



*Procession to the lake on the Feast of Jordan.*

ceremony was quite often held out of doors on a nearby lake where a large cross of ice blocks was set up, but due to the extreme cold weather in January, the ceremony is now performed in the church. An earlier custom included firing a musket or shotgun prior to the outdoor service. After the benediction the people take some holy water home. The pastor visits the homes of his parishioners on the Epiphany and on the following days, and blesses them and their homes with holy water. This holy water is also used for drinking and for baptisms.



*Cross made of ice for the Feast of Jordan.*

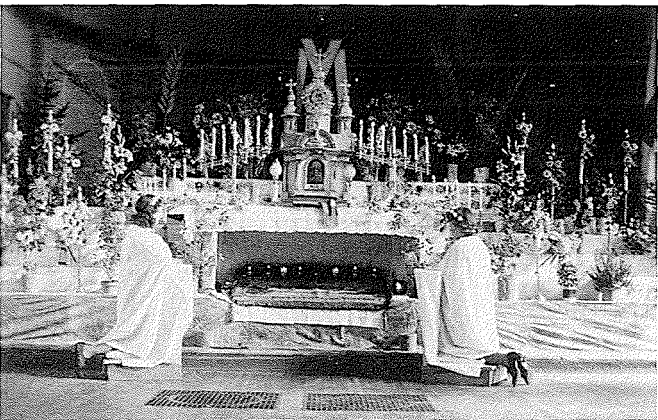
Candles are blessed on February 15 or *Sritennia*. This custom was borrowed from the pagans who used to carry lighted torches through the streets of the city. Blessed candles replace the pagan torches. Parishioners use the blessed candles in their homes, (in some homes, candles are lit during severe storms to avert harm or injury).

*Sritennia* was introduced in the third century. In the sixth century an earthquake and floods tormented the Byzantine empire. Special devotions were instituted to the Mother of God. The prayers were answered and this feast was sanctioned as a reminder of Mary's protection over the faithful.

*Easter* or *Velykden* is the principal feast in the Ukrainian culture. It falls on the Sunday following the spring full moon. It is preceded by seven weeks of Great Lent. The Lent is referred to as "chotyrry-desiatnytsia" or the Forty Day Fast. Amusements which involve music or dancing, marriages, etc. are abstained from during this period. Moderation in food, drink and entertainment is practiced.

The sixth Sunday of Lent is called Palm Sunday or "kvitna nedilia".

*Good Friday night vigil over the Plaschivnetsia (the Shroud).*



On this Sunday the parish priest blesses pussy willows which are distributed to the congregation. This tradition reminds us of the palm branches used by the pilgrims and people of Jerusalem who met Jesus at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is customary to take the willow branches and tap another person three times (sometimes done rather vigorously!) and chant - " 'Tis not I that strikes, It's the willow, For a week from today, It is Easter! "



*Easter basket arranged by Joyce Coulson's mother, Mrs. Marie Lazaruk.*

*Father Kulak blessing Easter baskets.*



Today, the large majority of the population of our community celebrate Easter in a unique way, a way inherent to the spiritual traditions of the Ukrainian culture - the "sviachene".

"Sviachene" translated literally means blessed food. It is the partaking of the blessed food with the family on Easter breakfast on Easter Sunday and with the parish a week later.

The most symbolic food item blessed is the "Paska" - a rich round Easter bread with elaborate dough ornaments. The central motif on the Paska is always the cross. It bears direct symbolism both to the Old Testament (the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage) and the New Testament (salvation of mankind from the bondage of sin through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ). Because of this symbolism the Ukrainian people, to honour Christ's resurrection, bless the Paska on Easter Sunday (or in some parishes, on Saturday). The Paska is considered so important that the entire Easter basket, regardless of its contents, is called Paska. This Paska then forms the table centerpiece and is eaten on the third day after Easter.