

REVEREND MONSIGNOR RUSSELL ANDREW DUKER, SEOD.



A priest of the Byzantine Catholic Archdiocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, passed away peacefully on January 22, 2024, at Mt. Saint Macrina, Uniontown, PA. He was born on August 24, 1943, in West Aliquippa, PA, and is the youngest of seven children born to Stephen D. Duker and Mary A. Varhola. Monsignor Duker is survived by his sister, Peggy Duker Chabala; sister-in-law, Janet Shema Duker; and numerous

nieces, nephews, cousins, parishioners, and friends. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brothers, Igor Stephen, Dr. Daniel Gregory, and Raymond (Mary Jane) Michael; and sisters, Juliann (Paul) Smerigan and Olga Marie (Joseph) Mackin and brother-in-law John Robert Chabala. Monsignor Duker was raised in Aliquippa, PA where he received his elementary education at Washington Elementary School, and in 1961 graduated from Aliquippa High School. In 1964, he graduated "Summa Cum Laude" with a Bachelor of Science Degree from Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania and later did graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh, PA. During the years 1965-1967, Monsignor Duker attended Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary and Duquesne University, both in Pittsburgh, PA. In the fall of 1967, Monsignor Duker was assigned to complete his seminary studies in Rome, Italy, at the Pontifical North American College. While in Rome, he completed his theological studies at the Gregorian University and at the Pontifical Institute for Eastern Studies. Upon the completion of his seminary studies, Monsignor Duker was awarded the Baccalaureate Degree in Sacred Theology. Returning to the United States in 1970, Monsignor Duker was ordained to the Holy Priesthood for the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, PA in his home parish, Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, on September 20, 1970, by Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko. His First Solemn Divine Liturgy was celebrated in his home parish of Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church on September 27, 1970. Monsignor Duker's first priestly appointment was to serve as the Assistant to the Rector of Saint John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, PA. In addition to his pastoral duties at the Cathedral, he was given additional assignments as the Assistant Chancellor of the Archeparchy and the Secretary to the Metropolitan Archbishop Kocisko. On July 18, 1972, Monsignor Duker was appointed to be the founding and organizing pastor of the newly established Saint Stephen's Church in North Huntingdon, PA. While serving in this assignment, he was also appointed as a member of the Archeparchial Liturgical Commission, an Associate Editor of the Byzantine Catholic World, and the Secretary of the Priests' Pension Board. On April 17, 1975, Archbishop Kocisko assigned Monsignor Duker to the pastorate of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Youngstown, Ohio. After several years of pastoral assignments, on September 26, 1979, Monsignor Duker was relieved of his appointment at Saint Nicholas Parish and was assigned to the Eternal City of Rome, Italy, where he was to complete his post-graduate studies leading to a Doctoral Degree in historical theology. While in Rome, Monsignor Duker lived at the Casa Santa Maria, the Graduate Department of the North American College, and attended the Gregorian University's Pontifical Institute for Eastern Studies. Monsignor Duker was subsequently awarded the specialized Baccalaureate and licentiate Degrees in the area of Eastern Church Studies. On June 9, 1982, he publicly defended his doctoral dissertation entitled The Byzantine Catholic Synod of Vienna of 1773. Additionally, he was awarded with "High Honors," the Degree of Doctor of the Theological Sciences of the Eastern Churches from the Pontifical Institute for Eastern Studies of the Gregorian University. In the summer of 1982, Monsignor Duker published his doctoral dissertation as a book. Upon completion of his studies in Rome, Italy, Monsignor Duker was appointed to serve as the Pastor of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in McKees Rocks, PA. Additionally, he was named the Director of the Archeparchial Office of Religious Education. On March 15, 1983, Monsignor Duker began his assignment to serve as the Defender of the Bond for the Metropolia Matrimonial Tribunal, and on September 15, 1983, he was appointed to serve as a Consultor to Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko of Pittsburgh, PA. On September 21, 1984, the papal document conferring upon Monsignor Duker the office of Prelate of Honor of His Holiness, Saint John Paul II, with the title of Monsignor was signed at the Vatican by the Papal Secretary of State, Augustine Cardinal Casaroli. Public announcement of this appointment was made in Pittsburgh on December 10, 1984, by Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko, and the solemn ceremonies of Monsignorial Investiture were conducted by Archbishop Kocisko and Auxillary Bishop John M. Bilock in Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, McKees Rocks on Sunday, February 3, 1985. In 1990, Metropolitan Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko, and Coadjutor Archbishop Thomas V. Dolinay appointed Monsignor Duker to be the Rector of Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary, North Side, Pittsburgh, PA. In addition to his duties as the Seminary Rector, Monsignor Duker also served as the Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Homiletics. Following the untimely death of Bishop John M. Bilock, who was serving as the Administrator of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh since the sudden death of Archbishop Thomas V. Dolinay, Monsignor Duker was elected by the Board of Consultors on September 14, 1994, to serve as the Archdiocesan Administrator. He administered the Pittsburgh Archdiocese in this interim period until the ordination and installation of the new Metropolitan Archbishop, Judson M. Procyk, on February 7, 1995. At the onset of Archbishop Procyk's administration, the new Metropolitan Archbishop asked Monsignor Duker to serve as his Vicar General and also as the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh. He served in these positions for 17 years. Monsignor Duker completed his five-year term of office as the Seminary Rector on June 15, 1995, at which time he assumed the pastorate of Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in the Oakland section of the City of Pittsburgh and at St. Pius X Byzantine Catholic Church in Carrick, PA, where he remained until retirement after 26 years as the pastor and administrator. Monsignor Duker is the author of numerous articles and publications that deal with the history, liturgy, and theological tradition of the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church. He was well known as an eloquent speaker who lectured extensively on these same topics at many academic and ecclesiastical institutions throughout the country and abroad. Monsignor Duker represented the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh at the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, where he served in executive positions; and was on the Board of Delegates of the Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania. He likewise participated in many ecclesiastical societies, ecumenical forums, and civic organizations. In September 2020, Monsignor Duker celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest in the Vineyard of Christ. For more than 50 years he has exhibited unbreakable, unshakable, unconditional, and infinite love and faith in God. And now in glory, his spirit will live on. Family and friends will be received on Tuesday, January 30, 4-8 PM, with Parastas celebrated at 7 PM, and Wednesday, January 31, 2-8 PM, with Parastas celebrated at 7 PM, at the St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cathedral, 210 Greentree Road, Munhall, PA 15120, where a Funeral Liturgy will be held at 10 AM on Tuesday, February 1. Interment will follow at Mount St. Macrina Cemetery, Uniontown. Arrangements entrusted to the **SAVOLSKIS-WASIK-GLENN FUNERAL HOME, INC.**, 3501 Main Street, Munhall, PA 15120. Condolences may be left at www.swgfuneralhome.com.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb