

PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
Announcing
The Year 2012 – A YEAR ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD!

To the Very Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Religious Sisters, Seminarians and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada:

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

Following his baptism in the River Jordan and his subsequent time of prayer and fasting in the desert, Jesus began his 3 years of public ministry. He entered the synagogue in Nazareth and read the following words from the Prophet Isaiah: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” [Lk 4:18-19]*

As we, the members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada, begin the New Year 2012 with the commemoration of Christ’s baptism in the Jordan River and the start of his public ministry, we too are called upon to begin a year acceptable to the Lord. This year will mark several important events in the life of our Church, which we wish to officially announce with this letter.

The Centenary of Blessed Bishop Nykyta Budka

In 1912 the first bishop appointed to lead the Ukrainian Catholic faithful in Canada arrived in Winnipeg to begin his public ministry. The newly ordained Bishop Nykyta Budka began the pastoral work of coordinating the clergy, religious sisters and brothers, together with the laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church scattered across the vast country of Canada into a united Church, initially as a single Canada-wide Exarchate. This later grew into a Metropolitan Province with an Archeparchy and four Eparchies.

The task awaiting young 35 year-old Bishop Budka was immense. Not only did he strive to unify Ukrainian Catholics into an organized Church, but he needed to obtain civil recognition of our Church by the government of Canada, to establish and develop good relations with the dominant Roman Catholic Church and other denominations, and help the Ukrainian immigrants who had been settling here since 1891 to face the challenges of a new culture and a new way of life. Indeed, Bishop Budka had to carry out his ministry according to the scripture text mentioned above: bringing joy to the poor, visiting the imprisoned, helping the sick, and assisting all those oppressed with the difficult conditions of pioneer life.

Bishop Budka carried out his mission in Canada from 1912 until his final return to Europe in 1928. He suffered much during this period and his health deteriorated. In Ukraine he returned to pastoral ministry. With the rise of communism, Bishop Budka, although still a Canadian citizen was arrested together with the other bishops in Ukraine and sentenced to a concentration camp in Kazakstan, where he died in 1949. In 2001, during the historic pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II to Ukraine, Bishop Budka was beatified, together with other martyrs of the faith and now holds the title of BLESSED Bishop Nykyta Budka.

Ukrainian Catholic Synod of Bishops scheduled for Winnipeg 2012

To mark this important centenary of Blessed Bishop Nykyta Budka for our Church the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops of Canada invited the Ukrainian Catholic Synod of Bishops to hold its annual meeting in Canada in 2012. This invitation has been accepted and we are happy to announce that this gathering of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops from around the world will be held in Winnipeg from 9-16 September 2012. Of the current 51 bishops (including those in retirement) it is expected that around 35-40 bishops will take part. Although the Synod itself, according to canon law, is open only to bishops, various public functions are being planned, including the opening Divine Liturgy in Winnipeg's Sts. Vladimir & Olga Cathedral on September 9th. Also planned are a public banquet on September 16th, and visits by bishops to various churches in Manitoba on Sunday, September 16th.

A committee has been organized to make logistical plans for this Synod and its activities in Manitoba. All plans are ultimately subject to approval by the Secretariat of the UGCC Synod of Bishops from Ukraine.

Visit of newly elected Patriarch Sviatoslav

In March of 2011, following the resignation of His Beatitude Lubomyr Husar, Father and Head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the UGCC Synod of Bishops elected Bishop Sviatoslav Shewchuk, 40 years of age, as the new Father and Head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Following the confirmation of his election by Pope Benedict XVI, His Beatitude Sviatoslav was installed in Kyiv on 27 March 2011. His Beatitude will be in Canada not only to take part in the Winnipeg UGCC Synod, but will also make pastoral visitations to the other eparchies in Canada during September 2012. Each Eparchy is responsible for planning the details of the Patriarch's visit in its particular area. With the pastoral visit of Patriarch Sviatoslav, the ties of our Church in Canada with the Church in Ukraine will be strengthened, and the memory of Blessed Bishop Nykyta Budka will be honoured.

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

Indeed the year 2012 will be for Ukrainian Catholics in Canada "*a year acceptable to the Lord!*" It will be a time not only to remember the past, but to celebrate it as well. It will be a time to receive guests and offer hospitality in the name of the Lord. And it will be a time to review and renew our pastoral mission in the world we live. Let us continue our pilgrim journey with Christ our Saviour, into this special year, through the prayers of Blessed Nykyta Budka, our first bishop and martyr.

6/19 January 2012, Feast of the Theophany of our Lord
Prot H/1/2012

- + Lawrence Huculak OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
- + David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
- + Stephen Chmilar, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
- + Ken Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
- + Bryan Bayda CSsR, Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon