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Holy Three Hierarchs, Dallas, Texas (short history and 20th anniversary)



Industrialization coupled with the smell of oil fields has been drawing Serbian immigrants for decades. By the end of the sixties, the Karakasevic family moved to Texas, followed by the Simic and Palmer families in the eighties, who later became pillars of our church established in 1999. At the outset of the 1990s, there was an immense influx of our people from Serbian Krajina and central Bosnia and Herzegovina, who, carried by the flames of war, started to build new nests in the Northern Texas area.

His Eminence Metropolitan Christopher of Midwestern America, approved the formation of the “Holy Three Hierarchs” parish in Dallas Fort-Worth (DFW). The official date of the parish foundation was January 30, 1999 when the Metropolitan gave the name and blessed the church board directed by Mr. Rajko Simic. This took place in the Greek Orthodox Church “Holy Trinity” on Hillcrest Road in Dallas.

Fr. Dejan Tiosavljevic, from the Saint Sava church in Houston, served the first liturgies in late 1997. Mrs. Zagorka (Zaga) Simic became the first president of the Serbian Sisters Circle established in 1999. During this time, many entertainment events were organized in church halls around the metroplex, which represented a

major source of financial support for our church activities. The first church Slava took place on February 12, 2000 in the Greek church “Saint George” in Euless, TX.

Starting from mid-2000, services were mostly held in the OCA St. Seraphim of Sarov cathedral in Dallas. Although the financial situation was chronically frail, the church board, in a somewhat bold move, requested from Metropolitan Christopher to assign a permanent priest to the parish. During that time, there was a widespread apathy and the number of people attending services was constantly diminishing, but not for long. On October 4, 2001, the parking lot of the Orthodox Church of America was too small to accommodate all the cars of our parishioners who came to greet prota Milan and protinica Milica Zbiljic and to thank and welcome them. A dream dreamt for two centuries came through and the Serbs of the Holy Three Hierarchs parish finally had their permanent priest, which reflected so well on everyone’s mood.

Shortly after arriving, prota promoted architect Dusan Karakasevic as the president of the architectural committee whose assignment was to prepare a land purchase feasibility study for the future church building. Immediately after church Slava in 2002, prota insisted that land should be purchased although no one knew exactly what kind of estate should be purchased. At that time the parish received a donation in the amount of $65,000 from Mrs. Nena Manojlovic as well as a loan from our Midwestern America Diocese in the amount of $40,000, both of which boosted hopes that the land will be successfully acquired.

In the fall of 2002, Mr. Dragos and Mrs. Denise Belcevic, who had just moved from New Jersey, offered to provide a loan of a couple of hundred thousand dollars to the parish. In October of that same year services were held in a garage located at the parish’s own small estate on Ballewood Road. During the 2003 church Slava celebration, Metropolitan Christopher blessed the estate in the middle a big sanctified cross was erected. During the following two years, the estate was a place of a constant building activity. In May of 2005 the church hall was consecrated.

A big change came at the beginning of October 2005 when a new young priest Fr. Ljubinko Savic arrived from Cajnice, Republic of Srpska. At the beginning of 2006 the estate on South Story Road in Irving, TX was purchased where the church is located to this day. Some 2-3 acres of land, which holds church building, church hall, and a three-bedroom house, were paid a little over $800,000. During the following year the seller (a Baptist church) was paid off in full from Dragos Belcevic’s funds, which he wrote off in subsequent years. The parish paid him back a portion of the money received after the old estate was sold. October 1st, 2006 was the official move-in date to the new location. Of course, church had to be

remodeled, just like the hall and the house. A beautiful iconostasis was installed in early 2008.

On May 3rd, 2008 the estate, church building, and iconostasis were consecrated. The rite of consecration of the church was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Christopher of Midwestern America. The newly established church choir “Saint John Damascene” led by the director Jelena Tehlirian, beautified the service. Hundreds were in attendance! The crown of all the hard work and dedication, and, at the same time, a recognition to all the benefactors and those who contributed over time, was “The Order of Saint Sava of the First Degree” which the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church awarded to the family of founders Dragos and Denise Belcevic.

In 2014 his Grace Bishop Longin awarded the Order of Constantine to Mr. Rajko and Mrs. Zagorka Simic for their hard work and dedication to the Church and the Orthodox faith. During the 2016 church Slava, the parish priest, Father Ljubinko Savic, was elevated to the rank of Protopresbyter. On that occasion, Fr. Ljubinko said: “A priest in the USA is in a very different position from those in the homeland. It is on us to achieve a lot, to counsel, to abide to. It is on us to bear burdens, to work, and to sacrifice. In the homeland, it’s all different. By being made a priest I have voluntarily accepted to be a servant of God and of my people and to go where I was sent.”

In February 2019, the Holy Three Hierarchs Serbian Orthodox church celebrated its Slava and the twentieth anniversary of the parish’s establishment. On the eve of Church Slava, Mr. Rajko Simic hosted a dinner for his Grace Bishop Longin, all the Serbian Orthodox priests serving in the state of Texas, all past and present church board presidents, and guests who arrived for this special occasion from afar. The memories and recollections of the past twenty years, and especially of the humble beginnings, were brought up from the hearts of those in attendance. Clearly, so much faith and sacrifice were built into the foundations of the parish which thrives today and is more than ready to step into the bright future. February 16, 2019 was the day to remember! After the hierarchical liturgy, a big celebration was held in the remodeled church hall. The hall was overflowing with people who came to witness a small miracle that this parish has become. Beautiful speeches, patriotic performance by Serbian actress Ms. Ivana Zigon, folklore dances, and amazing food were all blended into a heart-warming celebration of faith and God. With God, everything is possible





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