



Artur Bubnevych, left, was consecrated as the new bishop of the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix. His consecration was held Jan. 28 at Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church in Anaheim, California. (Jonathan Cabada)

by Greta Gaffin

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With only 19 parishes in his eparchy, the new bishop of Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix, Artur Bubnevych, hopes the missionary character of his church will be a spiritual home to those who need it.

Bubnevych was consecrated on Jan. 28 in this eparchy of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, which comprises 13 Western states.

"I'm being carried by the grace of God and the prayers of the faithful," he said. "I'm excited to start my ministry and to learn," he added.

Unlike in other parts of the United States, this is not a Byzantine Catholic eparchy that is primarily composed of members of a specific ethnic group. They have some congregants who grew up in the Latin rite, some who grew up Protestant, and some who grew up with no religion but learned about the Byzantine Catholic faith on their own. While Bubnevych is pleased that there are people learning about the faith online through podcasts and videos, he thinks they still have work to do.



Artur Bubnevych, new bishop of Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix (Jonathan Cabada)

"The challenge is to develop that into a more substantial level," he said.

Bubnevych said that for people who grew up in the Latin rite, the smaller parish size is appealing. But it's also about the beauty of the Byzantine liturgy and spirituality.

"A lot of people need help, and need a spiritual home, and feel like they are being fed. Our divine liturgy is the source of great spiritual nourishment," he said. The

Byzantine rite developed in the East, and is more similar to Eastern Orthodox worship practices.

He sees his background as giving him a unique insight on this. He was raised in a Byzantine Catholic family in Ukraine and was a young adult when the Soviet Union was falling. He studied theology in Austria, and then went back to Ukraine to help rebuild the church after the end of state repression. He was then asked, however, to come and serve in the United States.

Bubnevych noted that Pope John Paul II said the church needs to "breathe with both lungs" (referring to the West and the East), so he wants to further that goal.

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"I want to try and make parishes more sustainable. We're on a level of just surviving, or just maintenance, but Pope Francis said you have to change that and you have to go out and evangelize," he said.

He was one of five American priests who attended a March 2024 meeting of parish priests as part of the synod on synodality held at the Vatican. "I will try to incorporate the synodal spirit into the life of the church today. I want to be a missionary of synodality," he said.



Bishop Artur Bubnevych hopes the missionary character of his church will be a spiritual home to those who need it. (Jonathan Cabada)

One struggle is that there are only 15 active priests (and eight retired), although the eparchy does have two men who will be ordained to the priesthood soon and several more entering the seminary in the next two years. "It's a constant challenge," Bubnevych said. "I hope that within the next five years, we will have enough priests for all the parishes."

The eparchy also wants to support priests in Ukraine: They send donations to help the clergy get additional psychological training to deal with the massive number of deaths that Ukrainians have experienced. Bubnevych was also able to help some refugee families who had been resettled near his old parish in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In addition to its parishes, the eparchy also has a small monastery founded in 2013, Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Monastery in Weston, Oregon. Bubnevych hasn't visited yet, but he hopes that eventually the eparchy could be home to a women's monastic community, noting there are sisters at Christ the Bridegroom Monastery in Ohio who grew up in the Eparchy of Phoenix.

Bubnevych was ordained to the priesthood in 2014 by the late Bishop Gerald Dino, then head of the Eparchy of Phoenix. He was consecrated to the episcopate by William Skurla, archeparch of Pittsburgh, with Kurt Burnette, eparch of Passaic, New Jersey, and Robert Pipta, eparch of Parma, Ohio, as co-consecrators.