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ANNIVERSARY GREETING OF ARCHPRIEST PAUL LAZOR

As a special blessing on our Centennial Anniversary, it gives us great pleasure and honor to share with you this greeting of Archpriest Paul Lazor, a scion of our parish and retired Dean of Students of Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.



Fr. Paul reading the Ambo Prayer at the conclusion of the first Divine Liturgy which he served in our parish

Please enjoy reading it while blessing God that He is still wonderful and is still glorifying His Name even among us.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH – CANONSBURG, PA

100TH - YEAR PARISH ANNIVERSARY

GREETINGS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

Congratulations to *all* the members of the Orthodox parish of St. John the Baptist in Canonsburg, PA., as *we* celebrate this great occasion in our history: the 100th anniversary of the parish! I use the word *ALL* in this opening greeting to you to ensure that, from the very beginning of this holy celebration, our heartfelt desire is to include EVERYONE in our prayerful gratitude to our Lord and God: clergy and laity, living and departed, parents, grandparents and relatives; those active, dedicated and founding members of the parish from 1918, as well as those of you who, at the present time – 2018, constitute the committed and active parish membership. Personally, I offer special thanks to our Lord and God for the lifetime of prayerful and highly positive activities accomplished in our midst throughout their lifetime by my parents. My father, Joseph Lazor, is listed among the founding members of our parish, and served as the parish's official cantor and choir director for 50 years. My grandfather, Michael Lazorchak (the father of my mother), is also listed among our founding members. My mother, Anna, was totally absorbed within the liturgical/sacramental life of the Church. She sang (alto voice) in the choir, carefully observed all of the fasting and festal seasons of the Church's life, and always personally prayed to our Lord and God, faithfully and daily. Without fail, she also took on major responsibilities in the area of cooking and hosting for the many seasonal celebrations, commemorative and social events in parish life. The priests of our parish loved to visit our family home, enjoying the prevailing atmosphere there of faith, hope, love and respect, as well as (depending on the time of the visit) – a good breakfast, lunch or dinner!

In this opening greeting to you, I also use the pronoun *WE*, because, along with a number of my family relatives, I still consider myself as a parish member. Among these relatives, allow me to mention my Aunt Helen (*nee* Zubenko) Lazorchak, her daughter Leah, Leah's husband, David Stockman, and their son Nathan – an active server in the holy altar. David is the Vice President of the Parish Council and Leah teaches in the parish Church School. I see photos of them as well as many of you regularly on the parish website, as you all engage joyfully in the prayer, life and labor of our parish. Certainly my own life, by the will of God, for more than 50 years (about half of our “one-century” history), except for several special occasions, has been all but removed from direct and active involvement in local parish life. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh in 1961, I left Canonsburg to enroll at St. Vladimir's Seminary, during the autumn of that same year. After graduating from the Seminary in 1964, I married my wonderful wife, Natasha. We were married in the Seminary chapel, and our Lord and God has blessed us to be together since that year! About one month after our marriage, I was ordained to the Holy Priesthood, again in the Seminary chapel, by Archbishop +JOHN of San Francisco. Shortly afterward, in October of the same year, His Beatitude, Metropolitan +IRENEI, assigned me to my first parish in distant Milwaukee, WIS. After more than 2 years of service in Milwaukee, I was transferred to the wonderful parish of the Holy Trinity in New Britain, CT, where I served as rector for nearly 11 years. Then, following faculty invitation and assignment by our Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, I was officially transferred to full-time ministry at St. Vladimir's Seminary. During these nearly 50 years of my official and consecrated service as a parish priest, a seminary and international teacher of the Orthodox Faith, however, St. John's parish in Canonsburg has always retained its special place in my heart and mind as my native spiritual home – a major point of reference regarding my

experience and vision in and for life, within Christ's Holy Church.

II. OUR PARISH – THE BODY OF CHRIST

For these 100 years of the existence of our parish, God has worked in and with our faith-grounded love and dedication to Him to ensure His Divine Presence in Canonsburg. By means of the establishment and growth of the parish of St. John the Baptist, He has secured an assembly of people dedicated to being the local embodiment of His “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” (our official confession concerning the Church in the Nicene Creed). In all its fullness, the true Church of God is, as the Apostle Paul says many times in his writings - the BODY OF CHRIST (e.g., Rom 12:5). Christ Himself is forever the Head of this Body, and we the members, indeed many and varied in our unique personhood, abilities, family and other origins and backgrounds, by the Grace of His Divine calling, and the empowerment of His Holy Spirit, are the current and local, visible members of -- this Holy Body! This basic, Biblical teaching means that, from the very first days of the parish's establishment in 1918 to the present year of 2018, the committed parish members are inspired by the Holy Spirit of God to strive for and to realize that, by “Grace Divine” (an expression heard frequently in the prayers of the Church), we are blessed to be nothing less than -- the BODY OF CHRIST! As members of this Holy Body, we are consecrated to gather regularly in an *Orthodox* manner, i.e., in the true faith, hope, and love, in and for the one and true God and each other, to worship Him and, through the Church's liturgical and sacramental life, to grow in ever-greater unity with Him and with each other. We are thereby empowered to reflect and transmit, within our own families and households, as well as with and to others, the loving and saving presence of God Himself – as He is directly known within His Church -- the HOLY BODY of His Son, Jesus Christ!

III. PARISH MEMBERSHIP

Each of us is consecrated into membership within this HOLY BODY through our sacramental Baptism and Chrismation. As we celebrate this great anniversary of our wholeness and integrity as an Orthodox parish, let each of us personally recall some aspects of our own Baptism, Chrismation and Entrance into God's Holy Church. Who was our parish priest at the time of our Baptism/Chrismation? Who were our sponsors? Were we children or adults? As I write these words, wonderful memories of my own baptismal sponsors (I as a child at the time of my Baptism), the lifetime supporters of my path both toward and within the Orthodox priestly ministry, John and Julia Taper, immediately spring up before me - in the “eye” of my mind! Let each of us recall that, immediately following our consecration into the Church through our Baptism and Chrismation, we were carried by our sponsors (as infants), or led by them (as adults) three times, in a triumphant procession, around the Baptismal font, as the glorious Biblical words of my heavenly patron, the Apostle Paul, were sung: “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). This “putting on of Christ” implies much more than a mere dressing with different “outer” garments, (e.g., the special baptismal robe in which the newly baptized is vested immediately following his/her baptism). In popular consciousness, entrance into the life of the Orthodox Church is often presented as dealing almost entirely with a host of external matters, e.g: the taking on of new languages, ethnic customs and foods, a different shaping of the cross (3-barred) as well as a different way of making on oneself the “sign” of the cross; a different “religious” calendar involving different dates (especially for Pascha), more fasting seasons, “holidays” and their accompanying social events, etc. Yes, some of these and/or other external factors certainly might be elements in our entrance into and ongoing efforts within Churchly life and piety. Our “putting on of Christ”, however, is a daily as well as lifetime action demanding much more than these externals, no matter how great in number or difficulty (from one community to another) they might appear to be. The putting on of Christ is largely an all-encompassing and *interior* matter. The “putting on of Christ” is, in its complete implication, the foundation of a full life of daily consciousness and personal effort toward: *inner transformation*. To live up to our calling as Orthodox Christians, each of us is anointed with the Holy

Chrism during the initiatory Sacrament of our Holy Chrismation. This Sacrament bequeaths to each of us the Holy Spirit, who, working *within* us, enables each of us, personally and often slowly, but always surely, to die to our *egotistical* selves, and to strive to live out in actuality the new life in Christ which has been gifted to us. The foundational features of this “Way, Truth and Life” (John 14:6) in Christ are far beyond any externals. Within the sacred life of the Church all of us, “with unveiled face,” as St. Paul says, “beholding/reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (II Cor 3:18). This gradual growth in godliness, from “*one degree of glory to another*,” is termed by Orthodox theologians as **theosis**, a Greek word implying exactly - “growth in Godliness,” – a *forever* process of upward movement from Divine *image* to Divine *likeness*. Fr. John Meyendorff, one of my greatest teachers in the Orthodox Faith, loved to use this word. Most often, he applied it to our constant effort to stay forever on the forward-moving path that we, as members of the Body of Christ, are consecrated to walk. He always went on to note clearly that this path leads us to actualize, both personally and together, what he termed as the “*possible impossibility*,” or, as he often stated it inversely, the “*impossible possibility*.” These words, while emerging from human intelligence, directly relate to the Divine admonition of Christ Himself, when He commands: “**You**, therefore, must be *perfect* as your heavenly Father is *perfect*!” (Matt 5:48).

IV. THE HOLY EUCHARIST – THE DIVINE LITURGY

The principal context of our growth in this holy perfection, within which we increasingly realize ourselves as the BODY OF CHRIST, both personally and together, is our regular celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In churchly terminology this most-holy gathering is called -- the Divine Liturgy! This term signifies that the Eucharist is celebrated as the principal gathering, the “work of the people of God” (the meaning implied in the Greek word, “*liturgia*”) on each Lord’s Day (Sunday – the day of the Resurrection), as well as on each of the major and many of the minor, commemorative days. Each of these days is always celebrated within the *whole*, i.e., “for us men and for our salvation” (words taken again from the Nicene Creed). Throughout the course of a Church year, we are thereby connected directly and powerfully to the significant examples and saving events in the life of Christ, His Holy Mother (the Theotokos), and all the Saints. The Divine Liturgy, however, can never be taken as a singularly purposed or private celebration. Whether the Liturgy is a gathering of a huge number of people, with a choir of 50 singers, with the presiding celebrant being our local Archbishop MELCHISEDEK, including as well several ordained Deacons and Subdeacons, along with visiting Priests, or – a modest weekday celebration during a winter snowstorm, for which only the parish Rector, the Cantor, and a few other “heroic” people are in attendance, the ultimate, all-encompassing and saving purpose of the celebration remains the same. The word “Eucharist” is from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving”, and in the Eucharistic celebration, as again, my heavenly patron, the Apostle Paul states it: “We who are many become one” (Rom 12:4-5). The implication of this statement is that, at each Divine Liturgy, we thank God for everything, and offer to Him all that we are and all that we have, “*on behalf of all and for all*.” These wonderful and all-encompassing liturgical words are chanted by the celebrant, at each Divine Liturgy, as he raises the Chalice and the Discos (holding the Bread and the Wine) and intones: “Thine own of Thine own, we offer to Thee, on behalf of all and for all.” This thankful and gracious offering is focused finally on the Eucharistic bread and wine which, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, are transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ. Participants in this Eucharistic celebration are those who have gathered as the Church, and personally have gone through the focusing and cleansing operations of preliminary fasting and prayers. In the Church they sing and listen attentively to the liturgical psalmody and hymnography. They take part in all of the litanies and prayers offered by the priest (as well as deacon, if he is serving). They hear and embrace anew the prescribed Scripture readings, the Epistle and Gospel of the day, as well as the instructive sermon offered by the celebrant. Together they recite the Nicene Creed, the official and basic outline of **Orthodox Faith**, thereby stating, personally and together, that this Faith is *their* Faith. And now, having made the offering to God of all that they are, have and know, “on

behalf of all and for all”, they partake of HOLY COMMUNION -the very Body and Blood of Christ. Thereby, in a most *specific community and personal manner*, they become, again in the affirmative words of the Apostle Paul: the *BODY OF CHRIST*.

V. FR. JOSEPH OLEYNIK

Congratulations again to all of you: to your pastor and teacher in the Lord, Fr. Joseph Oleynik (and to all the nine preceding pastors and their families), to all the living and departed parish members (parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins and friends), from all phases and particular aspects and responsibilities of parish life (parish council, brotherhood and sisterhood organizations, youth, educational and mission activities), to the choir directors, cantors and fellow singers, to the many altar servers and sacristans (such as His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, who, as a youthful member of our parish, was “always there,” serving in the altar), and to all others, known and unknown - on this great occasion!

At the forefront of all the names of those presently involved in the life of our parish, our current parish pastor, Fr. Joseph Oleynik, by the Grace of God, as manifested in his long-standing commitment and service, certainly merits special attention. Fr. Joseph is the son of an Orthodox priest and a native Western Pennsylvanian. His wife, Matushka Annice, is the daughter of Fr. Daniel Hubiak, who for many years served as the Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America. Annice also previously served in the OCA Chancery, and over those years I came to know her rather well. In St. John’s parish, she has been blessed in many ways by our Lord and God to exhibit her spiritual dedication and wonderful skills, especially as a competent choir director and singer. She and Fr. Joseph together truly are - a *consecrated* couple. Fr. Joseph has been blessed by our Lord and God to be the longest serving pastor of our parish (37 years)!

VI. TWO MAJOR EVENTS FROM MY OWN LIFE IN OUR PARISH

#1

As a conclusion to my words of greeting and congratulations, let me now present to you two amazing and significant events, linked directly to our parish life, which have been determining factors in the course of my own life. Both of these events occurred during my earlier years of personal upbringing and growth. They took place within “regular” parish life, i.e. - **in your very midst!** They are associated with the very beginnings of my life in the large, multi-family (Lazorchak-Lazor) home at 210 E. Pike St., located in a section which no longer exists - of that major, Canonsburg “avenue”. Most significantly, they are events reflective of the overwhelming openings in the heart, soul and mind of my life, of a vision and journey toward that forever-existing and **ultimate home – the Kingdom of God:** the ultimate destination for which we were all called “from non-existence into being” (words of our liturgical prayers) by our Lord and God! A foretaste of that “homeland of the heart’s desire”, as the Kingdom of God is called in the Church’s hymnography, was given to me especially in and through my participation in the liturgical life and worship of God, within our Orthodox parish of St. John the Baptist in Canonsburg – during the earliest years of my childhood.

My father, Joseph, as I mentioned previously, served as our parish’s official cantor and choir director for 50 years, rarely missing any liturgical services or celebrations during that time. The first *memorable* spiritual event from my own life is linked to my father’s place and holy responsibilities within our parish. It took place when I was but 8 years old! It happened in connection with the “Old Style” (Dec. 19) celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas (well-known among children back then as “Santa Claus”), which fell that year on a weekday. A substantial snow storm had hit our area during the night before the festal Eucharist. The storm posed a serious question within my family: could my father make the rather long trek from his workplace, the FORT PITT BRIDGE WORKS, to the Church – in order to lead the congregation in singing the liturgical responses on this great holiday? We had no family automobile in those days, so, independent

of weather conditions, he and our entire family almost *always* had to accomplish the rather long and difficult walk from our home to the Church, a journey requiring us, quite literally, to “amble up” to Vine St. While my father had an arrangement with the Bridge Works which permitted him to leave his workplace for Church services and then to return after their conclusion, his walk to the Church was even more trying. His walk up; to Vine Street included a longer and rougher section along the Pennsylvania railroad tracks. My mother, Anna, awakened me early that morning and told me the following: officially by telephone, she had been informed that, because of the storm, the public schools would be closed for the day. She immediately and joyfully added that, as a result, I was “free” to go to the Church with her for the great celebration of St. Nicholas Day. I got out of bed with equal joy, dressed appropriately, and very soon my mother and I departed from our house. The “holy assignment” before us was to accomplish, in timely fashion, that substantial journey, described earlier, of walking to the Church. The trek by foot, in and through the snow, took considerable time and effort, but – “we made it!” Upon our arrival, I went immediately to the sanctuary to prepare to serve as an altar boy. My cousin, “Frankie,” as he was known back in those youthful days, had accomplished his even longer walk from his family home in Canonsburg’s East End, was – as always, already “there” in the Church and ready to go! Through his *lifetime* of love for and faithful dedication and service to Christ and His Holy Church, demonstrated so clearly during his youthful years at our St. John’s parish, he later attended and graduated from St. Vladimir’s Seminary, was ordained to the Priesthood in 1961, served as a parish priest in Madison, ILL, was consecrated as a Bishop in 1967, and, in 1977, was elected as His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS – the consecrated head of the Orthodox Church in America! He exercised this position until his retirement in 2002!

As the time to begin the Liturgy drew near, it was fairly obvious that my father would be unable, especially because of the heavy snow, to accomplish the difficult walk from his workplace. What was to be done? Who would lead the singing? Our parish pastor at that time, Fr. Basil Horsky (1934-1948), repeatedly glanced up from the altar toward the cantor’s place at the front-center of the choir loft. Seeing that my father was still not there, and noting by his wristwatch that only a few minutes remained before the official starting time for the Liturgy, he suddenly turned to me and directly, in his substantial Russian accent, said: “Paul, you will sing!” My dear cousin looked at me, smiled, and nodded in full agreement. In total awe and amazement, but with complete understanding of the implications in his directive to me, I said nothing in response. After receiving Fr. Basil’s blessing, I left the sanctuary, walked from the front to the back of the Church via the center aisle, made the sharp right turn at the back of the church and took the steps up to the choir loft. Along the way down the center aisle, I walked past my mother, who was sitting in a pew on the right side (as you face the altar) of the Church. She looked at me and smiled, giving to me a certain indication that she *understood* what was happening. Finally, I made it to the place from which my father usually chanted the services: the cantor’s traditional place at the front-center of the loft.

Within minutes, cousin “Frankie” also journeyed to the loft to ring the church bell (the rope for which was located at the back of the choir loft), indicating that the Liturgy was about to begin. Before ringing the bell he handed me a little service book, which Fr. Horsky had asked him to give to me. The book contained the Divine Liturgy, and was printed entirely in the parish’s liturgical language: *Church Slavonic*. At this youthful stage in my life, however, I was still *unable* even to read the alphabet of this rather archaic and complex language, and certainly was incapable of denoting its many abbreviated words and usages. Neither had I ever seen any musical settings for the Galician chant sung by my father and the entire congregation back in that era of parish life. I had, however, from the earliest days of my life, when my mother still carried me in her arms, attended the Divine Liturgy and other services on a regular basis. Now, for the first time in my life, to my incredible and shocking surprise, I was able to accomplish, **PUBLICALLY**, the following: from the priest’s opening exclamation, “Blessed is the Kingdom...”, to his final blessing with the Holy Cross, by “Grace Divine,” I was able to lead the congregation in singing the entire Divine Liturgy – in Church Slavonic, in the Galician chant, and in my “boy-soprano” voice! Most significantly, I knew the liturgical order and

chanted everything, literally – **BY HEART!** This memorable accomplishment was a tangible beginning of that much deeper “touching base” within me of a Divine calling. At this very young age, as I sang the Divine Liturgy, I sensed a “spark” of that profound calling and movement toward the “homeland of the heart’s desire:” the Kingdom of God, the Holy Church, the Body of Christ, in which we – *to this day* - lovingly sing of, worship and glorify our One and True God, within and for all that He continuously does - “for us men, and for our salvation.” All the while, we are filled with the Grace Divine to grow as well in our joyful love and care for one another. I will never forget this overwhelmingly significant event in my life!

As a side issue, I must mention that, much later in my life, as a faculty member at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, among my several areas of teaching responsibility, I taught not only Church Slavonic, but Russian and Greek as well. When for the first time I personally undertook studies of these languages as a seminarian, I discovered that a rather substantial capability and knowledge of them was, to my surprise, already *there* and was just waiting to “explode” through actual study. I trace this special linguistic ability back to my roots in the liturgical singing at St. John’s parish.

#2

The second memorable and path-determining event in my life occurred in connection with a sacramental Confession which I made during the Christmas Lent of my senior year (1960-1961) as a college student at the University of Pittsburgh. Time indeed had moved on. I was now 21 years old. I attended PITT on a basketball scholarship (as did my older brother, Bob, 4 years before me). My field of study was chemical engineering, an area my high school teachers (at the “CHS” of those days) had strongly advised me to enter because of my excellence in such subjects as mathematics and chemistry. During the summer of 1960, I had obtained employment as an engineering trainee with the Bethlehem Steel Corporation at the Company’s giant plant in Buffalo, NY. As a result, I had a job lined up with that Company immediately following my college graduation.

The Sacrament of Confession, at least for me back in those days, was not such a profound, soul-opening or life-changing event. It was more like a “disciplinary” action, a practice specially performed before Easter and Christmas, in order to ensure one’s record as a parish member in “good-standing.” Much had changed in my life, however, since those early years I previously described. During my four years of college, I was rarely at home. I lived at the University campus in Pittsburgh. My social circle had expanded to include many new friends who had little knowledge of and virtually nothing to do with the Orthodox Church or my native Canonsburg. For most of them, Orthodoxy was largely a “foreign” thing – a religious practice adhered to by Russians, Greeks, etc. This practice involved primarily “external” things (about which I commented earlier) such as: languages, ethnic foods, clothing and a multitude of customs connected with different calendars, holidays and special events. My own life had started to make a certain “drift” away from the foundational ways which I had known and arduously followed since early childhood. A very particular aspect of this drift was my “sagging away” from participation in the Church’s liturgical life, which had, in terms of actually “going to Church,” dramatically dropped to an all-time low level. Now, as I was at home for a little break before Christmas, I thought it might be a good thing to restore some “order” into my life by making a “typical” and “customary” sacramental Confession. But, as the saying goes: “One never knows...”

I prepared to “go to” Confession before the next scheduled (weekday) Divine Liturgy. Fr. Nicholas Fedetz, our parish priest during those years (1948-1961), received me for the Confession. After I came forward and, as was customary in our parish back then, knelt before the Cross of our Lord and His Holy Gospel, the Lord Himself, without any warning, “touched base” deeply within my heart and soul. I underwent an internal and truly *shaking experience* as, suddenly, considerations regarding my life and its ultimate purposes uncontrollably rose up within me. A Russian saying I learned years later from my Russian-speaking mother-in-law, Maria Feodorovna Manturoff, captures well what took place during my Confession as this much earlier time. The adage goes something like this (my own English translation): “You have

something, you don't value it; you lose it, --- **you cry!**" I tried to begin my sacramental Confession, but, in a totally unpredictable fashion, I suddenly broke down and, indeed, cried profusely. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a profound interior sense that, if I continued to walk on my present path of life, something extremely valuable, my life in Christ and His Holy Church, would be pushed aside and eventually - **lost!** Deep within my heart, soul, mind and strength, for the first time, I fully realized that something had to be done. What was that *SOMETHING*? During the Confession, Fr. Fedetz exercised great self-restraint. He said nothing to me as I uncontrollably wept. He kept his arm around my shoulders and let me get it "all out!" When, after a time, he asked me what was troubling me so much, I tried my best to calm down and say to him something about the contemporary circumstances and path of my life. My final words had to do with the holy possibility of my attending Seminary and training for the priesthood. His very simple advice to me came at the conclusion of my Confession. It directly regarded my aroused sense of the ultimate purposes of my life. He said: "Paul, give it a try!"

Later, as I began attempts to heed his advice, we spoke outside of Confession about the various Orthodox Seminaries, and to which of them I might apply. He advised me to consider enrollment at his *alma mater*, St. Vladimir's Seminary. Again, he offered me only very simple and understandable reasons for this consideration. He said: "Paul, you will soon be a college graduate and you have always been a good student. You should seek enrollment at that Seminary which offers the best education. St. Vladimir's is a graduate school of Orthodox theology; you soon will be a college graduate. You should seek enrollment there!" Following his very simple and sound guidance, I underwent the appropriate application process and, during the summer of 1961, was accepted for enrollment at St. Vladimir's for the forthcoming term, scheduled to begin in September with several days of official Orientation for new enrollees.

