



THE TABLET



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FIRST 100 DAYS

Catholic leaders give mixed reviews about president's performance after address to Congress | PAGE 12

Croatian Catholics Mark 50 Years of 'Home Away From Home' in Queens

by Bill Miller, Senior Reporter

ASTORIA — Traveling across the tri-state area to worship at Mass in their “mother language” doesn’t seem to faze a faithful congregation of 200 Croatian-speaking Catholics.

Their homeland, after all, is some 4,300 miles to the east, but these distinguished grey-haired members have been attending services at Most Precious Blood Parish in Astoria, Queens, since 1971.

That year, the parish formed what today is called the Croatian Apostolate of Blessed Ivan Merz to serve a massive wave of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia.

Fifty years later, members rejoiced with a May 2 Mass celebrated by Bishop Ivica Petanjak from the Diocese of Krk in Croatia. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of the Diocese of Brooklyn presided. Many of its original members have since moved from Astoria to settle in Long Island, New Jersey, Connecticut, and other boroughs of New York City. Still, Most Precious Blood is their home parish.

“I got married in this church — 1973,” said Željko Maračić.

“I christened my two kids here, my son and my daughter,” added Antone Zic.

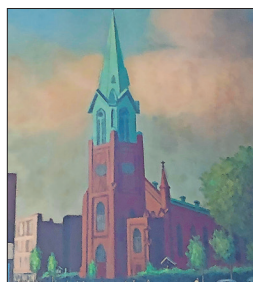
Maračić said the community cherishes the opportunity to celebrate Mass “in our mother language.”

“You can go to any church,” he added, “but somehow we people like to go to the mother language for Mass.”

Before the event, Bishop DiMarzio said Astoria once welcomed many Croatians, drawn when restrictive U.S. immigration laws were eased in 1965.

More than a half-century before that, the Diocese of Brooklyn had already earned its moniker as the Diocese of Immigrants. New arrivals, which began in the late 1960s, re-inforced that reputation.

Continued on page 3



Oldest structure in the diocese stands tall

PAGES 16-17



Moms on raising a priest

PAGES 30-31