Columns
Religious Life



Basilian Sr. Monica Jaciuk behind the camera at PCTV for the "Kairos" series (Courtesy of Ann Laszok)



by Ann Laszok

Contributor

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

August 17, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Little did I know that when Basilian Sr. Monica Jaciuk came from Argentina in 2003 to minister in our province in Philadelphia, she would become a close friend, colleague, collaborator and partner in many of our projects and ministries.

She received permission from her provincial to come to the States to see how the USA handles communication in various media, her field of study. Knowing only Spanish and Ukrainian, she was assigned to work at our archeparchial newspaper, The Way, where the staff knew Ukrainian. There, she began learning English informally.

After a year of working at the newspaper, she asked to be assigned to our Pastoral Ministry Office in Pittsburgh, since she had heard of our first production of "New Life in the Trinity: The Mystery of Christian Initiation" (a video on the sacraments of baptism, chrismation and Eucharist) and she was interested in doing videos. That's when our collaboration began.

Since she wanted to expand her knowledge of videos, I introduced her to our local broadcasting channel, PCTV, where we had done our first nonprofessional video, "Being Born Again."

Advertisement

She spent hours producing small vignettes and we even collaborated on an icon series called "Kairos." Eastern Christian theology and spirituality were not her forte, but it was mine and she absorbed much through our joint prayer, discussions and even courses at St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh.

Her help in getting appropriate photos for all the following professional videos that I produced were a wonderful creative contribution. She also inspired me to have subtitles in all our videos in different languages so that she could teach her people back in Argentina.

It was a joy and a challenge to keep up with all her creative ideas. Her love for Eastern Christian theology was enormous. She collaborated with me as a translator and photographer on all the following videos: "The Kiss of Christ: The Mystery of Repentance," "Sacrifice of Praise: An Exploration of the Divine Liturgy" and "Oil of Gladness: The Mystery of Anointing of the Sick."

