



FIRST CATHOLIC SLOVAK UNION
OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
FCSU FINANCIAL®

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Dear Rev. Thomas Nasta, President Kenneth Arendt, Executive Officers, and fellow members of the FCSU Board of Directors:

It is my honor to represent the members of First Catholic Slovak Union as the Region 1 Director. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Executive Board and my fellow board members for the opportunity to work together for the benefit of our society, the First Catholic Slovak Union.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the devoted Jednota members of my region for their unwavering commitment, fervor, and steadfast support throughout the year 2023.

As Region 1 Director, I have diligently performed all the duties required of me as stipulated in the bylaws of the First Catholic Slovak Union including, but not limited to, attending all Board of Directors meetings as well as meetings requested by the President. Furthermore, I actively contributed to the Committees to which I was appointed by the President. Moreover, I proactively promoted our society and products and successfully recruited new members to be a part of our fraternal society.

I zealously attended District 1, 4, and 16 meetings within my region, as well and other events as my schedule allowed. As a very active member of my branch, I consistently attended all meetings of Branch 746 and District 4, organizing a myriad of engaging events for our members, including the much-anticipated Region 1 Summer Picnic and pilgrimage to Marian Shrine, both cherished annual traditions. Additionally, I enriched the pages of the *Jednota* newspaper by contributing articles and sharing photos of events within my region. Remaining abreast of activities across Districts and Branches within Region 1, I participated whenever possible. To rejuvenate branches within my region, I liaised with Branches 517, 890, 102, and 652 exploring avenues for enhanced support and facilitating actional recommendations to the home office. It was a delight to have Branch 132 members at the annual District 4 meeting.

Region 1 continues to be one of the most vibrant regions of our society boasting an increasing influx of young members who actively participate in meetings and most recently ascended into leadership roles, exemplified by the notable elections of District 16 President, Vice-President and Secretary, as well as District 4 Fraternal Activities Director and Branch 716 Secretary. Noteworthy is the heightened engagement of young adults in Branch 746 meetings, indicative of a promising future for our fraternal.

Within Region 1, a plethora of engaging activities await our members, meticulously organized by local branches, districts, and the flourishing Slovak non-profit organizations in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut areas. While the following list is by no means exhaustive, I would like to spotlight a selection of prominent events in the region in 2023, owing to the fervent participation and organizational capabilities of Region 1 Jednota members.

The Slovak Ball 2023: Serving as Chair of The Slovak Ball, I extend my profound gratitude to the FCSU Board and Jednota members from Region 1 for their unwavering support of this gala event held in

New Jersey. The 29th annual Slovak Ball, orchestrated by the Slovak-American Cultural Center (S-ACC) at the Royal Manor in Garfield, NJ, paid a unique homage to contemporary folk music while commemorating Slovakia's 30th anniversary of independence. The evening was enriched by captivating performances of Slovak and Rusyn folk music by the charismatic Štefan Štec, accompanied by the renowned Slovak drummer and percussionist, Martin Valihora, and the live band, Express. Guests were also treated to a soulful performance of Ester Wiesnerová. The event garnered 480 attendees, inclusive of the Slovak diplomatic community, spanning across the US and even overseas, a testament to its resounding success. Thank you to Kevin Collins, FCSU Executive Secretary, who was also in attendance and presented the FCSU basket to the lucky raffle winner.

Region 1 Annual Summer Picnic: I organized the Region 1 annual picnic hosted by Branch 746 on Sunday, August 13, 2023, at the Al Kalla Park in Linden, New Jersey. The day was filled with fraternalism, great Slovak food by Julie Rada Catering, and lots of laughter. Although the weather forecast predicted a hot and humid 92 degrees, under the shadow of the walnut trees it was pleasantly cool with a slight breeze. After the delicious meal members were surprised with a special treat -- the So Delicious Ice Cream Truck, a family-owned local company, arrived with a wide selection of premium hand-churned ice creams and toppings that satisfied all kinds of sweet cravings! The afternoon concluded with the awarding of the Jednota Branch 746 Scholarships to a talented young athlete who have demonstrated scholastic excellence and community leadership.

58th Anniversary of Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel: Annually Region 1 Jednota members from New York and New Jersey travel 4 hours each way to attend this beautiful mass organized by Katherine Nowatkoski and Branch 856. This year, along with the Board, I attended the mass with the main celebrant, The Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, J.C.L. Bishop of Greensburg, PA.

Slovak Heritage Festival: Amidst adverse weather conditions, the 45th Slovak Heritage Festival unfolded with remarkable resilience at the Middlesex County Fair Grounds in East Brunswick, New Jersey. Despite the cold and rain, the Slovak American community came out to support the event, the largest Slovak festival in the US. The festival, adorned with a vibrant program, featured captivating performances by renowned folklore ensembles "Litmanivky" from Litmanova, Slovakia and Šarišan from Prešov. Members of First Catholic Slovak Union Branch 746 (Linden), 716 (New York City), and 45 (New York City) were in attendance to support the event including FCSU Executive Secretary Kevin Collins, Director of the Slovak Institute in Cleveland and the Program Director of the Slovak Radio Milan Kobulsky (Branch 450). The Slovak Heritage Festival was also an opportunity for vendors to share unique Slovak and Czech made products and taste delicious homemade cuisine such as traditional brynzove halusky, grilled kolbasa, nut rolls and poppy seed rolls, and so much more! As Region 1 Director, I was proud to continue to support this incredible event.

Region 1 Pilgrimage to Marian Shrine: Embarking on a sacred journey, the members of Region 1, under the auspices of St. John Nepomucene / St. Frances X. Cabrini parish, collaborated to organize a reverent pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine in West Haverstraw, New York, on the first Sunday of October. There was active participation of Region 1 Jednota members from Branch 45 in NYC, Branch 716 in NYC, and Branch 746 in Linden, NJ. The day unfolded with a solemn Holy Mass conducted in Slovak, with Fr. Martin Kertys as the main celebrant. After mass, the pilgrimage continued with opportunities for confessions, a communal lunch, and the recitation of the Holy Rosary in Slovak. Pilgrims experienced a profound sense of joy and spiritual reconnection as they returned to the Marian Shrine, after a hiatus caused by the challenging circumstances of the pandemic.

Lipka Academy: Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Lipka Academy, a beacon of Slovak language education in Linden, New Jersey, hosted a gala evening on November 11th. It was a privilege to partake in this milestone event, representing FCSU and honoring the dedicated teachers who have nurtured the language skills of countless children over the years. Branch 746's involvement in Lipka Academy's Mother's Day and Christmas events underscores the commitment to preserving the Slovak language for future generations.

Vilija: Branch 716 and Branch 45, under District 16, orchestrated a traditional Slovak Christmas dinner, "Vilija," following Slovak Sunday Mass at St. John Nepomucene Church on December 10th, 2023. This cherished annual event, enlivened by festive music and traditional Slovak fare, epitomizes the enduring spirit of camaraderie and cultural celebration cherished by our community.

St. Nicholas / Sv. Mikulas: The annual St. Nicholas party at St. John Nepomucene Church in New York City witnessed the joyous participation of over 130 children and their families on December 3rd, 2023. District 16, Branch 45, and Branch 716 played instrumental roles in organizing this beloved community event, exemplifying our commitment to fostering cherished tradition.

LUX New York: Branch 45, 716, and 746 members continue to support the mission and work of LUX New York. LUX New York live streams Holy Mass (in Slovak at 10:15am and English at 12:00pm) via Facebook from St. John Nepomucene Church in New York City. To learn more about LUX New York and listen to live or archived masses and programs, visit: <http://www.luxnewyork.net>.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all branches within my region for their dedication in fostering mutual support, organizing fraternal activities, and engaging in community service endeavors. Looking ahead, I am eager to continue my tenure as Region 1 Director, steadfast in my resolve to cultivate youth engagement, revitalize dormant branches, and fortify fraternal bonds within our Jednota community, guided by the enduring values and principles espoused by our esteemed founder, Fr. Furdek.

Respectfully submitted,

Sabina Sabados

Region 1 Director