

Detroit: Serbian cathedral celebrates joyful mortgage burning



On Saturday, October 18, the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Lazarus-Ravanica held a celebration and thanksgiving dinner to mark the complete repayment of its new church property, valued at \$960,000.

A large number of parishioners gathered with their priest, Fr. Aleksandar Vujkovic, in a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving to God for His mercy and blessings that enabled the Church to purchase and fully pay off the new property, reports the Diocese of New Gračanica and Midwestern America.

In his remarks, Fr. Aleksandar highlighted the importance of unity and prayer, stating that through faith and prayer, God builds His Church. He expressed deep gratitude to all who contributed through voluntary offerings and donations toward repaying the new property, noting that every gift—large or small—represented an expression of love for God and His Holy Church.

Children from the Ravanica parish shared their thoughts on what the Church means

to them, demonstrating that the Church is not simply a stone building but the living body of the faithful, a place of love, prayer, and spiritual growth.

Church-School Congregation president Ognjen Šaran then thanked everyone who helped with the purchase and repayment of the new property before conducting the burning of the mortgage, a symbolic act marking the full repayment of the loan. This moment was met with great joy and enthusiasm from those present.

The event represents a significant achievement and one of the first steps toward fulfilling the parish's shared vision of building a new church and cultural center.



The organized religious life of Detroit Serbs began on Christmas Day, January 7, 1915, when Rev. Dusan S. Trbuovich arrived as a special missionary of Bishop Varnava to establish a new Serbian parish. Services were initially held in a rented building, but by May 20, 1917, property was purchased with three small frame homes—one remodeled as a church, another as a school, and the third as the parish residence.

After Proto Trbuovich returned to Detroit in 1927, the homes were razed and construction began on the first Ravanica Church. The Great Depression brought work to a halt, and the parish nearly lost everything when The Maccabees corporation threatened foreclosure on a \$10,480.25 mortgage in 1932. The Serbian community rallied—women sold baked goods door-to-door, hosted teas and bunco parties, and personal loans materialized—allowing the Serbs to retain the property

and continue construction. The church was consecrated on June 17, 1934, under the presidency of Jovo Chakara, with St. Mardarije (Uskokovich) officiating.

Fr. Miodrag D. Mijatovich served as parish priest from June 10, 1943, until his passing on July 11, 1976. Under his leadership, the parish grew and established branches in Windsor, Ontario (1946), Monroe, Michigan (early 1950s), and Ecorse, Michigan (early 1960s). The congregation purchased land for a new religious and cultural center in 1947, and the American Serbian Memorial Hall was consecrated that same year by St. Nikolai (Velimirović). A new Ravanica Church was consecrated on November 25-26, 1967, by three bishops assisted by 27 priests. The church mortgage was paid off in just six years and burned on November 26, 1973.

The parish celebrated its 100th anniversary in October 2015, having served as the center of spiritual and social life for Serbs in Detroit and its suburbs for over a century. Throughout its history, Ravanica has hosted numerous national Serbian sports, musical, and church events, including the 750th Anniversary of the Serbian Church in 1969 and the 600th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989.

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