



Rebuilding the Church in Ukraine

Ukrainian Catholic NEWSLETTER

Ukrainian Hero Addresses Synod of Bishops in Rome

A prisoner of conscience in Soviet camps for 10 years, Myroslav Marynovych was unable to speak even to his closest friends for years. He probably never thought he would be speaking at a synod attended by the assembled bishops of the Catholic Church. A Ukrainian Catholic with priests in his family, Mr. Marynovych is now the director of Lviv's Institute of Religion and Society. An expert on ecumenical affairs, he was one of 23 lay people invited to attend the Synod of Bishops held in Rome from Sept. 30 to Oct. 27, 2001. He shared his reflections on the bishop's role in the church.

Founding of Ukrainian Helsinki Group

The decisive moment in his life came 25 years ago, when he joined the original Ukrainian Helsinki Group to monitor human rights abuses in then-Soviet Ukraine.

In the 1970s the idea of defending human rights was highly valued. Through various methods the West was trying to make the Soviet Union become a democracy. One method was the signing of international accords. So in 1975 in Helsinki, Finland, 33 European nations, the USA and Canada signed "The Helsinki Accords."

On November 9, 1976 in a Moscow apartment in the presence of foreign journalist, the creation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group was announced. There were 10 members at that time, of whom Myroslav Marynovych was one of the youngest.

As Marynovych explains, the task of the Helsinki Group was "to follow up on how the Helsinki Accords signed by the Soviet Union were being observed. First of all, it focused on that chapter of the accords which spoke about different aspects of the rights of the human person, in particular freedom of speech, movement and religion."

From the very start the group was upfront about its activities. Contact information on all its members was published with their first announcement. This openness made the KGB's work easier, but it also forced them to admit the undemocratic approach of the Soviet government.



Myroslav Marynovych talks in a small group session at the synod.

"Yes" meant arrest; "No," loss of self-respect

Mr. Marynovych recalls the founding of the group: "I recall that clear night when we were invited to join the Ukrainian Helsinki Group... We thought about the choice: to agree, that meant arrest, no doubt; not to agree meant loss of self respect, loss of our human face. I was 28 at the time. I said to myself 'yes.' And now I am happy with the choice I made, because in fact that decision laid the foundations for my future."

Some of the most blatant human rights abuses were, of course, against religious groups. During his time with the group, Marynovych reported on the liquidation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and its underground activities, the liquidation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and "the persecution of the rebellious Baptists."

The group's members were under constant surveillance, their homes were bugged, they awaited inevitable arrest.

The Soviets were unsure what they should do with the members of the group.

Though they hadn't come out against the Soviet government, they were definitely making waves. Thanks to them, the whole world knew that the

Continued inside

Inside

"Opiate of the masses?"

Mission to Kazakhstan

Patron of orphans

Notes from the underground



“The opiate of the masses?”

From the address of Fr. Michael Kwiatkowski, Vice-rector of Spiritual Life of the Lviv Theological Academy, to new students, Sept. 14, 2001.

Marx said “Religion is the opiate of the masses!” And I agree with him ... to a certain extent.

If there is a drop of truth in Marx’s words, it’s when we forget that religion is a means which God has given us for achieving holiness and salvation. It’s when we use religion only as a means of comfort in difficult moments of our life. It becomes an opiate for us if we forget that salvation is not merely our private business.

The goal of religion (the goal of our faith) is a common goal. When we all work to help one another, religion, the practice of our faith, becomes much more than a selfish source of satisfaction.

We at the Academy, students, scholars, most importantly, practicing Christians, have received a blessed task: To study deeply the fundamentals of our Faith and let them take root in our souls. Our primary obligation is to share with others what we have learned.

Our countrymen and all people of good will through the whole world are waiting for us.

People are waiting, people like the mother in the small town in Dnipropetrovsk region who is looking for words of hope to tell her son, who more and more desires alcohol and violence, because he doesn’t see any sense in modern society... People like our peers who are lost in a chaotic and restless modern culture and hunger for a word of certainty, for direction in their lives.

Our Church and our people have great hopes for this establishment. They believe that we will be candles of Christian knowledge for this nation. We should worthily and honorably work to carry out all the tasks given to us.

