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Croatian Classes at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Croatian Catholic Church in NYC

The day before Valentine's Day marks the start of the first Croatian class at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, located at 502, W. 41 Street in New York. The classes are held every Friday at six pm in the Church's basement, free of charge, and are open to anyone interested in learning Croatian.

The classes are a labor of love for Anita Skara, the woman behind the idea. Skara has been teaching elementary and high school Croatian classes at the church for the last ten years, but she wanted to start an adult class. In our discussion before the class began, she commented, "I've been wanting to do this for a long time."

Her enthusiasm was apparent when she met us at the door. On the way in, I met a new classmate, Suchi, who is interested in "getting familiar with the culture." I also met Kristofer, who is taking the class "to improve my grammar and vocabulary, and to get in touch with my roots." Annie attended the latter part of the class, and hopes to "regain a better grasp of the language, as I lost a lot." When I asked Skara why she was driven to teach Croatian, she explained that she was born in Croatia, but moved to the States and lived here until she was twelve. She moved back to Croatia for high

school and college, and understands the difficulty of learning the language, even with a background. "When I learned Croatian, I realized how much I didn't know."

We started with the basics: Skara believes it's very important to solidify a good foundation upon which to build. Working from the alphabet, we proceeded to short dialogues, and then to forms of *Biti* (the verb to be), plural forms and the declension of nouns. Skara, a pro at creating lesson plans, typed our first lesson in Excel. Everything was clear, understandable and well presented.

Midway through the lesson, we received two surprise visits, one, from Father Ivica Majstorovic, and the other, from Father Ante Bekavac. They welcomed us to the church, and kindly offered their services to us if we had any questions. Both were instrumental in helping Skara secure the space to hold the lessons. To them, we owe many thanks.

The remainder of the class went smoothly, until we were booted out by a group of elementary kids, at which time we scurried into the hallway and exchanged a few last words. We are all looking forward to next Friday, and hope to see some new faces in class.

K. Vukovic