggs, making the dough, kneading and rolling the dough, cooking the sauerkraut and finally pinching the pirohi!

Bill Dzuricko | President



Volunteers making pirohi.



## Lodge 271

HOMER GLEN, IL

### Christmas on the Prairie 2022

St. Nicholas made his annual stop at Annunciation BC Church on a horse drawn carriage. The event was enjoyed by parishioners, friends and especially the children.

Rev. Father Thomas Loya, pastor at Annunciation, commented “The event is about who we are. St. Nicholas is part of the riches of our church.” Fr. Loya added the church wishes to spread the message of charity and share the spirit of St. Nicholas, the church’s patron saint, with all. There were prairie tours filled with stories of St. Nicholas, a tent with spinning and candle-making activities and plenty of hot chocolate, cookies and other baked goods. Fun was had by all. Have a Happy New Year 2023!

Vicki Blidy | Vice President



Baked goods and treats at Christmas on the Prairie.



Sunday, December 4, 2022, St. Nicholas visits children of St. Joseph parish and provides them all with a gift.

## Lodge 302

BRECKSVILLE, OH

### Holiday Cash Giveaway Fundraiser

On Sunday, December 18, 2022 names were drawn for the winning prizes of the Holiday Cash Giveaway.

This year’s winners were: Paula Vasickanin \$500.<sup>00</sup>; Joseph Klinkosky \$100.<sup>00</sup>; Mr./Mrs. Kochilla \$75.<sup>00</sup>.

Many tickets were sold and the lodge was able to raise over \$1,000.<sup>00</sup>. Along with Community Matching Funds from the GCU Home Office, the lodge was able to donate a total of \$2,124.<sup>00</sup> to the Kidney Donor Conversations (a non-profit organization). Funds will be used to educate professionals and the public about living kidney donations.

Thank you to all of the lodge members who sold tickets for this final fundraiser of Lodge 302.

In addition, Lodge 302’s final donation of remaining funds of over \$500.<sup>00</sup> was given to St. Mary’s Hospitality House.

Christine Bratnick | Publicity Director



Fr. Vasyi Kupar’s sons: David, Olexi and Constantine pulled the winning raffle tickets for the Holiday Cash Giveaway Fundraiser.

## Lodge 321

BRADENVILLE, PA

### St. Nicholas Day Celebration

On Sunday, December 4, 2022, CCD students of St. Mary's BC Church received treat bags assembled by Lodge 321 members after class during their party. The GCU Home Office provided coloring books, crayons and candy for the bags. The student also enjoyed donuts and drink boxes. This year's celebration was a comedy of errors. Two men who were supposed to be St. Nicholas got sick, so there was no visit from St. Nicholas. Only a few students came because there was no heat in the church that day.

Giant Eagle Market gift cards were mailed to the shut-ins of the parish the same day to assist with their holiday preparations.

Laurene Kristof | President



Kids at the St. Nicholas Day Celebration.

## Lodge 336

EUCLID, OH

### Flag Day Ceremony

On Sunday, June 12 Lodge 336 held its annual Flag Day Ceremony followed by a coffee social. The ceremonies took place after Liturgy at Holy Resurrection Parish. The ceremony began with a prayer for our country by Fr. Lukas Mitro, followed by a commentary on the meaning of Flag Day by President Patti Comai. The Flag was raised by Bob Fetsko and Anthony Wheeler and the singing of the National Anthem concluded the event. The lodge provided coffee and doughnuts afterwards.

### Labor Day Raffle 2022

Lodge 336 held its annual Labor Day Raffle for the benefit of Holy Resurrection Parish. The raffle was a great success! There was \$6,699.00 in ticket sales, plus GCU Parish Matching Funds provided another \$5,000.00 for a grand total of \$11,699.00 for Holy Resurrection Parish. Lucky prize winners were First Prize—Kathy Sabol - \$1,000.00; Second Prize—Trina Sarli - \$500.00; Third Prize—Holy Resurrection Parish - \$250.00; Fourth Prize—John Mazur - \$125.00 and Fifth Prize—Matt Stachowiak - \$125.00.



Patti Comai presenting Kathy Sabol with her raffle prize of \$1,000.



Lodge Officer Joseph Comai presenting Father Lukas Mitro with a check from the proceeds of the raffle.



Fr. Lucas Mitro greeting St. Nicholas (Bob Fetsko).

### A Visit from St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas came to visit Holy Resurrection Parish and Lodge 336 on Sunday, December 4. There was a great turnout! Fr. Lukas Mitro and the children sang "O Who Loves Nicholas the Saintly," to prepare for the visit by St. Nicholas. St. Nick arrived with bags of treats for all of the children, plus he told the children the story about who he was and why we revere him.

Patti Comai | President

# Lodge 351

INDIANA, PA

## The Ernest Miners' Memorial

Lodge 351 finished out its last year as a lodge working to complete a few projects that it had started.

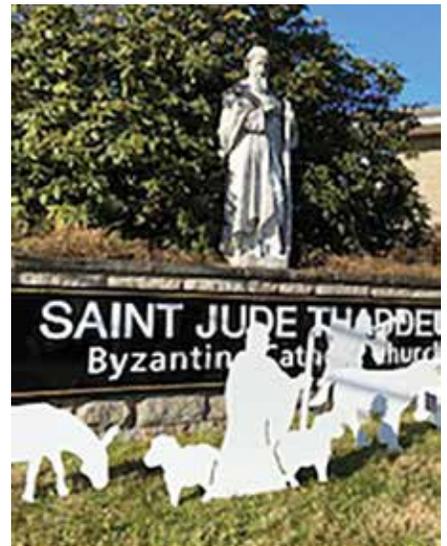


Miner's Memorial: McCracken Brothers.