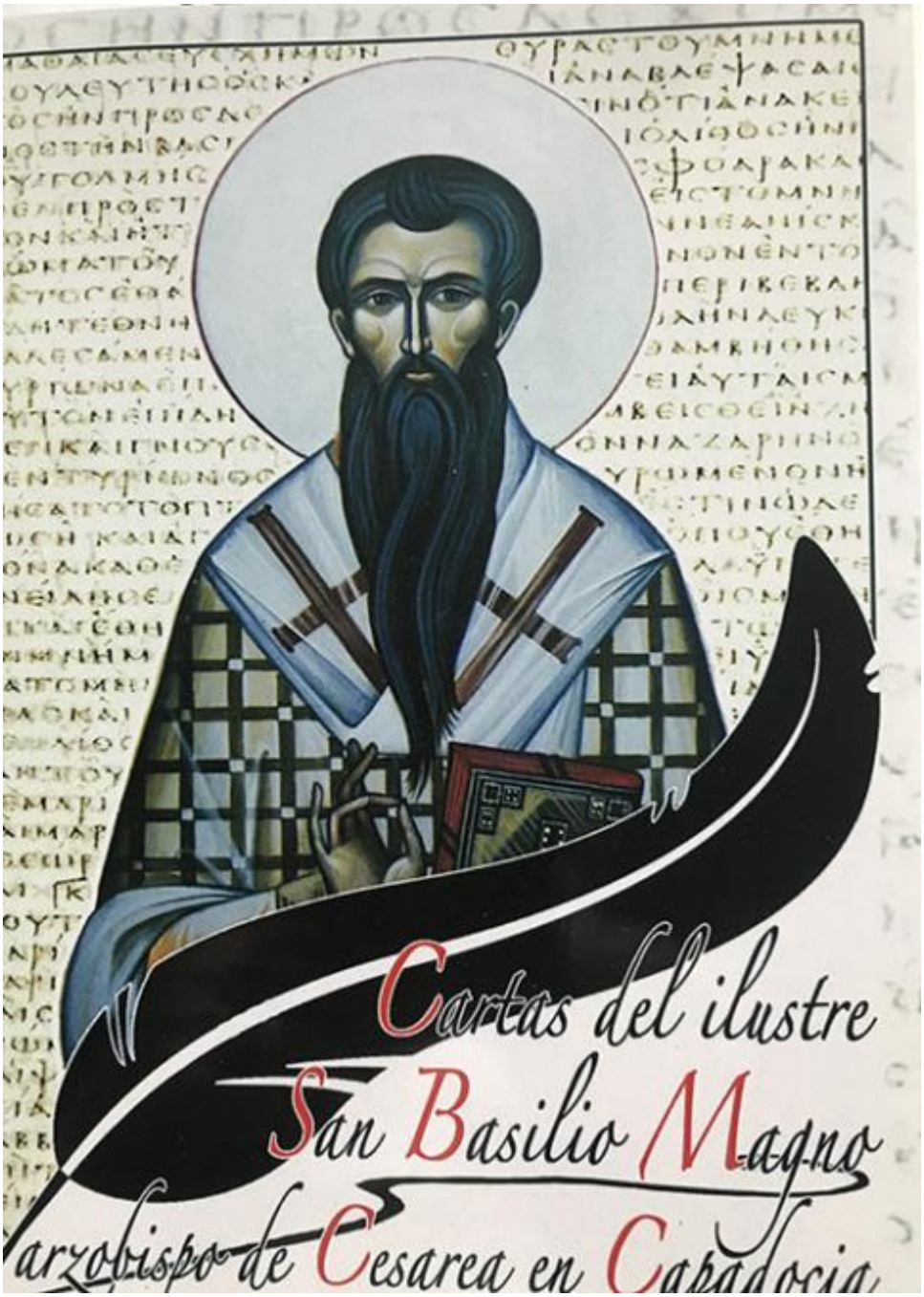


Basilian Srs. Olga Marie Faryna, Monica Jaciuk and Ann Laszok (front row from left), with Frs. Michael Polosky and Walter Wysochansky (back row from left), pose for a photo after a farewell Divine Liturgy in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, to wish Sister Monica well on her return to Argentina. (Courtesy of Ann Laszok)

When she went back to Argentina, we missed her terribly, but that didn't stop us from communicating and collaborating more on helping to write grants and discussing how best to deal with issues in community and church, through Skype and Zoom.

We even were chosen by our General Curia in Rome to be members together on our Interculturality Commission, to work on newsletters and videos together for the order.

Although she told me she has learned a lot from me, it has been a reciprocal relationship. I learned a renewed love and respect for community from her. She loved making our older sisters happy in small but significant ways.



The cover of *The Letters of St. Basil the Great in Spanish* (Courtesy of Ann Laszok)

I am proud to announce her latest accomplishment in the publication of *The Letters of St. Basil the Great in Spanish*. This compilation of St. Basil's letters was published by her, Sr. Monica Jaciuk, OSBM of Christ King Province of Argentina, under the direction of Paul Jonathan Fedwick, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto.

Each letter has an explanatory note about the date and the place of composition, as well as the reason and the identity of the recipients of the letter.

Readers will recognize that the truths written by St. Basil are courageous, persuasive and applicable to all the times. You will be amazed at how contemporary the topics are. St. Basil, the father of the Eastern Christian Church, teaches much about consolation, doctrine, morality, asceticism and the need for friendship.

The book was long in the making but was finally completed thanks to the contribution of many good and generous people: members of the Basilian praying family, the Basilian Sisters of the Jesus Lover of Humanity Province of Philadelphia, and the Basilian Sisters of the Christ the King Province of Argentina.

The collaboration we shared in this and others projects throughout the years has been a real blessing and gift from the Lord. Because of our friendship and collaboration, I even got to travel to Argentina to meet most of our sisters in Argentina. We've proven that we can be an order in unity even beyond borders!