

## Bishop Longin in Troy, MI

*“For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over the household, as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would look upon the Lord Himself.”*

*St. Ignatius the God-bearer, Epistle to Ephesians*

Rare are the Church writers who could write so clearly and beautifully about the role of the bishop in the Church and what he represents, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer did in his epistles.

Appointed from on high, rather than by some earthly authority (for the Holy Spirit governs the Church), our hierarchs are to be revered as the successors of the grace of the Holy Apostles. Naturally, bishops are not worshipped as idols or infallible demigods, but to deny them authority in the Church, bestowed upon them by God Himself, would be equal to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. As St. Ignatius writes to the Magnesians: in honor of God “the Father of Jesus Christ”, Who is “the Bishop of all”, we show respect to our hierarchs.

On the second Sunday of Great Lent, February 28<sup>th</sup>, the faithful people of St. Petka Serbian Orthodox Church – “Vratnica” in Troy, Michigan, showed not only respect, but also great love to their hierarch when they received His Grace Bishop Longin. This was the first archpastoral visit of His Grace as the ruling bishop, as well as his first ever visit to St. Petka church, which was consecrated in October, 2005.

The faithful flocked to welcome their shepherd and spiritual father. First in line to greet His Grace were the children from the parish school who offered him bread and salt. The church was bright and beautifully prepared for the occasion, like a young bride.

His Grace served Divine Hierarchical Liturgy in the temple. Along with the parish priest, Fr. Kristijan Petrovich, other concelebrants were V.Rev. Stavrophor Miosav Djindjilovich, rector of the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. George in Monroe, V. Rev. Stavrophor Zivko Kajevic, rector of the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Steven of Dechani in Warren, Fr. Andrei Alexeyev, and deacons Nikolaj Kostur and Ivan Feloniuk. The clergy served piously and solemnly; the St. Petka church choir prayerfully sang the responses; and all the faithful followed the service in silence and devotion, some even in tears. Everyone was reveling in spiritual joy, as if it were already Pascha.

Again, St. Ignatius reveals to us the source of this general elation, when he says to the Ephesians, “For if the prayer of one or two possesses such power, that Christ stands in the midst of them, how much more will the prayer of the Bishop and of the whole Church, ascending up in harmony to God,



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prevail for the granting of their petitions in Christ!”

Truly, we were reminded that “God is with us!” The wide solea was too small to receive all those who wished to partake of Holy Communion. It was especially moving to see many children, who crowded around the Holy Chalice like little chicks.

With utmost attention, the faithful absorbed the wise and God-inspired words of Bishop Longin’s sermon. His Grace spoke about fasting, repentance and growing in spiritual life. Particularly soul-profiting was the advice to the faithful concerning confession. His Grace said that people often are in distress because they feel like they are confessing the same things over and again. However, one can never stagnate – we are always either getting closer to God or moving away from Him. We should examine our life and actions carefully to determine where we are spiritually.

What made everyone’s cup of joy overflow was the presence of V. Rev. Stavrophor Stevan Petrovich – who is

lovingly called “Dedo-pop” (Grandpa-priest). He was the first and only priest of this community for many years, and has been retired for five years. Fr. Stevan has not been coming to the church for a while now, due to illness and old age, but his effort to come this time made the occasion all the more memorable.

In the old country (the area around Tetovo, present FYRO Macedonia), Fr. Stevan suffered for the Faith and was imprisoned by the Communist regime. Upon coming to America, in the late sixties, he was the one who gathered the faithful and inspired them to form a parish and build the church. He tirelessly worked to spark the flame of the Holy Spirit in people, enlightening the faithful with his fiery sermons and fearless confession of the Faith. Now 91 years old, Fr. Stevan showed himself once more as an example to all by standing during the whole service.

Bishop Longin finished his sermon with a few chosen words about Fr. Stevan’s confession of Faith and his role in building the temple of St. Petka. His Grace warned everyone to beware of the human common illness of envy, when people are ready and willing to comfort others and share in their sorrow, but they find it hard to say “congratulations” and rejoice at others’ success. In the end, Bishop Longin presented Fr. Stevan with a Hierarchal Gramata for his life-long dedicated work in the Lord’s field.

Thanking His Grace for the honor of his visit, parish priest, Fr. Kristijan, on behalf of the entire congregation, wished His Grace many years as their shepherd and presented him with a gift from the St. Petka parish family – an intricately adorned bishop’s staff.

After the Divine Liturgy everyone tasted of the feast of love served in the vestibule of the church. The lunch was truly a joint effort by the parishioners, who all brought traditional Serbian lenten dishes and desserts. His Grace expressed his amazement with the beauty of the temple and his sincere hope that soon it will be accompanied by a much-needed, equally beautiful church hall.

Bishop Longin took the time also to talk with the people and take pictures with them. After receiving the archpastoral blessing from His Grace, everyone’s heart was full. With such disposition of the soul, the faithful are strengthened to continue in their lenten effort and to worthily greet the glorious Feast of our Lord’s Resurrection.

To our Bishop Longin – Many Years!

To our Lord God – glory and praise forever!

*Popadija Aleksandra Petrovich*

P.S. More pictures and videos of the event are available on the website of St. Petka church: [www.saintpetka.org](http://www.saintpetka.org)