To this brief narrative regarding the two *major events* involving the interaction between my own life and the life of our "100th-Anniversary" parish, I must conclude with a few words regarding my actual departure from Canonsburg, to begin my enrollment and studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary. None other than my "always-there" cousin, now His Beatitude, the currently retired Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, ensured the continuation of this interaction. Himself already a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary, he accompanied me on the overnight bus trip from Canonsburg to New York City and the Seminary. I will never forget our walk along upper-Broadway on the morning of our arrival in New York City. As we passed several large educational institutions and their impressive facilities such as – Columbia University, Barnard College and Union Theological Seminary (with a glimpse of Julliard School of Music in the background), I looked fervently for some familiar signs of an Orthodox presence: perhaps a gold cupola or a three-barred cross! There was nothing of this kind! The Seminary's move to its present location north of New York City (near Yonkers, NY), with its own campus, dormitories and other needed buildings, did not take place until the following year. (Much more, physically, has been added to the Seminary since then!) Only after we had walked up to and entered a very typical, non-descript, unnamed, brownish-brick building at 537 West 121st Street, and later stepped out of the elevator on its 2nd floor, did my cousin turn to me and say: "Paul, you are now at St. Vladimir's Seminary!"

To this day, I still find it amazing that this simple, unheralded arrival at St. Vladimir's Seminary, and my move into residence there, would develop into a profound **transfer**, laden with such all-encompassing meaning, for the rest of my life! At this very beginning, I was required by the Lord Himself to make the substantial mental, physical and spiritual move from being a scholarship athlete at the University of Pittsburgh, living in the former Schenley Hotel, with most meals provided for me and other scholarship athletes at a special training table, to being a seminarian at a school featuring tightly squeezed housing (I lived

in a small apartment with eight other seminarians), where you could cook your own humble meals in a very small “dorm kitchen,” or eat for a reasonable price at a nearby little restaurant called “Dot’s”. All this took place (living space, chapel, classroom, meals, offices, etc.) in an old building tightly squeezed between two other similar structures on a “kind-of” side street in New York City! From those very first moments of my wonderful days of prayer and study, under the great dean and faculty at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, I sensed that the Lord Himself was already presenting to me a **new path - HIS PATH**, along which He was now directly calling me, by virtue of His example and help, to walk. His words rang out to me then, and continue their powerful meaning in my life until now:

“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29).

VII. CONCLUSION

Let me conclude this outline of my life in terms of its special connection with the one-century history of the Orthodox parish of St. John the Baptist in Canonsburg, PA. My more than 50 years of ministry as an ordained Orthodox priest, Seminary faculty member, pastor, administrator and international teacher in and for God’s Holy Church, find their roots and continuous growth in the life and the loving dedication my wonderful wife, Natasha, my parents and family, the clergy, and CERTAINLY the beautiful liturgical worship of our parish – within which I was blessed by the Lord to grow and develop as a human being! I thank God for blessing me with such excellent spiritual roots and a lifetime of love, support, guidance and companionship. I thank God for all of you who have constituted the parish in my presence during those early years of my life, and in my physical absence over these last more than 50 years! I have great remembrances of my years as an altar boy under the immediate guidance of (later) Metropolitan THEODOSIUS. I remember well my years, and the knowledge and experience I gained, while attending the Church-School and Christian Education classes, conducted as either “release-time” classes from public school, or as those gatherings set up separately by our parish. Memories of the classes as led and taught by Fr. Nicholas Fedetz, as well as the many young brother and sister parish members who attended these classes and other youth activities with me, joyfully vibrate within my mind and heart to this day!

Let us thank our Lord and God for everyone and everything as we celebrate this 100-year anniversary of the Orthodox parish of St. John the Baptist in Canonsburg. Let us thank Him for the hierarchy and clergy, the founders and benefactors, our parents, relatives, families and close friends, and, in a particular way – for the ongoing Power of His Holy Spirit, which has inspired generations of parish members to sing, to serve and thereby to glorify Him through the Grace-filled liturgical worship in His Holy Church.

MAY GOD GRANT YOU ALL ----- MANY YEARS !!!

ARCHPRIEST PAUL LAZOR