One being the Ernest Miners' Memorial. With the help of a Community Matching Funds grant and the McCracken Brothers LLC from Homer City, PA the sidewalk that was installed in the spring is now stabilized. The Ernest Miner's Memorial still has a way to go to be completed, but with the help of funding through Indiana County, the GCU and private donations, there was a lot of progress made toward completing the project.

## Activities at St. Jude Thaddeus Church

During the month of December, Lodge 351 bought St. Nicholas gift bags for the parishioners of St. Jude. The gifts were handed out at the end of Divine Liturgy on December 4, 2022. The same day, members of Lodge 351 helped to decorate the church, both inside and outside, for Christmas. A nativity set was put up in front of the new St. Jude sign. That little section of the Ernest Community welcomed travelers with a reminder of the true meaning of Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus Christ. He is the true light of the world. A clothing and non-perishable food drive during the month of December benefited the local community through St. Vincent de Paul in Indiana and the Creekside United Methodist Food Pantry in Creekside, PA.



The new sign with the nativity display for the Christmas season.

## St. Jude Thaddeus Sign

Another project that lodge members worked on was to replace the sign in front of the statue at St. Jude Thaddeus Byzantine Catholic Church. The Parish Matching Funds as well as donations from parishioners was a great help in making this project come to fruition. Blue Sky Sign Company near Greensburg, PA created a beautiful sign that now welcomes members and neighbors to St. Jude. It was installed during the month of November just in time for the Christmas season. A new spotlight was also installed, so during the long winter nights the statue of St. Jude and the new sign shines brightly.



Clothing Drive: Addy, Stryker and Zoe Little.

## Final Lodge Meeting

Lodge 351 held its final meeting on December 30, 2022. Closing up the lodge reminded everyone of the many changes including the passing of many dear members, friends and relatives that took place. Over the years Lodge 351 participated in many activities both as a lodge and part of District 4. There were children's bowling tournaments (one of which Theresa (Klyap) Frederick won in her age group because she was the only one in that age group); golf tournaments held at different golf courses in Indiana, PA, which included great picnics in the backyard of Jean & Alex Zbur; Christmas parties; countless church dinners; Mother/Daughter teas and Father/Son camping trips. The members of the lodge will continue to work with the local community and the parish of St. Jude Byzantine Catholic Church continuing many of the projects that have been done in the past and working to finish a few that were started this past year. Members do not look at this as an end but as a new beginning—looking forward to the future as being members of the GCU, although in a different way. Reflecting back on the many memories, I have to write this last article with the words my dad, Mike Klyap wrote at the end of all his GCU Messenger articles—"A good time was had by all."

Patty Yamrick | Fraternal & Publicity Director



Food Drive: Isabelle, Zoe, Stryker and Addy Little.



At left: Charley & Ella McQuay, middle: John Melcotti and right: Grace Melcotti, all enjoyed visiting with St. Nicholas.

## Lodge 401

NANTY GLO, PA

### St. Nicholas Day Dinner

GCU Lodge 401 sponsored the annual St. Nicholas Day dinner at St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church.

The catered dinner followed the 11 AM Liturgy on Sunday, December 4, 2022. A complete turkey dinner was served and homemade desserts were provided by the parishioners. The children eagerly awaited the arrival of St. Nicholas (Steve Bender) and his distribution of gifts. The smiles on the faces of the children are always the greatest treats. A special thanks to all who made this event possible and thanks to the Home Office for their Fraternal Grant.

### Annual Christmas Visit

Members of GCU Lodge 401 made their annual Christmas visit to the residents at St. Stephen's Living Center.

Each of the residents was given a Christmas stocking filled with treats. They wasted no time sampling the goodies. Before ending the visit, lodge members joined together in singing a few Christmas carols.

A note of thanks to all the volunteers and the Home Office for the Fraternal Grant to make the purchase of the gift items possible.



Marina Sell with a resident at St. Stephen's Living Center.



Eugene Ostinowsky and Jerry Nedrich.

### Interfaith Community Food Pantry Donation

On behalf of GCU Lodge 401, Eugene Ostinowsky presented a \$600.00 check to Jerry Nedrich for the Interfaith Community Food Pantry. Jerry is an active member of the Food Pantry Committee and a member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Nanty-Glo, PA. A special thanks is extended to all volunteers at the Food Pantry and God's blessing on each of you for your community service.

Eugene Ostinowsky | Vice President

# Greater Hazleton Regional Lodge (GHRL) HAZLETON, PA

## Final Event for GHRL

The GHRL celebrated a job well done as their final official event as a lodge. GHRL officers did an amazing job at putting together the party arrangements, raffle baskets, volunteering during the event and of course for inviting Saint Nicholas himself to make an appearance!

Dorothy Foran, recently retired from the GCU Board of Directors, was honored for her time and dedication. A big thank you to all of the lodge members who did an excellent job on countless events over the years.



Former GCU Board member Dorothy Ann Foran and her husband Deacon Larry with St. Nick.



GHRL officers and members with St. Nicholas at the dinner.

## We Will Miss You Agnes

It was heartbreaking to hear about Agnes' passing. I just saw Agnes three weeks prior to her passing at The Greater Hazleton Regional Lodge's final event. Her friends told me "I have big shoes to fill" (about the new GCU Metamorphosis structure) and I let them know that "Agnes isn't going anywhere." I explained how we would be working together as Agnes was moving forward as a Constellation Coordinator for the Hazleton area. Even though I only knew Agnes for a short time, since joining the GCU team in May, she left a huge imprint on me and I know the same is true for the members who knew her. Her obituary appears on page 36.

Agnes was secretary, athletic director and fraternal director for the GCU's GHRL. She was the GCU Fraternalist of the Year in 2019 and Pennsylvania Fraternal Alliance Fraternalist of the Year for 2020. She was a member of the GCU bowling league since 1992 and served as secretary and treasurer of the league.

We have big shoes to fill for sure with Agnes's passing and we hope to continue to see your dedication and unity carry over through the GCU's exciting Metamorphosis.

Melissa Cohen | Corporate Comm. Events Coordinator-NE PA



A few of the tables at the dinner.



## Central Pittsburgh Regional Lodge (CPRL) GREENFIELD, CARRICK & SOUTHSIDE-PITTSBURGH, PA

### Kids' Christmas Party

On Sunday, December 4, 2022, approximately 70 people attended the holiday party at St. John Chrysostom church hall, Greenfield. As the children entered the hall, they were guided to the cookie table to decorate their own cookie complete with colored icing, sprinkles and festive M&M's.

Once everyone finished and was seated, Fr. Miron said a blessing before eating. Big Jim's pizza, a veggie/cheese tray, bags of snacks and lots of candy were on the lunch menu. A special thanks to the two church members who donated a tiered tray of Russian candies and a huge variety bag of Mars brand candies. They were both a big hit.

Games started simultaneously with lunch; if you were one of the lucky ones with a sticker under your plate, you won a door prize. Raffle prizes and the Left-Right game were held later in the afternoon.

Next, Puppet Works performed a 45-minute puppet show entitled, "A Christ Mouse Tail." The children and adults sat mesmerized during the show. A story line was interspersed with singing of Christmas carols. It was fun for people of all ages.

Following the show, the congregation was led in singing of the "Hymn to St. Nicholas" by the beautiful voice of Fr.



The kids with St. Nicholas and Fr. Miron.

Miron's wife. St. Nicholas (my boss, Jordan Hartman, was recruited and played the role very well) made a visit and gave all the children a \$1 gold coin to save or spend.

Once the children finished visiting, talking and taking photos with St. Nicholas, Jingle Bells was sung to bring out Santa Claus. Santa (church member Bill Sacco was

fantastic) arrived with a bag overflowing with presents. Each child's name was called to accept their gift. Some were eager to sit on his lap while others were a bit leery; some just cried right away. In addition to the present, a gift bag and a hardback holiday book were also given to each child.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this event. It is very rewarding to see the happiness in the children's faces.



The kids with Santa Claus.

### St. John the Baptist Matching Funds Events

The last quarter of 2022 was a busy one. Three church Matching Funds events were held to utilize the total allowable yearly Matching Funds.

First, for several weeks in October, a food drive was held. During the holiday season (Thanksgiving and Christmas) many people are in need of food. Happily, 190 nonperishable food items were collected. They were divided between St. Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry inside St. Mary's Holy Assumption Orthodox Church and St. Paul's Monastery. Both are located close to St. John Church on the South Side of Pittsburgh. These were chosen to keep the donations within the local community.

Second, a toy drive was held during part of the months of November and December. Over 100 toys and gift cards were collected. They were distributed evenly between Brashear Association and LePetite Café. The café worked with Thick Bike, Churn and Cupka's to host a Breakfast with Santa.

Third, a Soles4Souls shoe drive was held for one week in December. For just that one week, 57 pairs of shoes, boots and tongs combined were collected. These were mailed to the Sole4Souls headquarters where they were distributed to areas of need.

These events were great successes. The remaining Matching Funds of approximately \$2,300.00 were reached and a check was presented to St. John the Baptist, South Side. It will be used for necessary repair work and utility bills.

Kim Kolesar | Trustee

# Southeast Pittsburgh Regional Lodge (SEPRL) CLAIRTON & MUNHALL, PA

## St. Nicholas Luncheon at Ascension Church

Ascension Church celebrated the St. Nicholas holiday on Sunday, December 11 with a luncheon. Father Ivan Mina gave the blessing and led everyone in singing the “Hymn of St. Nicholas.” Right on cue St. Nicholas arrived with treats and coins for the children and each child got to visit and get a picture with him. GCU SEPRL had a gift bag and treats and the Holy Name Society had Christmas stockings filled with treats for all the kids. After lunch, everyone joined in playing Christmas games. One Christmas trivia game was a little difficult, but Henry Dufalla surprised everyone by answering all but one question correctly.



The group with St. Nick at Ascension Church.



Kids at St. Nicholas event at St. John Cathedral.



Hilzendegeer family at St. John Cathedral event.

## St. Nicholas Event at St. John Cathedral

SEPRL held their St. Nicholas Celebration in conjunction with St. John the Baptist BC Cathedral after the 9 AM Liturgy on Sunday, December 18, 2022. Nearly 100 people enjoyed the buffet breakfast at the Cathedral Center. Following breakfast, children in attendance enjoyed a visit from St. Nicholas who brought gift bags of candy, toys, coloring books and crayons. It was a great start to the holiday season.



Homeless Veterans donation.

## Collection for Homeless Veterans

Both Ascension and St. John Cathedral parishes joined together to collect items for homeless Veterans in the VA Hospital in Aspinwall, PA. Donations were overwhelming—a van loaded with boxes and bags along with a flat screen TV were delivered to the hospital before Christmas. Ashley, the volunteer coordinator was amazed at the size of the donation and had to go back for a second flatbed dolly to unload everything. She said it couldn't have come at a better time.

Trish Roberts | President

Patty Bovee | Treasurer & Publicity Director



Highland Health Free Medical Clinic, Georgia Lehman, Felipe Lucio and Rita Hull.



St. Mark's Pet Food Pantry representative JoAnn McKinney and Rita Hull.



Salvation Army: Georgia Lehman, Major Don Sanderson, Wanda Bennett and Rita Hull.

## Lodge 625 Happenings

Well, 2023 is underway! We hope that everyone in the GCU family had an enjoyable holiday season.

