

Marriage in Christ

Although many people think of June as the month when weddings normally take place, my wife and I were married on May 15, 1971 at Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church in Natrona Heights, Pennsylvania. Interestingly, that date was chosen because it was the only day in the summer of 1971 that a reception hall was available. Our reception was held at St. Vladimir Ukrainian Catholic Church Hall in Arnold, Pennsylvania. Ladies from the church provided traditional Ukrainian and Slovak foods for the dinner. Our having similar religious interests and ethnic backgrounds was one contributor to the stability of our marriage.

In October of 2020, Fr. Stephen Freeman of the Orthodox Church of America presented the webinar “Crowned with Glory and Honor, Understanding the Marriage Covenant” for God With Us Online, peppered with humorous anecdotes. He related a theory: all marriages fail in some manner. For “divorced” couples with children, the children dominate the future relationship. Divorce is not an unmarriage. Separating is a lousy way to live out a marriage. The marriage just doesn’t go away. Most marriages do not suffer this pain.

He noted that marriage is part of our being—it is ontological, that is literally real. Man and woman become one flesh when united in matrimony. As we get older, we suffer some physical pain every day. We are built that way. Pain is part of our existence. It is ontological. Marriage can be painful. Our covenant is more important than a legal contract. Scriptural covenants are ontological, different from secular ones. Covenants require the shedding of blood. When a child is born, the ontology is filled in a very literal way. Children bring anxiety to a couple. The story of our creation can only be understood in the concept of marriage. Adam and Eve came into existence already married. God created them male and female. They were united as one. It is not good for the man to be alone. Marriage is the first human good. When St Paul spoke about marriage, he said no man hates his own flesh. Marriage is a mystical reality. Our

relationship with Christ is ontological: we are His bride. In our Holy Week observances, we participate in the “Bridegroom Matins” in which we are seen as brides of Christ.

In the marriage ceremony in Eastern Christian Churches, the couple drinks from a common cup, it is the cup of the union. From that time forward, the man and

woman have a common life. They drink from one source. Our lives are shared. When we are born, we come into a family. When we are baptized, we are baptized into Christ. We live our lives preparing to die and to be with Christ forever.

He continued to state that we need to learn to talk about marriage in terms of its reality and not our culture. Our culture has a distorted view of the relationship between a man and a woman. He concluded stating that marriage is a journey and we continually grow to learn who we are.

In my journey with my wife we had many successes and failures, but never lost our faith in God’s love for us. We are also members of the People of Praise covenant community, and join with others in living our lives together. We learned how to be faithful husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. If we fail we have those around us who we can call on to help us get on the right path. We participated in the Marriage in Christ seminar offered by the People of Praise in which we would spend time together every day reading scripture, praying for each other, asking what we could do to help each other grow in Christ, and learning to do little love actions every day. I pray God continues to bless my wife and me with many more years of married life together.

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The First Eparchial Bishop of St. Nicholas

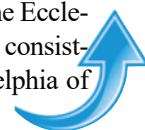
When the eparchy was created its first bishop was named as well: Monsignor Jaroslav Gabro.

Bishop-Elect Gabro was native-born, in Chicago, on July 31, 1919, the son of John and Catherine (nee Tymusz) Gabro. He is also the first of our bishops educated in American schools. He attended at St. Procopius Seminary (a high school preparing men to become Benedictine monks—or priests—or diocesan priests) in Lisle, Illinois. From there he went to St. Charles College in Catonsville, Maryland. (Before

the founding of St. Basil College some seminarians studied at St. Charles College or other schools) and St. Basil College Seminary in Stamford, Connecticut. His theological studies were at St. Josaphat's Seminary with joint studies at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Jaroslav Gabro was ordained a priest for the Apostolic Exarchate of the United States of America on September 27, 1945, by Bishop CONSTANTINE (Bohachevsky), Titular Bishop of Amisus. Father Gabro, during his priestly years in what is now re-

ferred to as the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States, saw many changes made. On July 20, 1956, Pope Pius XII created the Apostolic Exarchy of Stamford, Connecticut, assigning to it the parishes situated in the State of New York and all of New England and appointed as its first titular bishop, Bishop AMBROSE (Senyshyn), who had been the auxiliary bishop in Philadelphia. Two years later (July 12) the same Roman Pontiff established the Ecclesiastical Province of Philadelphia, consisting of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia of



the Ukrainians, and the Eparchy of Stamford.

Following ordination, Father Gabro served in parishes in Pennsylvania, Missouri, Michigan, New York and New Jersey. He was vice-dean of the archeparchy's New York deanery, a diocesan consultant, a member of the Diocesan Administrative Council and, in November of 1958, dean of the New Jersey deanery until his selection as bishop. He was pastor then of the Assumption parish in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, where he formulated plans for the Ukrainian Assumption School, which was completed by his successor Father Stephen Sulyk, later the Archbishop/Metropolitan of Philadelphia.

As noted earlier in *New Star*, on July 14, 1961, Pope John XXIII separated the western part of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia. Thus all the states of west of the western boundary Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi, including Hawaii and eventually Alaska, over 116,000 square miles, consisting of 31 priests with a population of 20,439 and established it as the Eparchy of St. Nicholas of Chicago for the Ukrainians, naming its first Bishop-elect, Monsignor Jaroslav Gabro, on May 10, 1958. As is typical, he was given the title, Doctor of Divinity, (DD) a designation that a bishop's role is the teacher of the diocese.

Bishop Gabro was ordained to the episcopacy at the Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 26, 1961. The main consecrator was the metropolitan and archbishop of Philadelphia AMBROSE (Senyshyn, OSBM). (who, on the same day became the new Metropolitan/Archbishop); and co-consecrators, Bishop ISIDORE (Borecky) from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and Bishop JOSEPH (Schmondiuk) of Stamford. Bishop Jaroslav was solemnly installed the newly-designated St. Nicholas Cathedral in Chicago, December 12, 1961. During his time as a bishop he was, in 1971, a consecrator of Bishops BASIL (Losten) and JOHN (Stock).

In terms of his apostolic succession, his line can be traced back to Archbishop MYCHAJLO (Rohoza), Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych in 1596.

Bishop Gabro attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. On October 29, 1963, then-Archbishop JOSOPH (Slipj) concelebrated the *byzantino-ucrainus ritus*—as the Council booklets described it—before the Council Fathers, together with Bishops ISIDORE (Borecky) and JAROSLAV (Gabro). Another event during the Second Vatican Council of note was the placing of the relics of St. Josaphat in St. Peter's Basilica, with the Pope's participation. The event was initiated by Slipj. Metropolitan MAXIM (Hermaniuk) of Winnipeg noted in his diary on November 25, 1963: "the solemnity at the altar of St. Basil the Great in St. Peter's Basilica on the occasion of the deposition, on the 22nd of this month, of the relics of St. Josaphat. The Holy Father Paul VI himself participated in this unique solemnity, *modo privato*. Eighteen of our bishops, presided by Metropolitan Confessor Most Rev. J. Slipj, celebrated a

Moleben to St. Josaphat."

To administer his far-flung Eparchy Bishop Gabro appointed Very Reverend Walter Paska as Chancellor and a Consultor together with Very Rev. Dr. Stephen Knapp. Reverends Michael Bochnewich and Peter Leskiw. He also divided the Eparchy into four deaneries. Very Rev. Knapp as Dean of Chicago; Rev. Bochnewich, Dean of Detroit; Rev. Leskiw, Dean of the Northwest; and Rev. John Lazar Dean of the Southwest. On March 17, 1962, the four members of the Consistory were honored with the title of Papal Chamberlain with the title of Very Rev. Monsignor.

Bishop Gabro hosted a youth conference for the Eparchy in 1970 and established the eparchial newspaper, *New Star*. Gabro decreed that the cathedral would follow the Gregorian religious calendar. He hosted Patriarch Joseph Cardinal Slipyi in 1968. He ordained seven priests during his tenure.

On February 5th, 1980 Pope John Paul II informed Cardinal Slipyj by letter of his decision to convoke a Synod of all Ukrainian bishops. Two days later Cardinal Slipyj had a private audience with the pope. Finally, on March 18th the Vatican made a public announcement that the pope had called an extraordinary synod of Ukrainian bishops for March 24th, 1980 at which the bishops would select a possible successor to the 88-year-old Cardinal Slipyj.

The Synod held in the Vatican was attended by 15 Ukrainian bishops headed by Cardinal Slipyj. Three bishops, including Bishop Jaroslav, did not attend because of illness. It was the first time in the history of the Ukrainian Church that a synod was convoked and presided over by the successor of Saint Peter, the Pope of Rome. On the closing day of the Synod, March 27th, the Vatican announced that Pope John Paul II named Archbishop MYROSLAV IVAN (Lubachivsky) of Philadelphia, as selected by the Ukrainian bishops as the coadjutor and eventual successor as the leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Church "with the nomination of Monsignor Lubachivsky, the continuation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church is assured" announced the Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*. On the day after the closing of the extraordinary synod on March 28th, Bishop Gabro, who had been seriously ill, died at age 60. The funeral rites were held on April 1st at Saint Nicholas Cathedral. The liturgy was con-celebrated by the new coadjutor Archbishop Lubachivsky, Archbishops MAXIM (Hermaniuk), and STEPHEN (Koscisko) together with nine other Byzantine bishops. Also participating was John Cardinal Cody, Archbishop of Chicago, and over 100 Ukrainian priests from the United States and Canada. Our first bishop's body is interred at Saint Nicholas Cathedral Cemetery.



Fr Jonathan Morse