Protestant Growth Continues

Protestant Churches in Ukraine continued their rapid growth in 2001. The United Methodist Church in Odessa, a port on the Black Sea, celebrated its first anniversary in December. Also in December, the Baptists in far southwestern Transcarpathia began publishing their first newspaper in the region and in November they held a major evangelization campaign. The majority of registered religious groups in eastern Ukraine’s Donetsk region are Protestant. The Jehovah’s Witnesses opened a massive compound just outside of Lviv in September of 2001. This complex in Briukhovychi, a leafy suburb that the Pope visited in June, will probably become the Witnesses’ European center.

Kharkiv Catholics Granted Land

The number of disputes over church property in Ukraine decreased significantly in 2001. As part of this trend, the regional authorities of eastern Ukrainian Kharkiv on November 16 ordered the local government to give a long-disputed lot to the local Catholic community. The parishioners have been asking for government permission to build since 1997. But, according to Father Mykola Semenovych, the parish priest, “the places they were ready to give us are not fit for building a shrine. One was a former Jewish cemetery, the other is a former Tatar cemetery.”

A number of national deputies in Ukraine’s Parliament, the Kharkiv eparchy of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the intelligentsia and dozens of lay organizations and human-rights groups stepped in to support the Catholics. The faithful say that Kharkiv’s Catholic community of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker received an early present from St. Nick.

Ukrainians Prepare for Elections

The big news in Ukrainian politics is the elections which will be held on March 31, 2002. All 450 national deputies of Ukraine’s Parliament are up for re-election, as are the deputies of local councils and city mayors. According to USAID, there are over 240,000 elected officials below the national level, less than 5 percent have a formal party affiliation, 20 percent are under 30 years of age, and two-thirds are serving their first term.



Ukrainian Catholic Newsletter

EDITOR, MATTHEW MATUSZAK

UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION
UCEF@UCEF.ORG WWW.UCEF.ORG

IN USA

2247 W. CHICAGO AVE.
CHICAGO, IL. 60622
(773) 235-8462
FAX (773) 235-8464

IN CANADA

1317 STONECUTTER DR.
OAKVILLE, ON L6M 3C5
(905) 465-3388
FAX (905) 465-3384

Internet resources for information about Ukraine:

- Updates on the religious situation in Ukraine are available from RISU, the Religious Information Service of Ukraine, WWW.RISU.ORG.UA
- Official site of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, WWW.UGCC.ORG.UA
- Site of the Lviv Theological Academy, WWW.LTA.LVIV.UA
- And don't forget UCEF's website, WWW.UCEF.ORG

In the Mission Fields

Kazakhstan: "The imprint of the holy martyrs"

Fr. Athanasius Schneider, chaplain at the Roman Catholic seminary in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, was in Lviv for the Papal Visit to Ukraine in June 2001. Fr. Schneider mentioned to Fr. Borys Gudziak, Rector of the Lviv Theological Academy, that his seminary needed philosophy professors educated in the Christian spirit, preferably in the West. Fr. Gudziak suggested Fr. Schneider inquire at the Academy's Institute of Marriage and Family Life.

Fr. Schneider met Yurii Pidlisnyi, a Philosophy professor and the director of the institute, and his colleague Petro Husak and told them his story. Pidlisnyi recounts that "maybe I was a little sceptical at first about his proposition. I thought, 'we'll hear him out, give some advice and that'll be the end of it.'"

But Fr. Schneider happened to take out a picture of Blessed Father Oleksii Zarytskyi, one of the new Ukrainian martyrs. He told the young philosophers about how Blessed Oleksii had changed his life. He saved Fr. Schneider's father during the war, and as he bade farewell he blessed little Athanasius Schneider. As Fr. Schneider told this tale, Pidlisnyi's doubts began to fade.

Ukrainian Catholics in Kazakhstan

After World War II, the Soviets deported many Ukrainians to Central Asian Kazakhstan, including bishops, priests, religious and lay members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Among these was Blessed Fr. Oleksii Zarytskyi, one of the 27



Ukrainian Sisters Servants conduct youth ministry in Karaganda.

Ukrainian martyrs beatified by Pope John Paul II on June 27, 2001.

There are now three priests and three nuns of the order of Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate who serve the thousands of Ukrainian Catholics in Kazakhstan. They serve in Karaganda and in Pavlodar, which are about 400 miles apart. Recalling his month in Kazakhstan, Petro Husak says: "It was interesting to hear the sisters or the fathers say, 'We're going to teach catechism nearby.' It turns out 'close' is about 160 miles away."

October 8, 2001

Dear Friends,

Profound thanks for your prayers. With God's help we started teaching today at the Karaganda Seminary. It's a little difficult finding the right terms in Russian when you're used to using English, German or Ukrainian but, in the end, this will be a wonderful experience.

There are many Ukrainians in Karaganda, no less than 70,000, and in all of Kazakhstan there are 500,000.

On Sunday we were at the Church of the Protection of the Mother of God. It's a small church but three or even four generations of Ukrainians attend services there.

Father Vasyl Hovera is building a parish there. He's built a Sunday school and plans to rebuild a wooden church, or, more likely, build a new brick structure. The locals are helping him.

The Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate minister to the youth here. Very young women have volunteered to come serve in Karaganda. This is a good example which many others could follow.

They've also opened a chapel dedicated to Blessed Father Oleksii Zarytskyi in the neighborhood where many Germans lived. (They still call the area "Berlin"). He served liturgy for them. You get the feeling here that this land carries the imprint of the holy martyrs.

In fact, it's a German priest who asked us to come teach here. His family was saved by Blessed Oleksii Zarytskyi. Maybe this is the way the saints work from heaven, tending their flock.

Prices are about the same here (some things more expensive, some cheaper). Salary ranges from 8000 to 12,000 tenge [US\$ 60-90/month] and pensions from 3000 to 4000 [US\$ 20-25/month].

Breakfast for now is stable: headcheese, bread, cheese with sour cream and tea. Lunch and dinner in general is buckwheat, cabbage rolls with bacon fat, and borscht. It's a typical Cossack diet. This is because the cook is a lady from Belarus.

The seminarians are 2 Ukrainians from the Ivano-Frankivsk region, one Kazak (Rustem), 2 half-Kazak half-Russians, and the rest look Russian. There's 20 in all.

They have German buses from the '60s to the '80s running here. They say they bartered them for coal. They haven't even taken out the maps of the city of Hamburg and its bus routes.

Roads here are like in Ukraine but generally without white lines.

Send my best to everyone – Yurii Pidlisnyi



"We flew into Astana (the capital). From there it's 255 miles to Karaganda. On the way there was 1 village and 1 city. The rest was steppe everywhere. The population is 17 million, on a territory 3.5 times the size of Ukraine. And they say the earth is overcrowded! People are strange..."

Pidlisnyi tells of the attitude of the mostly Muslim Kazaks toward Christianity. "Generally, if one of them becomes Christian, they reject him. In the Karaganda seminary one ethnic Kazak is studying, and he's been shunned by his own. They consider him a traitor.."

Catholics in Kazakhstan are a small island (180,00) in a population of about 8 million Muslims and 6 million Russian Orthodox.

In the letter on the previous page, Pidlisnyi describes the month which he spent on mission to Kazakhstan.

Anti-Soviet Hero Speaks in Rome

Continued from the front page

Soviet Union was not keeping the Helsinki Accords. After a long hesitation, the government decided to arrest the members.

On February 5, 1977, Marynovych was detained in Kyiv and warned that he would be arrested if he didn't stop his activities. He didn't stop and two months later he was arrested. They gradually arrested all the other members, even a 76-year-old woman.

But the idea was not squelched. Others took their place. A total of 41 people took part in the group.

Life in the camps

Marynovych reports that the members of the group had an extraordinary authority among the other prisoners in the camps. "We were defending those who had already been arrested, and that feeling gave us great spiritual strength. For, to put yourself on the line to help someone else, that's tapping into the source of the Gospel's strength."

People in the camps saw that they were not forgotten, that someone was giving the West information about them. When Marynovych arrived at the camp, there was a real celebration. He was carried around in triumph. He says it was "very pleasant, but also a great responsibility: I didn't have the right to waver, not an iota. In the camps we started to conduct different protests, hunger strikes, for which we were further persecuted."

The path to Rome

With Gorbachev and glasnost in the 1980s, Marynovych was freed in 10 years. He continued to observe the human rights and religious situation in Ukraine. In 1997 he founded the Institute of Religion and Society in Lviv.

One of the institute's ongoing activities is an annual ecumenical nation-wide student conference on topics connected to religion and society. Themes have included church-state relations in Ukraine and social problems in a post-totalitarian state and opportunities for the church. These conferences prepare a new generation to work together to solve Ukraine's spiritual and moral ills.

Mr. Marynovych is the advisor on ecumenical issues for Lubomyr Cardinal Husar, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and in 1999 he was recognized as one of western Ukraine's outstanding civil leaders.

Because he has become an expert, the former dissident was asked to prepare the Vatican intelligentsia for the Pope's trip to Ukraine in June of 2001. In May he gave reports to the Papal Gregorian University and the Oriental Institute on social problems and ecumenism in Ukraine. During the Papal Visit itself he oversaw the Text Service for the visit.

Invited to participate as an official auditor, Marynovych attended the recent synod in Rome on the theme "The Bishop: Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World." He spoke in small group meetings with bishops and reported on the synod to the Ukrainian public.

As an auditor at the synod Marynovych was invited to dine with the pope as part of a small group. He thanked His Holiness for the visit to Ukraine, which "brought hope back to Ukrainians." And not just hope, but a sense of direction. As Marynovych said, John Paul's "white figure became like a sail that clearly shows where the wind of the future is blowing."

In his own modest way, Myroslav Marynovych is helping Ukrainians, young and old, to follow the pope's charismatic lead.

Patron of orphans: Christmas and beyond

Students who volunteer at the Charity Center of the Lviv Theological Academy were busy in the fall of 2001 visiting orphans in the towns of Dobromyl, Lavriv and Drohobych (Lviv region). They made a traditional pre-Christmas visit in December (see photo), but they also regularly visit children living in difficult conditions in institutions in western Ukraine throughout the year. With money that they raised by holding sales of Easter eggs and sweets and a charity lottery, the students organized a St. Nicholas play last December.

On December 13, 2001 students of the LTA set out for the orphanage in Dobromyl, over 90 miles from Lviv and near the Polish border. Driver Frank Lyon, a volunteer from England who helps out at the Academy, was at the wheel. The car was donated for the Academy's use by Major Dan Parker, US Army retired. Major Dan and his family live in Germany. They have twice participated in the Academy's English Summer School.

Though December was unseasonably warm in most of North America in 2001, this was not the case in Ukraine. Snow and ice on the ground were the norm. The roads connecting Ukraine's towns are not up to western European or American standards, so the students helped Frank put chains on the tires.

With a little help from Divine Providence the group arrived at their destination in one piece. Hryhoriy Prystai, a second-year student with a talent at photography, took pictures of the trip. He also shared his observations: "As we drove into the schoolyard, the children's greetings broke the silence. Countless arms embraced each one of us. With interest and with trust they wanted something from us, and at the same time they wanted to give us something."

The Academy students gave presents to 120 poor orphans (or perhaps we should say they passed on gifts from St. Nick). They gave of their time and they put on a St. Nicholas pageant with a piece of their hearts.

The children, almost blind Olia (see photo) and the others, had no material gifts to give in return. So they shared their naivete, simplicity and exuberance with the older students.



Fifth-year LTA student Mykhailo Salo, a k a Saint Nicholas, leads his little flock of orphans in prayer at the start of the festivities. Various angels and at least one devil helped him put on a play for the children and pass out gifts.



Olia is nearly blind, but her water color masterpieces, including a large Way of the Cross, fill the corridors and rooms of the orphanage. "I draw what I know, what they told us about Jesus and His apostles, and His Love." She added proudly, "I can make the sign of the cross."

**Make a Difference!
Teach English
in Ukraine this summer!
More Info at
www.ucf.org**

Thank you very much!

Thank you and the students of the Academy for giving me such a great experience. I learned more from them than I could ever teach them. They taught me about Ukraine, what it means to be a Catholic, and how amazing life can be. The summer school experience truly changed me. My friends said I even looked different when I got back!

*Thank you again and again!
God be with you,*

Emma Jay Fox, 2001 Volunteer

Notes from the Underground

A New Bearded Nicholas

Ukrainian Catholics have enthusiastically celebrated the feast of St. Nicholas of Myra ("Santa Claus") since Christianity first came to them over a thousand years ago. But they now also have a native-born Nicholas for their liturgical calendar, Blessed Nicholas Charnetskyi, bishop and martyr.

Blessed Nicholas Charnetskyi was born on December 14, 1884 in the village of Semakivtsi. His parents, Alexander and Paraskevia, were poor peasants, but devout Catholics. Nicholas was the oldest of nine children. At age 19 he entered the seminary in Ivano-Frankivsk. In 1909 he defended his doctorate in Dogmatic Theology in Rome and was ordained to the priesthood.

After returning to his homeland the young Fr. Charnetsky was appointed spiritual director and teacher at the very seminary where he had studied. When the Russian army invaded western Ukraine at the start of World War I, Fr. Nicholas remained at his post. He visited vacant parishes, administered the sacraments and tended to the sick and wounded.

After the war he entered the novitiate of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists) in Lviv and was professed on October 16, 1920.

In 1926 he began work in northern Ukraine's Volyn region, where the tsarist regime had destroyed the structures of the Catholic Church in the 19th century. A model religious and missionary, he zealously worked for the union of the Holy Church. He was ordained to the episcopacy in Rome on February 2, 1931.

After the outbreak of World War II, Volyn and the other regions assigned to the care of Bishop Charnetsky were occupied by the communist Red Army. The bishop was expelled from the area by the KGB and forced to leave his



Faithful put flowers at the grave of Blessed Bishop Nicholas in Lviv's Lychakivskiy Cemetery.

"I saw him. He was a very humble person. The first time I came for instruction from the bishop, he was sweeping the house. I wanted to help him, to take the broom, but he didn't let me. He himself swept. 'Have a seat,' he said. I was embarrassed that the bishop was sweeping, but I was sitting, because he wouldn't let me. He told how many priests who had converted to Orthodoxy under Communist pressure came to him to confess ... nearly 300 priests, they repented and came to him."

– From an interview with Fr. Vasyl Voronovskiy

flock. He returned to Lviv and lived with the Redemptorists there. When the Germans invaded Ukraine and drove out the Russians, he had hoped to return to Volyn, but the German Gestapo prevented him. So he remained in Lviv where he helped his confreres in their apostolic work.

From 1941, he also taught philosophy and theology at the Lviv Theological Academy when it was reopened by Bishop Josyf Slipyj after the departure of the Red Army.

With the German retreat from Ukraine, the Red Army returned to western Ukraine, only to intensify its persecution of the Catholic Church. The Ukrainian Catholic Bishops were all arrested on April 11th, 1945. At 8 p.m. on the evening of that day the Soviet terror came to the Redemptorist house. The Belgian Vice-Provincial, Father Joseph De Vocht, answering a loud knock at the door, was asked to give the names of all who lived in the house. When he mentioned the name of Charnetskyi, the KGB officer demanded that he be taken to him. When the bishop answered the knock on his room door, the agents crowded in. He was roughly searched for weapons and had to stand by as his room was ransacked. Then followed a long interrogation. At the end of it all, he had to leave with the twenty KGB men who had arrested him. As he left the house, he asked for and received the blessing and absolution of the Vice-Provincial.

At first sentenced to six years of hard labor in Siberia, he eventually spent 11 years in prison. According to official data he underwent 600 hours of interrogation and torture and spent time in 30 different prisons and camps.

Regardless of his physical and spiritual suffering, Bishop Nicholas always had a word of comfort for his fellow prisoners. He found the strength to pray for his persecutors and to comfort his fellow prisoners, for whom he was a spiritual leader. He knew everyone by name.

In 1956 the camp commandant thought that the bishop was terminally ill, so they allowed him to return to Lviv, so that no one could blame the Soviet government for his death.

Bishop Nicholas secretly continued to fulfill his episcopal obligations in the catacomb church in Lviv. As a consequence of long physical abuse, he died a martyr for the faith on April 2, 1959.

From the moment of his death, the faithful have visited Charnetskyi's grave, confident of his holy intercession.