### Final Donations

At the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and final meeting of Lodge 625, members voted on the distribution of funds. During the month of December lodge officers visited many of the local organizations and presented them with donations raised through the summer and fall fundraisers. A total of \$10,000.00 was distributed to the local charities including a \$1,000.00 donation to the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great and House of Prayer in Uniontown, PA.



Kathy & John Russin, Michael Yewcic, Tom & Robin Oleksa and Rita Hull.

### Annual Christmas Party

On December 11, 2023, the lodge hosted the Annual Christmas Party combined with the St. Ann's Guild and the Bishop Romzha Men's Club.

### Thank You

The officers of Lodge 625 want to thank the Board of Directors and the Home Office staff for all their support over the years. Good luck to the new parish coordinator and their work to continue support to the parish and community.

Georgie Lehman |  
Secretary-Treasurer

### 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cash Bash

As the year 2023 and the new fraternal programs begin there are still several uncertainties that surround many activities within the parish, however, it was decided that Holy Trinity plans to have its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cash Bash on Saturday, April 1, 2023. Contact Georgia at 814-242-2083 for tickets and info.

## A New Rusyn Heritage Tour for the Summer

After a multiyear hiatus, the Rusyn Heritage Tour is back, post-Covid, and a little different.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the tour will NOT visit Ukraine this year. The focus will be on visiting Rusyns and exploring Rusyn culture in Poland and Slovakia.

The tour runs from June 27 to July 6 with tour guides John Righetti and Eva Bunkova leading the group.

Come walk where your ancestors walked, perhaps meet a few long lost relatives and more fully understand the Rusyn culture that made you... you!

For more info email rusynone@gmail.com or text to 412.518.7149.

## Earn your Master's Degree in Theology at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary's School of Theology

Degree options are offered both online and on campus.

Catholic • Ecumenical • Flexible  
Affordable • Prestigious • Spiritually Enriching  
Rooted in ancient Christianity

To begin M.A.T. program in upcoming summer semester, application deadline is April 20.

Students have a choice of four different M.A.T. focus areas:

- Chaplaincy
- Dogmatics
- Liturgy
- Sacred Scripture

www.bcs.edu



## Lodge 697 WEIRTON, WV

### Kids Bowling Event

With the help of GCU Lodge 697, St. Mary BC Church in Weirton was able to hold a bowling party for the children and parishioners. A great time was had by all. Thank you GCU.

Marilyn Charnie | President



Decorating cookies.

## Lodge 999 PHOENIX, AZ

### Cookie Exchange

On December 18, 2022 a cookie exchange was held at Joanie Mahar's home. Kids could decorate a cookie however they wanted. Proceeds benefited the Sisters at Mt. St. Macrina, Uniontown, PA.

Joanie Mahar | President



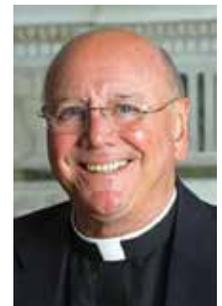
Kids enjoying bowling.



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY  
OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS  
FORMING LEADERS FOR THE CHURCH

## “Making the City a Church” Lecture Series

*In Person or Livestream*



Fr. John Baldwin.

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA is pleased to announce its 23<sup>rd</sup> annual academic lecture to be delivered by Fr. John Baldwin, S.J. at 7 PM on May 10, 2023. This live streamed lecture, entitled “Making the City a Church: Liturgical Processions in Constantinople from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries,” is to study the mobile character of ancient Constantinopolitan Christian worship and the processions of Byzantine stationary liturgy. This will shed light on the liturgy itself, popular piety, and the relation of liturgy to the surrounding culture.

All are welcome to attend this lecture virtually via the Seminary website ([www.bcs.edu](http://www.bcs.edu)). The lecture can also be

accessed live or at a later time from archives on the B.C.S. YouTube channel.

Fr. John F. Baldwin is Professor of Historical and Liturgical Theology at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. He is a priest of the USA-East Province of the Society of Jesus. He received his BA from the College of the Holy Cross, an MDiv from Weston School of Theology, and MA, MPhil, and PhD from Yale University.

Contact: Fr. Ivan Chirovsky 412-321-8383x36 or email: [development@bcs.edu](mailto:development@bcs.edu) for more information.

# For Your Information

## Events

### 16<sup>th</sup> Egg EGGstravaganza

Sunday, March 26, 2023

12 NOON to 4 PM

FREE

Sponsored by GCU St. John's, Local Egg Artists and the St. John's Ethnic Craft Club.

St. John the Baptist Church Social Hall  
201 East Main Street, Uniontown, PA

Call 724-438-1382 M-F 9 AM-3 PM—  
Please Leave Message.

Egg artists will display, demonstrate, and sell decorated eggs; Easter items (embroidered basket covers, lamb butter molds, decorated candles); crafts for purchase; children's Easter theme activities; explanation of traditional Easter foods for basket blessing; Lenten lunch menu; baked goods (including long rolls and more); workshop on making pysanky; fundraising activities and door prizes. Handicapped accessible.

### National Bowling Tournament

Friday, May 19 & Saturday, May 20

AMF Airport Lanes  
3754 Genesee Street,  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225  
716-632-0655

Lodging at Buffalo Airport Hotel  
4600 Genesee Street  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225  
716-634-6969

Applications are available in the Events Section of the GCU Website or will be mailed by request.

**NEW THIS YEAR** - Mixed Doubles & Mixed Team Divisions

Contact GCU Frat.-Comm. Dept. at  
1-800-722-4428 ext. 3810.

### Helping Hands Day at Mt. Saint Macrina

Saturday, June 3

9 AM

Uniontown, PA

Contact Basil Wahal at the GCU Home Office 724-495-3400 Ext. 3924 or email: bwahal@GCUusa.com

### GCU Golf Classic

Monday, June 5

9:30 AM Shotgun Start

Seven Oaks Country Club  
132 Lisbon Road, Beaver, PA 15009

Applications will be mailed to previous participants and are available in the Events Section of the GCU Website

Contact GCU Frat.-Comm. Dept at  
1-800-722-4428 ext. 3810.

### Byzantine Day at Knoebels Park

Sunday, June 11

10 AM

Elysburg, PA

Contact Melissa Cohen at 878-207-2327 or visit the Events Section of the GCU Website

### Spring Helping Hands Day at Holy Annunciation Monastery

Saturday, June 17

9 AM

Sugarloaf, PA

Contact Melissa Cohen at 878-207-2327 or mcohen@GCUusa.com

## Available

### Carpathian Cookery Cookbook

Having sold nearly 20,000 copies, the cookbook has entered its 20<sup>th</sup> printing and was requested by the Library of Congress to be in their ethnic cooking collection. The 330-page cookbook has a new look and features a protective plastic cover. The book includes sections on Christmas and Easter customs and recipes, traditional Rusyn and Slavic foods, other ethnic dishes, and many other tried-and-true recipes of St. John's parishioners. There is a variety of paska bread and kolachi (filled roll) recipes, as well as meatless dishes and Lenten recipes, suitable for the Great Fast, as well as the Pre-Christmas Fast. The cost of the cookbook is \$14.<sup>00</sup> plus \$5.<sup>00</sup> postage and handling (\$19.<sup>00</sup>). If ordering from Canada, please send a \$36.<sup>00</sup> U.S. Postal money order payable in U.S. dollars to reflect the difference in the exchange rate and postage cost. To order please send a check or money order to: Ethnic Craft Club, St. John Byzantine Catholic Church, 201 E. Main Street, Uniontown, PA 15401, call 724-438-1382 (M-F 9 AM-3 PM please leave a message) or email carpathiancookery@gmail.com.



2023  
National  
Bowling  
Tournament



**New This Year!**

Mixed Doubles & Team Divisions

Minimum Participants

Doubles (20)

& Teams (24)

Applications available online

Deadline for applications will be  
April 17, 2023

\$109 plus tax Single or Double

Block Code:

Fraternal Societies Bowling Tournament

Friday, May 19, 2023  
Saturday, May 20, 2023



3754 Genesee St.  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225  
716.632.0655

Accommodations



4600 Genesee Street  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225  
716.634.6969



ART & PHOTO CONTEST



Announcing the

GCU



2023  
ART & PHOTO  
CONTEST!

This year's theme:

"Invested in...  
Things that make us smile!"

**Deadline:**  
April 3, 2023

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

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

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

**If you're age 13-UP enter your photo!**

Include short description, name, age, address,  
phone number and email with your submission.  
Photos that include identifiable people require a model release.  
The model release form is available online.



# Deceased Members

(State Lodge-Member-City-State)

- 8304 Elaine Abrams, Banning, CA  
8309 Mary Anne Androsko, Melbourne, FL  
8344 Karen Bair, Tannersville, PA  
8337 Robert Bakalar, Johnson City, NY  
8344 Helen L. Baker, Ligonier, PA  
8313 Fern F. Barenbrugge, Yorkville, IL  
8344 Carmela Battaglini, Monaca, PA  
8344 Debora Ann Baum, Pittsburgh, PA  
8344 John Bednar, Perryopolis, PA  
8309 Linda Marie Bellack, Minneola, FL  
8337 Elaine Ann Beresny,  
Niagara Falls, NY  
8344 James L. Bernard, Indiana, PA  
8306 Mary Joan Bilcheck, Southbury, CT  
8302 Gary Bober, Chandler, AZ  
8344 Ronald M. Brosky, Catasauqua, PA  
8344 Robert L. Brown, Beaver Falls, PA  
8348 Robert W. Bruce, Nashville, TN  
8344 Frank J. Capan, Pittsburgh, PA  
8358 Gerald J. Carey, Stratford, WI  
8344 Thelma H. Carr, Freeland, PA  
8358 Dale Cattanach, Atlanta, GA  
8349 John Chabala, Prosper, TX  
8358 Marian A. Cherek, Hatley, WI  
8344 Helen Chmiel, Homer City, PA  
8344 Madeline Chopp, Lawrence, PA  
8335 Steve Churpakovich, Manchester, NJ  
8344 Norma Clawson, Tarentum, PA  
8309 Charles M. Collier, Clearwater, FL  
8335 Saul Cooperman, Bernardsville, NJ  
8344 Elise E. Cousins, Honey Brook, PA  
8358 Geraldine Czajkowski, Hartland, WI  
8344 Richard Darges, Pittsburgh, PA  
8335 Elizabeth C. Davis,  
North Arlington, NJ  
8337 Marie Depew, Endicott, NY  
8344 Joan M. Ditko, Johnstown, PA  
8309 Anthony Dziergowski,  
Jacksonville, FL  
8344 Marian Dzurmak, Boardman, PA  
8344 Victoria A. Edwards, Pittsburgh, PA  
8344 Gail F. Ellman, Mahanoy City, PA  
8344 Doris Ernest, Point Marion, PA  
8305 Brian Escobedo, Denver, CO  
8344 David G. Evans, Oakdale, PA  
8344 Irene V. Fedor, West Mifflin, PA  
8344 Margaret E. Fetchko, Whitehall, PA  
8344 Mary A. Filipiak, Pittsburgh, PA  
8358 Loren Fishler, Prairie Du Chien, WI  
8304 Beth Fleischer, Laguna Woods, CA  
8344 Lucille M. Futyma, Mahanoy City, PA  
8344 Pearl Galada, Beaver Meadows, PA  
8344 Marie Galgoci, Lansford, PA  
8344 Mary L. Gantz, Ligonier, PA  
8344 Mary Gaydos, Allentown, PA  
8344 John M. Geschwind,  
East Stroudsburg, PA  
8344 Mary Goda, Monogahela, PA  
8344 Ed Grosik, Telford, PA  
8344 Mary A. Groves, Beaver, PA  
8344 John M. Gula, Pittsburgh, PA  
8344 Barbara L. Hairhoger,  
Ellwood City, PA  
8359 Theodore T. Hall, Nakina, NC  
8359 Elizabeth R. Hannon, Charlotte, NC  
8344 Mary Ann Hartman, Pittsburgh, PA  
8344 Dolores Hay, Harmony, PA  
8344 T. Faith Heinz, Honey Brook, PA  
8304 Marcia Henrikson, Payson, UT  
8335 Dolores Herila, Carteret, NJ  
8304 Therese M. Hill, Orange, CA  
8344 Roberta Hillard, Mt. Bethel, PA  
8344 Thomas J. Hipp, Telford, PA  
8359 Kathleen Hogan, Jamestown, NC  
8309 Helen E. Holmes, Bradenton, FL  
8344 Christina H. Howze, Pittsburgh, PA  
8344 William R. James, Birdsboro, PA  
8341 Dolores M. Jasin, Vermilion, OH  
8327 Jacqueline J. Jensen,  
New Brighton, MN  
8358 Patricia Jirschele, Marshfield, WI  
8344 Anita Jones, Greensburg, PA  
8344 Vincent Kabay, Brackenridge, PA  
8359 William Kahrs, Etowah, NC  
8344 Ronald H. Kaufman, Fombell, PA  
8344 Martha Kelley, Hermitage, PA  
8344 Ronald Kelley, Dublin, PA  
8341 William J. Kendrach,  
Mingo Junction, OH  
8344 Freda L. Kenney, Hopwood, PA  
8344 Helen W. Kessler, Warrington, PA  
8303 David Kirchner, Maumelle, AR  
8344 Agnes Klyap, Ernest, PA  
8344 Robert Knish, Swoyerville, PA  
8344 Barbara L. Koebley, Gibsonia, PA  
8344 William Kolega, Johnstown, PA  
8344 Theodore Kolson, Punxsutawney, PA  
8344 Illene Konarzewski, Oakmont, PA  
8335 Mary Krulewicz, Bridgewater, NJ  
8344 Denise F. Kushner, Butler, PA  
8344 Elizabeth D. Labiaux, Freeport, PA  
8302 Robert H. Larson, Chandler, AZ  
8344 Anna Lesko, Brownsville, PA  
8359 Brenda A. Letterman-Childers,  
Barnardsville, NC  
8344 Phyllis Ann Lewis, N. Huntingdon, PA  
8344 Lewis Libertini, Brownsville, PA  
8358 Mary Litzow, Fitchburg, WI  
8344 Leo Lopo, Hazle Twp, PA  
8357 John D. Lott, New Manchester, WV  
8341 Mike Mackay, Barberton, OH  
8309 Martha Majoris, Pompano Beach, FL  
8327 Daniel Martin, Mounds View, MN  
8344 Lucille Mathews, Vandergrift, PA  
8344 Elizabeth J. McCarthy, Carnegie, PA  
8344 Thomas McCartin, Warrington, PA  
8344 Barbara McCreary, McDonald, PA  
8344 M Arlene McDowell,  
Hollidaysburg, PA  
8344 Cecelia G. McGuire, Saltzburg, PA  
8344 Dorothy M. Measel, Monaca, PA  
8344 Helen V. Meehan, Export, PA  
8341 Ricky Menough, Salem, OH  
8344 Patricia Moliterno, Vandergrift, PA  
8344 Bertha J. Mouser, Smock, PA  
8327 David W. Mutschler, Kiester, MN

8344 Dona L. Mylin, Lancaster, PA	8341 Tessie Suschak, East Lake, OH
8344 Mary C. Naccarato, Vandergrift, PA	8344 Robert C. Szoszorek, Pittsburgh, PA
8344 Harold F. Nelson, Greencastle, PA	8315 John T. Trussa, Indianapolis, IN
8344 Jane Nelson, Warren, PA	8344 Richard Tumas, Apollo, PA
8302 Philip S. Oberstar, Tucson, AZ	8341 Frank S. Uhrain, Youngstown, OH
8344 Mary B. Olek, Beaver, PA	8341 Catherine Ulrich, Youngstown, OH
8302 Carol Olson, Peoria, AZ	8344 Eugene Veltri, Whitaker, PA
8344 Samuel M. Palombini, Pittsburgh, PA	8354 Mary Vieira, Arlington, VA
8341 Mary Pannebaker, Fairborn, OH	8344 Ann Wahal, Levittown, PA
8349 Brian J. Paulson, Katy, TX	8344 Helen Wead, Philadelphia, PA
8344 Rose Ann Pecjak, Dilliner, PA	8344 Yolanda Westfield, Kingston, PA
8344 Bertha Petrishko, St. Clair, PA	8370 Jean M. Woods, England
8344 John Petro, McMurray, PA	8344 Kevin E. Woods, Hollidaysburg, PA
8310 Margaret Piper, Tallapoosa, GA	8326 Rose Wu, Livonia, MI
8344 Helen Pipik, Donora, PA	8344 Thomas R. Yaegle, Pittsfield, PA
8344 Patricia Plappert, Dupont, PA	8344 Richard Yannachione, New Brighton, PA
8344 Dolores Porta, Murrysville, PA	8359 Leon E. Young, Lumberton, NC
8344 Angelo R. Pro, Monessen, PA	8310 Carole Yurkanin, Woodstock, GA
8344 Isabelle A. Rabuck, Lehighton, PA	8344 Robert A. Zeedick, Pittsburgh, PA
8344 Roslyn Ragan, Monroeville, PA	8344 Jaime Lyn Zelinsky, Pine Grove, PA
8344 Judith E. Reese, Milton, PA	
8344 James R. Reid, Pittsburgh, PA	
8344 Rita Claire Rentko, Wilkes Barre, PA	
8326 Harold D. Reynolds, Afton, MI	
8326 Thomas J. Richter, Onaway, MI	
8341 Ruth E. Rummel, Elyria, OH	
8335 Dorothy L. Rusinko, N. Wildwood, NJ	
8344 Shirley Sakala, Cheswick, PA	
8344 Frances B. Santichen, Johnstown, PA	
8344 Erna Schaal, Pittsburgh, PA	
8358 Daniel Schnedecker, LaCrescent, MN	
8344 Janet B. Sciuillo, Monroeville, PA	
8341 Iphagenia Smith, Canton, OH	
8344 N. Don Snyder, Martinsburg, PA	
8315 Jered M. Solan, Munster, IN	
8344 Emma Stadler, Latrobe, PA	
8302 Douglas Stephens, Gilbert, AZ	
8327 Harold Stewart, Rochester, MN	
8359 Michael L. Strauss, Wilmington, NC	

# Remembrances

## Agnes Rohrbach

Agnes (Kuklis) Rohrbach, passed away Monday, December 26, 2022 at her home. Born in Hazleton, PA she was the daughter of the late Josephine Kuklis and was a member of Queen of Heaven Parish at Our Lady of Grace Church, Hazleton.

She was a 1966 graduate of Hazle Township High School. She was the president of the former Christian Women Society at Our Lady of Grace Church, and a member of the St. John's Byzantine Catholic Altar and Rosary Society. Agnes was secretary, athletic director and fraternal direc-

tor for the Greater Hazleton Regional Lodge (GHRL). She was the GCU Fraternalist of the Year in 2019 and the Pennsylvania Fraternal Alliance Fraternalist of the Year for 2020. She was a member of the GCU bowling league since 1992 and served as secretary and treasurer of the league.

Agnes enjoyed bowling, going to casinos and running bus trips to various shows and casinos and just living life. She worked for St. John's Byzantine Catholic Church as the secretary.

Preceding her in death, in addition to her mother, was her husband David

A. Rohrbach in 2017; mother-in-law Louise Rohrbach; and sister-in-law Cheryl Rohrbach.

Surviving are her sister-in-law Linda (David) Kochinsky; nephews Gene Culp and David Kochinsky; great niece Hailey Culp and several cousins also survive.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Monday, January 2, at Queen of Heaven Parish at Our Lady of Grace Church. Burial was in Our Lady of Grace Cemetery.

Eternal memory and blessed repose.

## Ned R. Kelso Jr.

GCU member and agent Ned R. Kelso Jr., 60, of Chambersburg, PA passed away January 28, 2023.

Born October 2, 1962, he was the son of the late Ned R. Kelso (Nancy), and the late Margaret L. Kelso.

Ned was a veteran of the United States Air Force. He spent his life continuing to serve others between Youth Ministry at the Presbyterian Church of Falling Spring, coaching young men in church league basketball, Wounded Warrior events, Fishing Rodeos, Mission Trips through World Harvest Outreach and other service organizations too numerous to name.

A lover of the outdoors, Ned could find God in every aspect of creation, eagerly sharing hearts and time with others in nature. His best fur buddies, Brier & Banx loved adventuring with him through God's Creation. Ned was an avid fisherman and hunter, and looked forward to his explorations in Horse Valley, SD, the Carolina's and Kentucky.

His outdoorsmanship passion was only surpassed by his love for his 'Bride' Monica J. Kelso who survives him. Their two daughters Cheyenne Kelso of Chambersburg, Calista Kelso of Pittsburgh and son Elijah Kelso of State College will forever be the absolute joy of his life.

While he was an uncle literally and figuratively to many, he shared a special relationship with his niece, Kiara Adams, and nephews, Cedric Adams and Tyler George, as well as with his girls' significant others, Kody Bodner and Jimmy Lundy.

He was especially fond of the band of brothers who walked beside him in faith & mentorship—they were a Godly crew with whom to do life.

Ned spent over 25 years serving the south-central Pennsylvania senior market through Combined Insurance and Bankers Life & Casualty Company before establishing an insurance brokerage of his own, Kelso Agency,

Inc in 2013. He continued building relationships through his agency, while helping so many with their financial needs. Ned was a leading Life Insurance Sales agent for GCU.

In addition to his parents, he was also preceded in death by two unborn children.

Ned has four siblings: Tony Schaffer (Becky) of Leesburg, VA; Laurie Beltz (Scott) of Orrstown, PA; Beth A. Eby (Steve) of Carlisle, PA and Stacy Shields (Mike) of Chambersburg.

A Celebration of Life service was held for Ned on Wednesday, February 1, 2023, at World Harvest Outreach in Chambersburg.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Mason-Dixon Warrior Adventures, c/o Fred Waite, 261 Thorton Drive, McConnellsburg, PA 17233.

## Archpriest John G. Petro

Archpriest John G. Petro, a retired priest of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, died suddenly of heart failure on October 29, 2022 at St. Clair Hospital, Upper St. Clair, PA.

Father John, as he preferred to be called, was born July 1, 1942 to the late Nicholas & Elizabeth Orlosky Petro.

John attended Canonsburg public schools and he was a member of the very first graduating class of the newly organized jointure known as Canon-McMillan. He served as Student Council President for the C-M Senior High School class of 1960.

After graduation, he entered the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril & Methodius in Pittsburgh, simultaneously enrolling in Duquesne University. He graduated from Duquesne in 1964 with a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy. He was then chosen to pursue higher theological education at the then known Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. He resided at the American College of Theological Studies there, and he graduated from the now designated Dutch Catholic University of Leuven with a master of arts degree in theology.

On September 29, 1968 Bishop Stephen J. Kocisko ordained him to the priesthood at his home parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Canonsburg. He then began a 54 year ministry to God's people in the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church. Numerous parishes welcomed the newly ordained Father John as their assistant pastor, and in 1974 he accepted his first assignment as pastor to St. Nicholas Church in Nanty Glo, PA.

In 1977 Father John became the chaplain, spiritual director, and retreat director for the Sisters of St. Basil at Mt. St. Macrina, Uniontown, PA. He assisted the Sisters in a monumental effort to translate liturgical services [matins, vespers, Lenten, and others] previously published in Greek, Slavonic, and French, into English. His untiring efforts led to the publishing of texts that are used for Byzantine Ruthenian services across the country.

During this same time, Father John initiated a self-directed study in the history and development of Eastern Christian Spirituality. He concentrated on the writings and teachings of the early church fathers, the various monastic communities and their contributions through the ages, the application of spiritual disciplines on the per-

sonal, parish, and institutional levels, and finally on the adaptation of spiritual traditions from the past into today's world.

Father John conducted retreats, spiritual conferences, and individual spiritual counseling at the Mt. St. Macrina House of Prayer on a regular basis. He became a much sought after leader for clergy retreats, religious communities' renewal programs, and numerous events and occasions seeking an emphasis on spirituality.

His alma mater, the American College of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium invited him in 1984 to return and join its faculty as director of spiritual formation. With his bishop's approval, Father John humbly accepted the invitation and soon returned to Leuven to begin a five-year term.

He worked closely with the seminary students at the American College, together with others who sought his spiritual wisdom. During this same five year period, Father John continued his study and research into Eastern Christian spiritual theology, spending countless hours at the university library, and also visiting some of the great Eastern Christian monastic communities throughout Europe.

Committed first to his assignments at the university, Father John also expanded his own cultural education on days off, by taking a readily available train to Brussels, Paris, Lyon or other towns and cities in Western Europe. He welcomed family and friends to join him in Europe for a "dream vacation" where they would explore Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and other countries.

His five-year assignment quickly ended and upon returning home in 1989 he became pastor of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Charleroi, PA. Once again, Father John responded to requests to speak or lead events with a spirituality theme or purpose. He also taught at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary.

Archbishop Judson Procyk named Father Petro rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in 1995. Father John quickly transitioned from parish priest to seminary leadership.

Recognizing the directives of the Catholic Church on priestly formation, together with the then current academic status of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Father John, his faculty, Board of Directors and project team set out to obtain full academic accreditation from the Pennsyl-

vania Department of Education and the Association of Theological Institutions.

Their untiring efforts culminated in the full accreditation of the Seminary as a four-year degree granting institution, authorized to award master of arts degrees in theology as recognized by the Association of Theological Institutions.

After an unprecedented 17 years as seminary rector, Father John resigned, enjoyed a sabbatical year of rest, and then in 2013 became pastor of St. Stephen Byzantine Catholic Church in North Huntingdon, PA. Father John led a renewal effort that embraced parish infrastructure, finances, liturgical and spiritual life, and other aspects of life at St. Stephen's, all of which remain as signs of their total communal effort.

Earlier this year on St. Thomas Sunday, Father John celebrated his final Divine Liturgy at St. Stephen's and immediately transitioned from pastor and leader to a quiet life in retirement near his hometown of Canonsburg. And, as he quietly entered this life on July 1, 1942, in the middle of the night on October 29, 2022, he would depart from this earthly life and forever be asleep in the Lord.

Preceding Father John in death were his parents. He is survived by his brother Fred [Mary Ellen] Petro; sister Barbara [John] Modzelewski; nephew Gregory [Kristen Sweeney] Modzelewski and great-niece Eliza Sweeney-Modzelewski; and niece Dr. Katherine [Dr. Nicholas Bosch] Modzelewski; and numerous cousins and friends.

Family and friends were received at St. John Cathedral, Munhall, PA, November 9. The priestly Parastas memorial service was celebrated that evening.

Con-celebrating the Funeral Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral on November 10, were six of Father John's fellow priests, Mitred Archpriest John Kachuba, Very Rev. Robert Pipta, Very Rev. Andrew Deskevich, Very Rev. Valerian Michlik, Rev. Geoffrey Mackey, and Rev. Paul West. Father Robert Pipta was the homilist. Metropolitan William C. Skurla presided. Interment was at Calvary Cemetery, Mount Saint Macrina, Uniontown, PA.

Eternal memory and blessed repose, Archpriest John George Petro, Vicnaja jemu pamjat'.



# THE Highlights OF A TRADITIONAL IRA



As a result of the SECURE Act 2.0 passed in December of 2022, GCU Members with an IRA may do any or all of the following:

-  The age at which owners of retirement accounts must start taking RMDs is 73. On January 1, 2023, the age in which you must start taking RMDs increased from 72 to 73. If you turned 72 in 2022 or earlier, you would need to continue taking RMDs as scheduled.
-  Contribute up to \$6,500 annually (or \$7,500 annually, IF you are age 50 or older). This is up from limits of \$5,500 and \$6,500, respectively.
-  Contribute to your IRA without an age restriction. Previously, IRA contributions had to cease at age 70 ½.
-  Withdraw up to \$5,000 to pay expenses for the birth or adoption of a child, without penalty.

Having earned income is a requirement for contributing to a traditional IRA, and your annual contributions to an IRA cannot exceed what you earned that year.



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Beaver PA, 15009

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