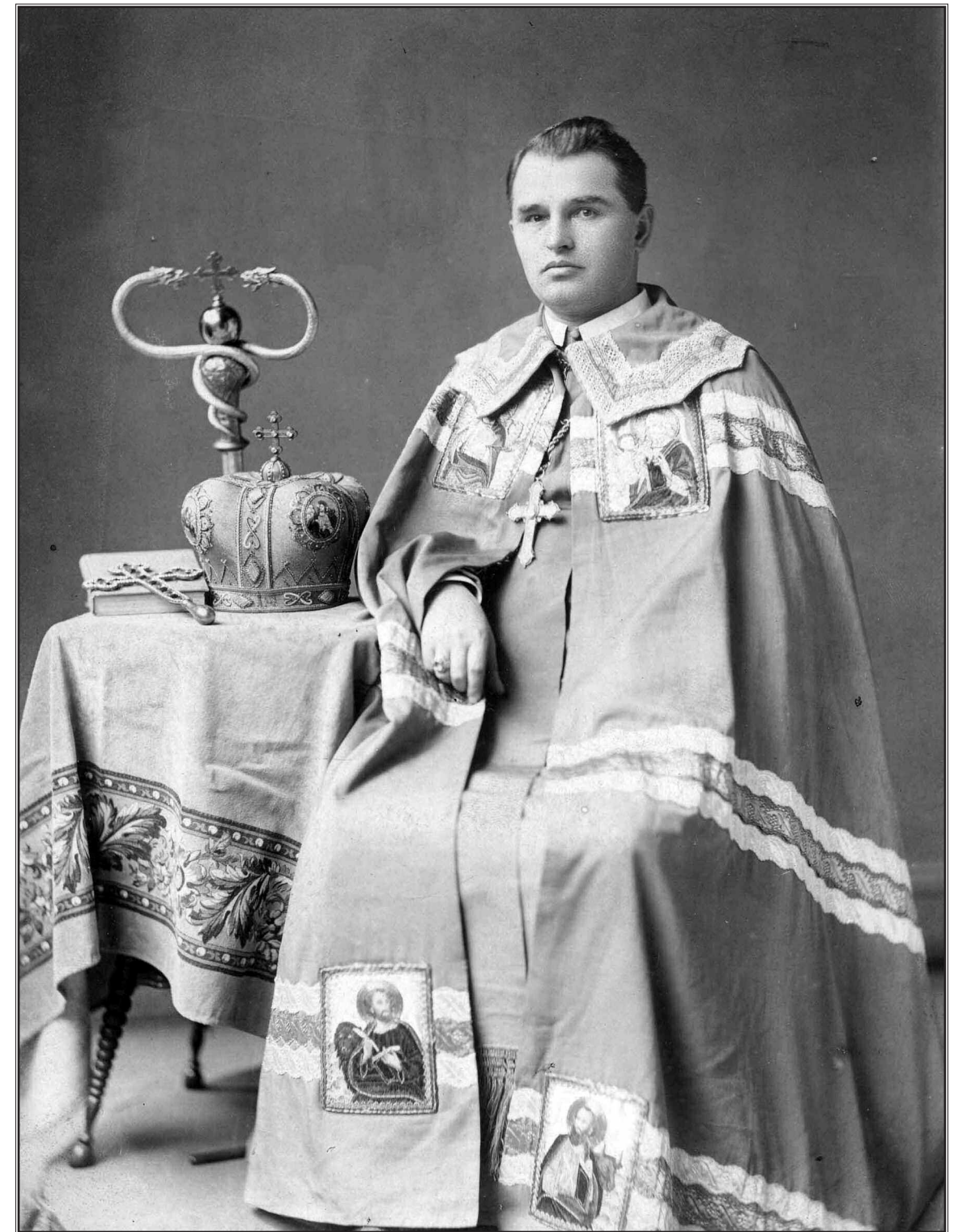


Rev. Ivan Kaszczak, Ph.D.



The present Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia. Bishop Ortynsky is buried in the crypt.  
Photo Credit: Michael Haritan



Courtesy of PAHRC

MOST REV. STEPHEN SOTER ORTYNSKY, O.S.B.M., D.D.

*"Kyr Soter"*

THE FIRST GREEK CATHOLIC BISHOP IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(1907-1916)



Design credit: Moki Kokoris



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827 North Franklin Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19123-2097

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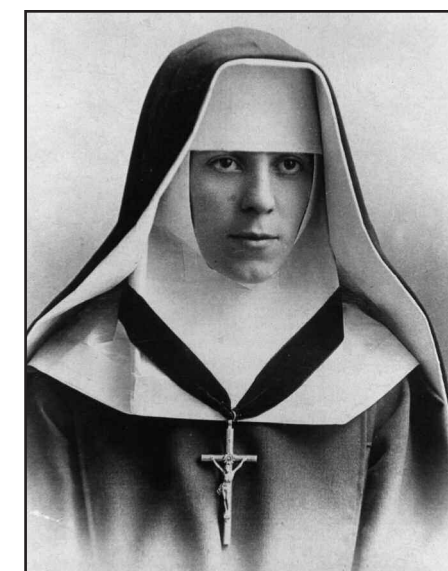


## Concluding Thoughts

The Church is always part of an historical context. Her traditions and particular customs breathe life into her primary mission of "preaching the Gospel to all nations." Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky dedicated his life to preaching that Gospel and trying to save all the various ethnic groups that called his "Greek Catholic" Church their home. He saw his mission not as a narrow mission to a particular people but to everyone in the United States. He was a pastor and an "episcopos-overseer." So, while many of his fellow Catholics tried to remind him that he was the bishop for the Ruthenians, he reminded them that the Gospel command was to preach to everyone. Yes, the Gospel was preached within the historical traditions of the Greek Catholic Church but its goal must never be to remain parochial but always to be universal – for all.



Bishop Ortynsky lying in state at the Cathedral.



Mother Helen Langevych,  
O.S.B.M, Foundress of Basilian  
Sisters in the U.S.A

Depiction of Bishop Ortynsky in stained glass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C. Ortynsky and DeSmet – has Metafile; Photographer: Geraldine M. Rohling / © Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C., 2005. All rights reserved. Used with permission.





Prayer cards distributed to commemorate Bishop Ortynsky at his funeral.  
Courtesy of Basilian Archives – Fox Chase, PA

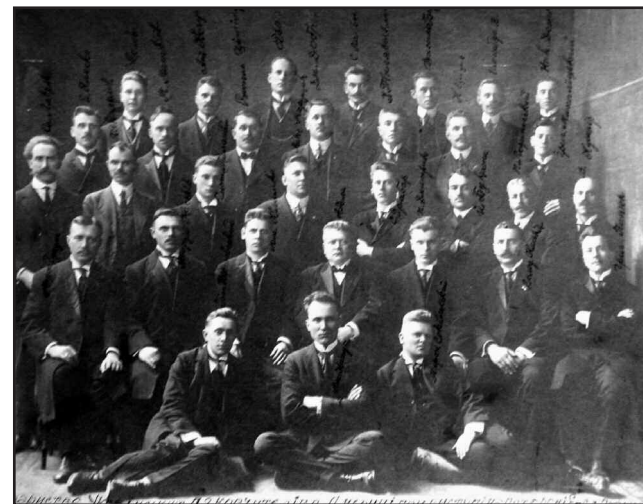
On March 21 the doctors began to worry and administered morphine. When this was of no help the doctors agreed to administer a greater dosage of medication. The weakened condition of the bishop precipitated his death on March 24 at 11:30 A.M.

Although there was some talk of burying the Bishop at the cemetery in Fox Chase they decided to bury his body in the cathedral. On March 26 at 10 A.M. the body of the beloved Bishop was carried to the cathedral dressed in new Episcopal vestments. On March 30, 1916, the Bishop was buried in his cathedral on Franklin Street. Many thought that Bishop Nicetas Budka, as the only remaining Greek Catholic bishop in North America, would arrive from Canada for the funeral but he was unable to make it.

The Apostolic Delegate, Most Rev. John Bonzano, informed everyone that all ecclesiastical consultants of Bishop Ortynsky must cease their office and he would telephone Rome for directions regarding the administration of the eparchy.



Ortynsky Funeral procession on March 30, 1916.



The cantors who were present and sang the requiem services for Bishop Ortynsky in 1916.  
Courtesy of Ukrainian Museum and Research Center – Stamford, CT

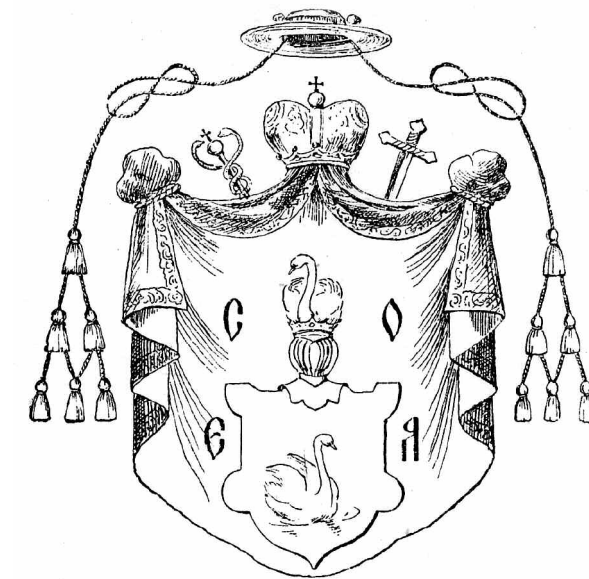
The police and newspapers estimated that from 10-15 thousand people attended the funeral. The main celebrant for the funeral was the Vicar General of the Eparchy, Very Rev. Aleksander Dzubay. The deacons were Revs. Levytsky and Chornyak. There were four homilies: Fr. Joseph Chaplynsky, Fr. Gorzo, Monsignor Label (who met the Bishop in 1907 when he arrived - representative of the New York Archbishop) and Fr. Pidhorecky who delivered his sermon in English as did Msgr. Label.

The family of Bishop Ortynsky wanted to carry out his wish of shipping the body to Galicia, Austria, but the expense and complication of such an endeavor during wartime rendered it only a wish. In some small way his place was with his flock and he remained not out of compulsion but out of obedience.

# The Swan

The swan is a very popular, romantic bird that has several memorable stories attached to it. The most popular story is the ballet, Swan Lake, where a prince falls in love with a princess who is under a curse that forces her to take on the shape of a swan. The most recent variations of this ballet take inspiration from the myth that, just before it dies, a swan sings sweetly. When displayed on a shield, the swan is seen "closed," with its wings folded. In heraldry, the swan represents poetry and harmony, and was often the charge of a knight who was musical. It was featured on the Ortynsky family crest.

**ORTYNSKY'S COAT OF ARMS:** Bishop Ortynsky placed a prelate or priest's hat above his shields. It is an external ecclesiastical adornment which protects and adorns the noblest part of the person – their head. If the prelate's (Roman) hat were omitted it would be more properly oriental. It has a cord on each side, both terminating in six tassels arranged in three rows. Six tassels have been commonly used for bishops. It has a cross and bishop's staff behind the shield. They are emblems of Episcopal rank. The bishop's staff is a sign of jurisdiction and the office of Good Shepherd. The staff of a Byzantine bishop terminates in two serpents facing each other between which there is usually but not always a cross. The serpents are the Old Testament symbol of the cross (*Numbers 21:9 and John 3:14f*). The Eastern bishop's crown in the center above the shield is a symbol of his episcopal dignity and represents a sacred rank.<sup>1</sup>



Bishop Ortynsky's crest

1. Bruno Bernard Heim. *Heraldry in the Catholic Church – Its Origin, Customs and Laws.* (Humanities Press Inc.: New Jersey, 1978).



## BISHOP STEPHEN SOTER ORTYNSKY (1866-1916)

### *"The Swan"*

*"When the tempest passes, the wicked man is no more;  
but the just man is established forever"*

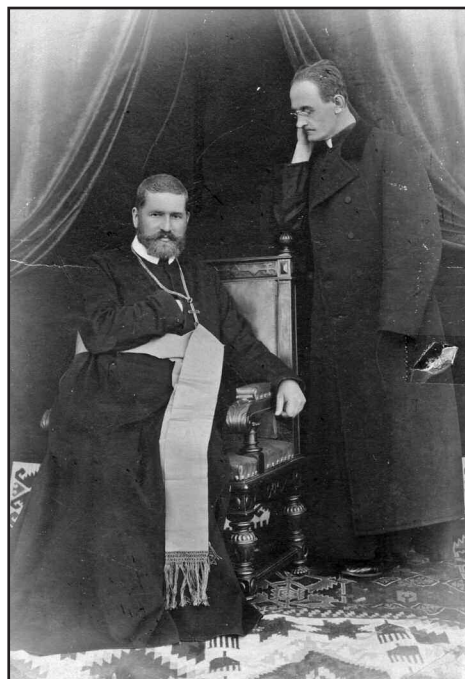
(Proverbs 10:25).

On March 24, 1916, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a relatively young man of fifty lay dying. His name was Stephen Soter Ortynsky and he was the first Greek Catholic Bishop of the United States of America. He was known to be a hard working and dedicated pastor who had contracted pneumonia after some particularly difficult days of labor in the vineyard of the Lord. This was to be his final day. His funeral was held on Thursday, March 30, 1916. He was buried in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on North Franklin Street in the city of Philadelphia.

This young hierarch was for many a cryptic and enigmatic figure during his life. He was a Greek Catholic bishop but he was not a Greek by nationality. He preached in English, Lithuanian and Ruthenian. He was born on January 29, 1866, in the province of Galicia, Austria, but he was not Austrian. He became a citizen of these United States and never left his adopted homeland. His own Catholic brothers and sisters sometimes did not understand how this "Greek" could be connected to the "Roman" Church. In the midst of such misunderstanding he preached the Gospel fervently and ministered to all.

### *The Beginnings<sup>2</sup>*

In 1867, the Austro-Hungarian government passed a very liberal emigration policy into law.<sup>3</sup> Their citizens were free to migrate to various parts of the globe. Many decided to seek their fortune in America. This was to be the first mass migration from Eastern Europe into the "new world." Among these immigrants were approximately half a million Eastern Catholics who were labeled since 1772 as "Greek Catholics" by the Austrian government.<sup>4</sup>



Metropolitan Andrew [seated] with one of his priests in 1906.  
Courtesy of Basilian Archives – Fox Chase, PA

## *A Trip to Rome and the Great War*

On June 2, 1913 Bishop Ortynsky set off for Rome to thank Pope Pius X for the establishment of the Greek Catholic Eparchy for the United States. While in Rome, he entertained the idea of building a Greek Catholic Church in Rome based on St. Sophia in Kyiv. From Rome, on July 24, he went to see Metropolitan Sheptytsky in Lviv. He also visited the Subcarpathian Bishops Anthony Papp (1912-1923) of Uzhorod and Stephen Novak (1914-1919) of Presov in order to discuss the situation of the Subcarpathian Greek Catholics. He then returned to America.

In September of 1914 World War I began and Bishop Ortynsky began various efforts to aid our church and even to help Metropolitan Sheptytsky who had been imprisoned by the Russian tsar. Bishop Ortynsky was sometimes the lone voice that spoke out in defense of the Greek Catholic Church which was undergoing persecution in Galicia and Subcarpathia.

Some Greek Catholics also held a National Church Congress in Johnstown, PA, on December 12, 1913. Among the proposals of the Congress was one that provided that the bishop would ordain married men to the priesthood and defend Greek Catholic rights. Once again, Bishop Ortynsky signed the proposals of this congress and began in some way to consolidate his leadership role among Greek Catholics.<sup>17</sup> He convened a National Convention in Philadelphia on December 8, 1914, at which he wanted to establish a "Ruthenian National Council" to help those left behind in Europe. Many, however, thought this was a clerical attempt to usurp power over the immigrant community.



Bishop Ortynsky seated in choir dress.

