

**GREETINGS
FROM THE BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN-GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
TO THE FAITHFUL
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2012 HOLY SYNOD
BEING HELD IN CANADA**

*“Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock
of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers,
in which you tend the Church of God that He acquired with his own blood”.*
(Acts 20:28)

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

These words of the holy apostle Paul, directed to the elders of the Christian community in Miletus, contain a message not only for the people in the times of St. Paul, but for us living today in the 21st century. As we, the Bishops of the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church throughout the world, prepare to hold our annual Holy Synod, St. Paul reminds us that through this gathering, we who have been called to oversee the Church are to tend this Church of God that the Lord has acquired through the shedding of his own blood, and for which during the thousand-plus year history many of its sons and daughters have given their lives.

This year the UGCC Synod of Bishops will hold its annual gathering in Winnipeg (Canada), to honour the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first bishop for our faithful in Canada, Blessed Martyr Nykyta (Budka). A Synod – this is a special work of God, carried out by men: a sign of the presence and special manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ’s Church.

In preparing for this event on Canadian soil, we want from all our hearts to greet all Ukrainians and their descendants, all the sons and daughters of the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church, who live in Canada, to assure each of you of our prayers, our admiration and love! Taking part in the Synod will be bishops from Canada, Ukraine, Western Europe, