

History of St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Parish

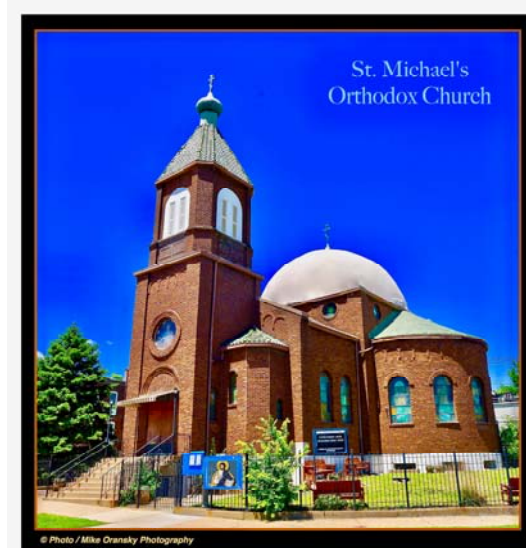
St. Michael's was made up of immigrants from parts of Europe such as Austria-Hungary, Galicia and Russia. They sought work in the mining areas of Illinois and Missouri and subsequently a few settled in St. Louis. As Orthodox Faith grew strong which resulted in the founding of St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church in October 1909.

The first priest who was assigned to serve St. Michael's was the Rev. Michael Pazdry. His Grace, the Most Reverend Bishop Alexander, blessed the church.

During the years 1909-1926, a number of priests served St. Michael's parish; Hieromonk Ioanniky (1909), Rev. Alexander Byacheslavov (1910-1912, and again in 1914), Rev. Alexy Alekhin (1913), Rev. Alexy Dankevich (1915), Rev. L. Zakevsky (1916), Rev. Gregory Matveychuk (1917 and served again in 1923), Rev. John Zitinsky (1917), Rev. Wasiliev (1917), Rev. Ieronim Lutsik (1918), Rev. Michael Rusinik (1918), Rev. Andrew Solanka (1919), Rev. Hariton Velma (1919), Rev. Paul Lisak (1920), Rev. Constantin Sukhostavsky (1920), Rev. Alexy Borokhovich (1921-1922), Rev. Nicholas Koshevich (1923-1924), and V. Rev. Arkhip Searbu (1925-1926).

Early in 1926 the parishioners began planning for a new church building and on December 12, 1926 started a drive for an estimated \$45,000 needed for that purpose. A groundbreaking took place in 1927 when Rev. Joseph Hunchak (1927-1929) was serving as pastor. The cornerstone was blessed by His Grace, the Most Reverend Bishop Theophilus (later elevated to the rank of His Eminence, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Theophilus) and assisted by Father Hunchak, Father Zaychenko of Madison, Illinois and Father Tertichny (then of Benld, Illinois) as well as clergy from other Orthodox Churches in the St. Louis Area.

The dedication of the new church building took place on June 2, 1929 with His Eminence, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Platon officiating and assisted by Father Hunchak, Father



Tertichny of Benld, Illinois, Father Warlashkin of Buckner, Father Sveridoff of Royalton, Illinois, and Father Antonishin of Desloge, Missouri.

When Father Hunchak was transferred from our parish, the following priests served St. Michael's: Rev. Nicholas Levitsky (1930), Rev. Daniel Gilevich (1931), Rev. Lazar Kirichenko (1931), V. Rev. Alexander Pogrebniak (1932), Mitred Archpriest John Tertichny (1932-1974), Rev. David Homiak (1975-1978), V. Rev. Paul Sawchak (1975-1997), Rev. Elias Khouri(1997-1999), Rev. Josef Von Klarr(2001-2005), Rev. Paul Gassios (now His Grace Bishop Paul, 2006-2007), and Rev. Christopher Phillips. (2007-current).

When the war ended and veterans returned, there was need for a renewal of responsibilities and programs for the fulfillment of spiritual needs of the parish as well as the upkeep of the church building. The Ladies Sodality and the Men's Club promoted various fund raising projects, which resulted in the installation of church pews. Major improvements followed such as installation of a gas furnace and blown in acoustical ceiling. A new roof was added, the belfry was enclosed and stainless steel crosses were added to the outside cupolas.

In 1970, a fund was started to cover the cost of new Byzantine Icons painted by Dimitri Zonia, a St. Louis artist and former member of our parish in his youth. A blessing of the Icons and the Mural of the Resurrection took place in November 1972 by His Eminence, Archbishop John. In November 1973 His Beatitude Metropolitan Ireney blessed the Mural of the Mother of God. For the 75th Anniversary, Mr. Zonia again made it possible for additional Icons to be blessed by His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius.

Also during this period of time we needed a parish home, and property near the church was purchased and remodeled. This proved quite adequate for a time but an opportunity presented itself to purchase our present rectory in South County St. Louis in August 1977.



Our parish became more involved in civic and community events such as the annual international Folk Festivals

held in Forest Park, Gardenfests of the Garden Tower Community Association, McKinley-Fox and Bevo activities, the V-P Fair Festival and our choir's participation in "Christmas Around the World" at the Old Court House where Christmas carols and traditions of many lands are featured each year.

The one event that has brought many visitors and friends together at our church hall has been the "Around the Samovar" Bazaar, which was begun in October 1975. Also fish fries have been ongoing for several years during the Lenten Season. Our Missions Dinners were started in 1982 for the purpose of assisting needy mission parishes in our Midwest Diocese. The Christmas cookie project has been a big part of the Christmas Season, and Flea Markets have been held in the spring for several years. Also, we recently started a barbecue project.

Our parish was a pick-up point for several drives that our deanery area had for the purpose of humanitarian aid for Russian and other countries of Eastern Europe. We had well over 300 boxes of clothing, food, medicine and books that were collected from our parishioners and neighboring parishes. Also, our parish has been participating in a Meal-of-the-Month project, which is serving our community.

In a spiritual way our parish experienced the following significant events during 1994 with His Grace Bishop Job officiating: the Ordination of Deacon Thomas George to the Priesthood on January 30, the Ordination of Deacon Timothy Sawchak to the Priesthood on August 13 and the Jeweled cross bestowed on Father Paul Sawchak at Father Timothy Sawchak's Ordination.

Another significant event was observance of Father Paul Sawchak's 25th Anniversary of his Priesthood (April 6) on May 15. Sadly, Father Paul reposed in the Lord in February of 1997. May his Memory be Eternal.

Our hope is that we have conveyed to you the love and devotion that has prevailed throughout the past 108 years. Let us pray that in the years ahead we will continue to glorify God and serve Him and our fellowman as well.