## *The Death and Burial of Bishop Ortynsky*

On Saturday March 11, 1916, Bishop Ortynsky gave the last sermon of a two-week long mission held at the cathedral. This sermon lasted two hours. On March 13 he went to the hospital to drive the superior of the Basilians, Sr. Helen, O.S.B.M., back to the monastery. On the way he contracted pneumonia (for the fourth time in his life). When he was hospitalized he called his lawyer, Julian Chupka, and in the presence of Revs. Joseph Guryansky and Kulmatytsky, along with his brother Joseph Ortynsky, he finalized his Last Will and Testament.

2. *The schema and subdivisions for this booklet are taken from: Gregory Luzhnytsky "Episkop-Pioner Kyr Soter z Ortyntsi Ortynsky, O.S.B.M."* (Providence Press: Philadelphia, PA), 1963.

3. *The Austrian Constitution of 21 December 1867, specifically Article IV of the Fundamental Law Concerning the General Rights of Citizens, provided complete freedom of movement for the first time to all Habsburg subjects.*

4. *Those Catholics converted by the Roman missionaries who lived in the western part of the Old Roman Empire were called Latin (Roman) Catholics while those converted by Greek missionaries and who lived in the eastern half of the Old Roman Empire were called Greek (Eastern) Catholics.*

17. Walter C. Wârzeski. *Byzantine Rite Rusins in Carpatho-Ruthenia and America* (Byzantine Seminary Press: Pittsburg, PA, 1971), 231.



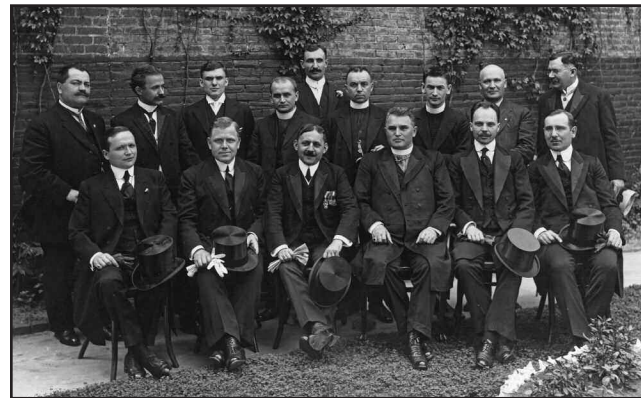
## Providence Association and the "Ruthenian Bank"

Bishop Ortynsky wished to give our immigrants financial security and stability. In 1912, he established "The Providence Association" partially based on an organization of Greek Catholic Brotherhoods. This organization had three main goals as is apparent from article 2 of their statutes: Moral - preach the faith, Material - help their members and National - a development of national identity for the Ruthenians.

The bishop also sought to establish a Ruthenian Bank. On May 13, 1915 the charter for the Ruthenian Bank was approved by the U. S. government. This bank was to be in the chancery office of the eparchy; however, the untimely death of the bishop put this project on hold indefinitely. They had even installed a vault which the chancery used for many years.

## A Greek Catholic Eparchy in the U.S.A.

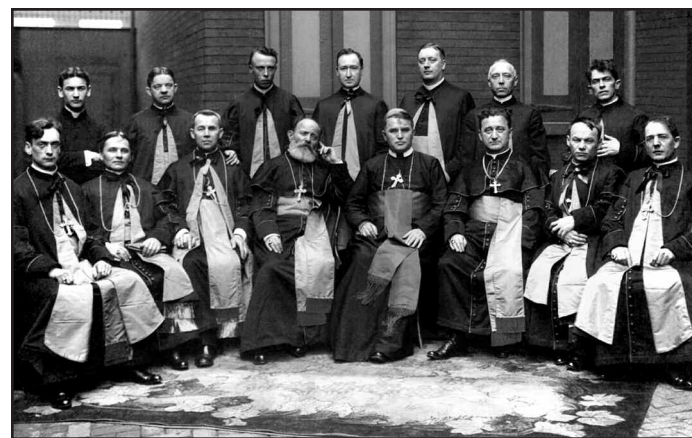
On May 28, 1913, the Apostolic See granted Bishop Ortynsky full ordinary jurisdiction making him independent of every Latin diocese. On August 17, 1914, the Congregation De Propaganda Fide put out a decree about the governance of the Greek Catholic Church for the next ten years called: "Cum Episcopo". It had four main points:



Bishop Ortynsky with members of Providence.  
Courtesy of Providence Association Archives - Philadelphia, PA

- 1) *The bishop is subject only to the apostolic see and his seat is to be New York while the vicar general and rector of seminary should be in Philadelphia.*
- 2) *That they establish a seminary.*
- 3) *That the faithful should belong to their own church.*
- 4) *Deals with mixed marriages and states that youth should be baptized in the rite of the father.*

With renewed zeal Bishop Ortynsky reorganized his eparchy into deaneries and selected a priest consulters body composed of both Galicians and Subcarpathians. Fr. Alexander Dzubay, a Subcarpathian priest, was his Vicar General. He also over the past few years had developed a



Bishop Ortynsky's eparchial consultors and staff in 1914.

Sitting (L to R): Fr. Joseph Hanyla, Fr. Victor Mirossay, Fr. Nicholas Pidhorecki, Fr. Alexander Dzubay, Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky, Fr. Valentine Gorzo, Fr. Peter Poniatishin, Fr. Alexius Holozsnyay  
Standing (L to R): Fr. Basil Steciuk, Fr. Michael Jackovics, Fr. Vladimir Dovhovich, Fr. Joseph Chaplinski, Fr. Nicholas Csopey, Fr. Philemon Tarnawsky and Fr. Augustine Komporday.

Brotherhood of the Holy Eucharist and the newspaper "America", the journal "Missionary" and "Eparchial Visti (News)" while also organizing the Brotherhood of Cantor/teachers.

In America there was much misunderstanding regarding these "new Catholics." They did not use the Latin language in their services, their customs and liturgical rites appeared foreign and perhaps, most shocking of all, they had married men as ordained priests. Antagonism towards these ancient eastern Catholic traditions, which some western Catholics mistakenly labeled as scandalous, was a catalyst for many Greek-Catholics abandoning their church:

*"The main issue on which the American bishops [Latin rite] chose to challenge the newcomers was that of clerical celibacy. They refused to allow married eastern-rite priests to exercise the ministry. Meeting in 1893, the archbishops resolved: that the presence of married priests of the Greek rite in our midst is a constant menace to the chastity of our unmarried clergy, a source of scandal to the laity and therefore the sooner this point of discipline is abolished before the evils obtain large proportions, the better for religion....The possible loss of a few souls of the Greek rite, the archbishops thought, 'bears no proportion to the blessings resulting from uniformity of discipline'."*<sup>5</sup>



Bishop Ortynsky as a young monk.  
Standing 5th from left.

This apparent disregard for the spiritual and ecclesial needs of Eastern Catholics was mostly born of ignorance. The Latin Catholic Church hierarchy and people had not been exposed to their Eastern Catholic brothers and sisters. Eastern Catholic customs and traditions were therefore rarely seen as customs and traditions of the Catholic Church. There was also the matter of episcopal jurisdiction. The Catholic Church had an ancient tradition of not placing two bishops into one city.<sup>6</sup> The church authorities also did not differentiate between an Eastern Catholic Church and a national parish within their jurisdiction. In a pamphlet defending Bishop Ortynsky his priests write:

*"The reason for a separate hierarchy for the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church in the United States is a very different one from that urged by certain foreign Catholics...With the Ruthenian Greek Catholics, however, there is an absolute difference in the Rite, form of worship and usages...No question of Ruthenian racial affiliations or of nationality, whether Austrian or Hungarian, is involved, but only that of the religious Rite."*

5. James Hennesey, S.J., *American Catholics* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1981), 193.

6. *In Lviv, Galicia, there were three archbishops: Greek-Catholic, Latin and Armenian.*

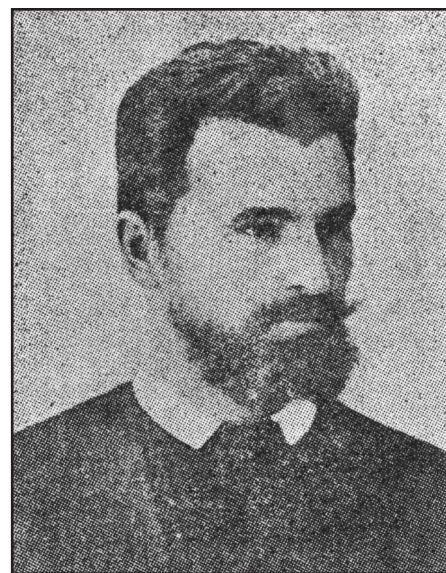
7. *Complaint against certain false and seditious attacks made by recalcitrant Ruthenian priests respecting their bishop, New York City, March 12, 1912, 6.*



## Ortynsky's Youth

Bishop Ortynsky was born in the village of Ortynych, Galicia, on 29 January 1866. His primary education was completed in Drohobych. At 18 he entered the Basilian Order and took the monastic name Soter. On January 1, 1889 he took his solemn vows within the Basilian Order. He was also sent for University studies to Krakow where he developed a friendship with the future Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky. They both received doctorates in Philosophy and Theology.

On July 18, 1891, he was ordained a priest by Metropolitan of Lviv Sylvester Sembratovych and celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at the Monastery Church in Dobromyl. He was thereafter named professor of Philosophy for clerics in the Basilian monastery of Lavriw where he taught for two years. He was later called to the Lviv monastery. It was during this time that he, along with Frs. Sheptytsky and Platonid Filas preached missions all over Galicia. They also began to publish the religious journal "The Missionary."<sup>8</sup> This time of evangelization and oratory fervor garnered for young Fr. Stephen the title "golden-mouthed – Chrysostom."

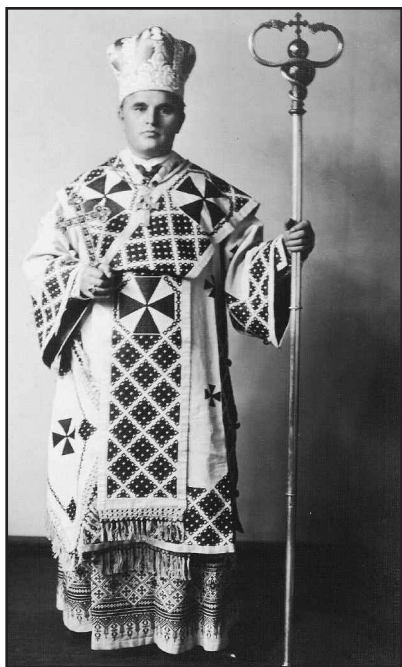


Young Father Ortynsky

In 1895, he was named Iumen (abbot) of the renewed monastery in Mykhailivka in Podillya next to the Russian border. When he arrived he found things in disarray. After nine years of dedicated service and sacrifice he was able to bring the status of the monastery to some acceptable level. He was developing his talents as both an organizer and leader.

## The Episcopacy - His First Pastoral Letter

In 1906, he returned to Lviv, Galicia, and prepared to be a missionary to Brazil. On March 26, 1907, he was quite surprised when Pope Pius X appointed him bishop for the Greek Catholics in America and named him titular Bishop of Daulia. He was consecrated by Metropolitan Andrew Roman Sheptytsky, Bishop Constantine Chechovych and Bishop Gregory Chomyshyn in St. George's Cathedral (Lviv) on May 12, 1907. Before he left Europe he stopped to see the Greek Catholic bishops in Subcarpathia and Rome. He also wrote his first Episcopal letter in which he states: "The



Bishop Ortynsky in embroidered full bishop's vestments.  
Courtesy of Basilian Archives – Fox Chase, PA

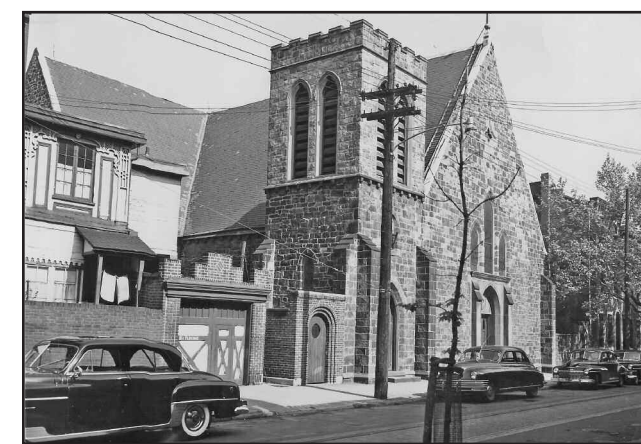
Among the Galicians, the immigration began to see some new intellectuals arriving. Some, however, were socialists in training and belief. They organized various societies and began to edit their own papers and publications. Often these would be in conflict with the bishop. On account of these tendencies even the "Ruthenian National Union" (later the U.N.A. – Ukrainian National Assoc.) began to shy away from the bishop. Bishop Ortynsky and Metropolitan Sheptytsky, visiting the U.S. at the time, refused to attend the convention in Cleveland on Sept. 20-23, 1910; nevertheless, Bishop Ortynsky was on the statutes committee and expressed his desire to change the name of the organization to: "The Greek Catholic Union."<sup>15</sup> This was eventually rejected by the members as a clerical attempt to control the organization. There was much ill will toward the bishop because it appeared he wanted to control the organization.<sup>16</sup> He was now at odds with major portions of both the Subcarpathians and Galicians.



Remembrance of the Cathedral consecration on October 2, 1910.  
Courtesy of Basilian Archives – Fox Chase, PA

## Metropolitan Sheptytsky in Philadelphia

Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky of Lviv, Galicia, was a personal friend of Bishop Ortynsky and the one most responsible for his appointment as bishop. For the longest time Metropolitan Andrew had wanted to visit his flock in the United States. The Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, Canada, gave him the opportunity in 1910. Metropolitan Andrew arrived in New York on August 25, 1910. The Metropolitan was also a representative of the Holy See who was to investigate the conflicts swirling around Bishop Soter. He interviewed various priests and laypersons and found Bishop Ortynsky to be in the right.



The original Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia. Consecrated in 1910.

On the occasion of his visit Metropolitan Andrew was deeply involved in key moments of this church's history. In September and October Metropolitan Sheptytsky blessed the grounds in Yorktown, VA, the cathedral in Philadelphia and the cemetery in Fox Chase, PA. His presence inspired many and was a bold endorsement of Bishop Ortynsky's pastoral role.

His presence inspired many and was a bold endorsement of Bishop Ortynsky's pastoral role.

8. In January of 1917 Rev. Zachary Orun of Philadelphia began to edit "The Missionary" magazine for the United States.

14. Greek Catholic can be a very misleading term because as a rule the members of this church were slavs. Also, under the term "Ruthenian" I mean the Subcarpathian Rusyn, Lemko, Galiacian Rusyn/Ukrainian and any of a number of variations of those slavs which composed the Greek Catholic Church in America.

15. In 1892 "Soyedyneniye Hreko-Kat. Russkych Bratsv" or Greek Catholic Union was founded. In 1894 the "Ruskij Narodnyj Soyuz" or Ruthenian National Union (future U.N.A.) was founded. It was this latter organization that in 1910 proposed to change its name to "Hreko Katolytskyj Soyuz" or "Greek Catholic Union."

16. Some split away from this organization and formed the "Ruthenian Worker's Union" in Scranton.

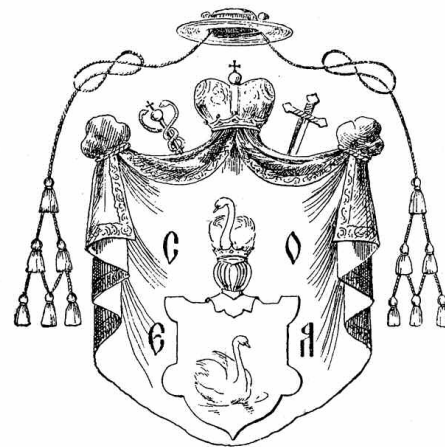


On account of the bull "Ea Semper" Bishop Ortynsky needed to get permission from every Latin bishop in whose territory he wished to minister. As a rule this was handled with tact and Christian diplomacy. There were, however, certain demands that needed to be met depending on the will of the individual bishop. Also, sometimes Latin bishops would assign Greek Catholic priests without Bishop Ortynsky's knowledge.

