

Sabino Coppola,  
Seton Hall University  
ORCID ID 0000-0003-2977-116X

### **Interview with Mrs. Lisa Gotsul, the parishioner of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Holy Ascension of Maplewood town, New Jersey, USA**

The interview with Elizabeth begins with her giving a bit of background into who she is, where the interview is taking place, and her personal history. She is a Ukrainian woman that has spent a majority of her life with Holy Ascension Church, where the interview is being conducted, where many formative moments of her life have taken place. She explains that this is because her father, a first-generation Ukrainian immigrant in the United States, has been pastor there her entire life. Growing up in this church, learning to speak Ukrainian there, and the different people she has met coming in and out of the church have impacted most of her life experiences.

Elizabeth was then asked to elaborate on her Ukrainian roots and how she has stayed connected to the country and its' culture. She discussed her family's history and how the Ukrainian culture was ingrained in her life. Elizabeth told the journey of her family coming to the United States, tracing back to her grandmother and grandfather. Her grandfather was born in a village in Ukraine while her grandmother was born in a displaced person's camp. Her grandmother, who was not Ukrainian by birth, strongly identified with Ukrainian culture. Interestingly she noted that despite not being Ukrainian, her grandmother did all she could to pass down the language and culture to her family. The effects of her grandmother's efforts were useful as Elizabeth and her family have gone to Ukraine both in efforts to aid special needs children as well as to visit the country they hail from. In sharing her experience of trying to maintain her Ukrainian culture while being in the United States with the native Ukrainians she met on her trip, she tells of native Ukrainian's shock in how invested she was in Ukrainian culture, as they didn't expect this to be the case for those who live in the United States.

While discussing her trip to Ukraine, Elizabeth casually mentioned that she happened to be visiting during a war. Surprised by this, the interviewers asked her to please elaborate about what that experience was like. Elizabeth explained that while she was visiting during this time, her experience was not what someone would normally imagine being in a country at war would be like. She stated that rather than seeing the horrors of war one would normally imagine, she actually learned more about the role that socio-economic class play in life for Ukrainians. Specifically, how war impacted people of different classes in immensely different ways. She learned in her time there that essentially if someone was affluent enough, the war did not matter because they had free rein to do as they pleased with no change in their lives at all.

The interviewers then questioned her on the differences she noticed in Ukrainian culture in the native land compared to Ukrainian culture in the United States. She explained that what people want in their day-to-day life is reversed from what one may expect. Native Ukrainians have an urge to experience American culture and indulge in American goods, while Ukrainians from the United States have a yearning for more traditional aspects of the culture. This conversation on culture then pivoted to the current state of Ukraine and Elizabeth's opinions regarding that topic. Elizabeth went on to explain her beliefs on not only the current state of Ukraine, but also what this current state reminds her of and her opinion on the role of the United States in the matter.

Elizabeth's interview wrapped up with her quickly touching on the pride she has in her Ukrainian culture, and what her family has done to preserve it despite being away from the country. For example, Elizabeth reminisced on the Ukrainians folk songs that her family would sing during Christmas time. She explained that keeping this tradition and knowing that people in Ukraine do as well is her way of feeling connected to the community that she cares for so deeply.

## References

*Gotsul, Lisa* (2018, May). Interview with Lisa Gotsul [Interview]. Sabino Coppola, Seton Hall University.

Interview 4 (19:14). May 8, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thbKSbbc1Xk>

