

Pastoral Letter on the 50th anniversary of the Winnipeg Metropolia

WINNIPEG - March 28, 2006

To the Reverend Fathers and Deacons, Sisters and Seminarians
and Faithful of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Acknowledgements

It has been just over a month since my installation as Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg and I wish to take this opportunity once again to thank everyone for the warm reception that I have received. I wish to acknowledge the work of those who assisted with the liturgical celebrations, the banquet festivities, and the hospitality needed for the many guests that attended. May the Good Lord reward you for your thoughtfulness and dedication.

50th Anniversary of Metropolia

I feel especially honoured to begin this new ministry at a time when our Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada prepares to mark the 50th anniversary of the creation of our Metropolitan Province. This historical event was a sign of the mature growth of our Church in Canada, which began with the arrival of the first pioneers from Ukraine in 1891, the first permanent clergy and religious in 1902, and the first bishop in 1912.

When the Holy See gave the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada the status of an Exarchate and appointed [Blessed Martyr] Nykyta Budka as the first Bishop in 1912, it was a sign that church life had moved beyond the mission stage. Bishop Budka immediately began to organize the scattered missions of our faithful across Canada into parishes and registered our Church with the Canadian government. He established the groundwork, which was continued by his successor Bishop Basil Ladyka, OSBM, in 1929. The dedicated work of the Basilian and Redemptorist priests and brothers, together with the diocesan clergy was aided with equal dedication by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate who together assisted the faithful in organizing more parishes and missions.

By 1948 the one Exarchate was divided into the Exarchates of Central, Western and Eastern Canada each with its own bishop. In 1951 the Central Exarchate was further divided into the Exarchate of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Thus by 1956 the growing numbers of faithful, clergy and religious, together with the many churches, halls, schools, hospitals, and other institutions, clearly demonstrated that the Ukrainian Catholic Church was here to stay in Canada and that it deserved the full church governing structure known as a metropolitan province, with its own metropolitan archbishop, and affiliated or suffragan bishops with their eparchies.

And so on 3 November 1956 Archbishop Maxim Hermaniuk, CSSR, became the first Metropolitan of Winnipeg; Bishop Neil Savaryn, OSBM, became the first Eparchial Bishop of the Edmonton Eparchy; Bishop Isidore Borecky became the first Eparchial Bishop of the Toronto Eparchy; and Bishop Andrew Roborecky became the first Eparchial Bishop of the Saskatoon Eparchy. Later in 1974 Bishop Jerome Chimy, OSBM, became the first Eparchial Bishop of the newly created New Westminster Eparchy.

The number of clergy and religious sisters also continued to increase with the arrival of new Religious Communities such as the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Sisters of St. Basil and the Studite Monks.

The number of faithful grew as well, with large numbers of Ukrainians arriving after the Second World War, and more recently since 1990. Church activities have further developed with new publications, organizations, radio and television programmes, cultural projects and business ventures.

Indeed with the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolia we have much to celebrate and much to thank God for. We also have much reason to look toward a promising future.

Archeparchy Plans

To mark this anniversary I am announcing a period of celebration in the Archeparchy of Winnipeg over a period of nine months.

1. This will begin with the planned visit of the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops of Canada to the Holy See, called the Ad Limina Visit, at the end of September 2006. Together with Patriarch Lubomyr the bishops will visit various Roman Offices, which deal with our Church including the Oriental Congregation, the Causes of Saints, and the Office of Christian Unity. This visit will be highlighted by a meeting with the Holy Father where a report will be given on the state of our Church in Canada.
2. A second event will be an Archeparchial Sobor on "Stewardship," to be held Friday and

Saturday, October 27-28, 2006. The Stewardship Program, which has had an initial start in the Archeparchy, is a spiritual program for clergy and laity aimed at renewing their spiritual dedication and commitment to parish life using especially God's gifts of time, talent and treasure found in the gospel teaching of Jesus. Practiced in other Eparchies and Dioceses, the Stewardship Program has proven to be a profound means for parish renewal.

3. A highlight of our anniversary celebration will be a Festive Banquet on Saturday, October 28, 2006, followed by a Pontifical Divine Liturgy on Sunday, October 29 at Saints Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral. This date has been chosen to enable the other Ukrainian Catholic Bishops of Canada to participate, in commemoration of the first such Pontifical Liturgy held on 3 November 1956.
4. The Youth are being invited to coordinate a Theophany Water Blessing ceremony at the Forks in Winnipeg in January 2007. Such a ceremony reminds us not only of our baptismal tie to the Church, but recalls the annual blessing of parishioner homes uniting home and Church together.
5. The Season of Great Lent 2007 will be an opportunity for parishes to consider a Lenten Mission based on the mission we all receive as baptized children of God to spread the Word of God. Just as our Church in Canada was built with missionary zeal, so too are we called upon as followers of Jesus Christ to continue that missionary spirit.
6. And finally Pentecost of 2007 will be a time to end our anniversary celebration, by which we remind ourselves of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and the continuous rebirth of the life of the Church. In order to live every church community must be alive in the Holy Spirit, be it on the scale of the Archeparchy or that of the smallest church community.

Conclusion

To help with these celebrations, I am inviting the members of the Ukrainian Catholic Council [Centralia] of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg to form a committee to help organize and coordinate these events. I invite as well parishes and parish districts to plan their own events to mark this anniversary. The same invitation is also extended to our Church organizations. It is my prayer that by pausing to see where we have come during these last fifty years, we will be able to see more clearly where we are headed. May the Holy Spirit guide us in our holy journey.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Archbishop of Winnipeg
Metropolitan for Ukrainian Catholics in Canada

19/26 March 2006 - Sunday of the Holy Cross