The Greek Catholic priests were also forbidden to administer Chrismation. All these unjust restrictions placed upon the ritual life of this church were a boon to those who wished to foment mistrust and agitation among the faithful.

## *The Subcarpathians, Galicians and others*

**Soter Stephen**



**Ortynsky.**

Sample of Bishop Ortynsky' stationery

### **GREEK CATHOLIC BISHOP OF UNITED STATES.**

The Greek Catholics were not Greek. They were an amalgam of various ethnic groups. Among the various names they were referred to as: Rusyns, Rusins, Russians, Galicians, Subcarpathians and Austrians. The Magyarized Subcarpathians (Transcarpathians), who were the majority, were stunned by the appointment of a Ukrainian patriot from Galicia as Bishop.<sup>14</sup> They had had two of their own priests who acted as administrators. The highly capable Archpriest Hodobay was seen by the majority of Greek Catholic Clergy as an episcopal candidate. There were also those elements within the clerical ranks that preferred anarchy and disorder to be the usual norm. They viewed any bishop as a restriction upon their freedom.

It is therefore no small wonder that the weakened jurisdiction and various restrictions upon Bishop Ortynsky played into the hands of those who disliked his presence. There were various delegations to Latin dioceses that sought to remove Bishop Ortynsky. A famous gathering of 44 parish representatives and 6 priests gathered in Johnstown, PA, on 11-12 January 1910. They did not want to be under Ortynsky but rather under the Latin bishop until they received a Subcarpathian bishop of their own.

Another meeting took place in Scranton, PA, on June 30, 1911, where 44 priests wanted to leave the Catholic Church. These priests were suspended and a group of 66 faithful priests gathered in New York City on March 12, 1912, and responded to all the allegations against Bishop Ortynsky. They stood fast with their bishop and his just quest for juridical independence.

power of obedience held me back from the road to Brazil, where my heart desired to bring help to the poorest of our emigrants. The power of obedience placed upon me the shackles of the episcopacy, by which I was united to the fate and sufferings of our Ruthenian Church in the United States. The power of obedience told me: take up this most difficult cross and crucify upon it your "Ego", and through the sufferings you will endure, save yourself and your people."<sup>9</sup>



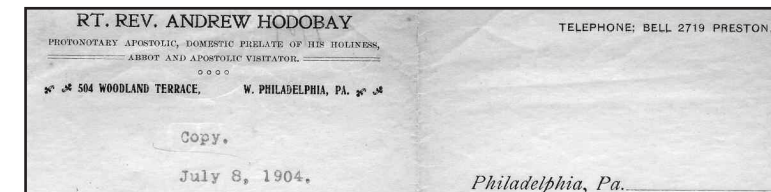
Cover of program for the consecration of Bishop Ortynsky as bishop in 1907.

Courtesy of Ukrainian Museum and Research Center – Stamford, CT

He arrived in the United States on August 27, 1907, with his secretary Rev. Vladimir Petrivsky. They were met at Hoboken, NJ, by a committee headed by Revs. Cornelius Laurisin, Gabriel Chopey and Joseph Chaplynsky. The bishop was escorted onto Manhattan Island to St. George's Church, then located on east 20th Street, where he held a Moleben (Prayer Service). The following day he celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at St. George's Church.

On August 29, he went to Philadelphia and then to Washington, D.C., where he met with the Most Rev. Diomede Falconio, O.F.M., the Apostolic Delegate. On September 1st, Bishop Stephen Soter went to South Fork, PA, to bless St. Michael's Greek Catholic Church. The Bishop had no residence or cathedral so he accepted the hospitality of the priest and stayed there until November when he announced his transfer to a residence on North Sixty-Third Street in Philadelphia.

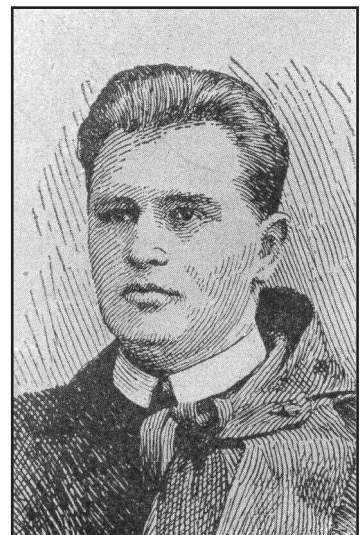
## *Church Structure*



Stationery of Father Hodobay Administrator of Greek Catholics.  
Courtesy of Philadelphia Archeparchial Archives – Philadelphia, PA

The faithful and clergy of the Greek Catholic Church had been without a bishop since the beginning of the

immigration in the 1880s. They had developed their own ways of governance. Rev. Nicephor Chanat (1891-1895, Administrator) and Very Rev. Andrew Hodobay (1902-1907, Apostolic Visitor) had been the initial attempts at organization. Czarist Russia through propaganda and financial manipulation wanted the loyalty of all Slavs and so took advantage of there being no



A pencil sketch of Bishop Ortynsky that appeared in the 1908 Catholic Directory

9. Dated from Lviv, Galicia June 25, 1907 – it was received in the United States on August 7, 1907.



bishop to attempt to make everyone Orthodox. There were Protestant sectarian influences, increased factional conflicts and prolonged misunderstandings of the Latin hierarchy. In general there was a lack of discipline and a breakdown of authority.



Bishop Ortynsky' first advisory council

The apostolic letter "*Ea Semper*" of June 14, 1907, which limited the position and power of the new bishop, was a surprise to Bishop Ortynsky. Although the new bishop received his jurisdiction directly from Rome, he was to exercise it as an auxiliary to every Latin ordinary. No married priests were to be sent to the U.S., nor were any married men to be ordained for the U.S. For many Greek Catholics, *Ea Semper* became a symbol of Western suppression and control over the Greek Catholic Church. For Bishop Ortynsky it was a constant source of stress and misunderstanding.

Bishop Soter called for a meeting of his clergy on October 15-16, 1907, in New York City. Seventy-six priests attended this meeting and among the many items they discussed were dividing the territory into nine Deaneries, schools for cantors, homes for orphans and widows and the erection of a seminary. A similar conference for parish delegates was held in New York in the fall of 1907. They voted that all Ruthenian churches (about 120 in 1907) sign over their property to Bishop Ortynsky; nevertheless, the jurisdictional problems were a source of continuing frustration.

The Bishop began to settle in at Philadelphia by becoming rector of the Holy Ghost Greek Catholic Church on 1925 West Passyunk Ave. Later, he celebrated at the church of St. Michael at 9th and Buttonwood Streets which was close to his residence at 1105 North 63rd Street. Late in 1908, Bishop Ortynsky purchased the former St. Jude's Episcopal Church in the 800 block of N. Franklin Street which was eventually consecrated on October 2, 1910 as the Ruthenian Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Thus Franklin Street became a religious center for Ruthenian Greek Catholics.

## Education

On September 15, 1909, at a conference in Philadelphia, Bishop Ortynsky established "Prosvita" – an educational-cultural organization for Ruthenians. The bishop also invited the Basilian sisters from Galicia, Austria, to help with the education of children, especially orphans. Three sisters and two candidates arrived in December, 1911, and three more sisters arrived in November of 1912. The first abbess, Sr. Helena Longevych, O.S.B.M., helped establish the Mother-house and Novitiate. There was also a plan to establish a hospital and Nursing Home. In short, the sisters became the heart and soul of much of Bishop Ortynsky's social program.



Philadelphia Orphanage Choir; L to R, Rev. Basil Stezyk, Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynsky and Mr. Basil Gela (Director) Courtesy of Basilian Archives – Fox Chase, PA

He encouraged parishes to establish evening schools. He formed a Brotherhood of Ruthenian Greek Catholic Cantor/teachers on July 13, 1913.<sup>10</sup> He also purchased over 222 acres of land in Yorktown, VA, upon which he intended to establish a seminary, technical school, factory and nursing home.<sup>11</sup>

At this time a group of Subcarpathian Rusyn Greek Catholic priests in Harrisburg, PA, created a committee: "The Civilian Executive Church Committee" and issued a memorandum that proposed to recall Bishop Ortynsky from America because of his alleged nationalism.

## The Orphanage

The Orphans were the weakest of the immigrant population and Ortynsky with his own funds purchased a building on the corner of 7th and Parrish Streets for \$24,000 dollars. It provided housing for over 200 orphans. In association with the orphanage he established a printing press, bookstore, and vestment store and rug factory. Aside from this, in 1914, for \$8,500 he purchased a 300 acre tract of land in Chesapeake City, MD, where the orphans from ages 2-6 would stay and all orphans would spend their summers. He often visited the orphans and was solicitous for them at all times. His fond affection and care for them lasted until his death.



Sisters' School-Children and Orphans, Philadelphia, PA in 1916

## The Latin Hierarchy and Bishop Ortynsky

The American Latin Catholic hierarchy was against the nomination of an Eastern Catholic bishop for the United States. In fact, on October 11, 1894 and again in 1896 "the American bishops again proposed that they be given the faculty of transferring all Ruthenian rite Catholics to the Latin rite in order to preserve uniformity."<sup>12</sup> They did not differentiate between national churches and Eastern Catholic parishes and it may be said that some, due to their regional interests, did not have a comprehensive vision of the Catholic Church. In fact, some wanted Eastern Catholics to simply become Latin Catholics: "The American bishops of the 19th century realized that national parishes were a necessity and may have concluded that these Ruthenian Catholics could be absorbed into the Latin rite discipline under the same conditions provided for national parishes of the Latin rite."<sup>13</sup>



Receiving Committee at Apostolic Delagate Bonzano reception given by A..H.S. January 3, 1916.  
Standing: Msgr. Henry T. Drumgoole, Jas. M. Willcox, Rev. Wm. J. Lallou, Msgr. J.P. Sinnott, E.J. Galbally, Dr. L.F. Flick, Jas. J. Ryan, M.F. Hanson.  
Seated: Bishop McCort, J.J. Ferreck, Chorbishop Yazbek (Maronite), Apostolic Delegate Bonzano, unknown priest, H.G. Vetterlein, Bishop S.S. Ortynsky, O.S.B.M.  
Courtesy of PAHRC

10. The first attempt at such an organization was in December of 1907.

11. See invitation to celebration issued by Bishop's Chancery in Philadelphia on August 15, 1910.

12. Walter Paska. *Sources of Particular Law for the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States* (Washington, DC, 1975), 33.

13. *Ibid.*, 52.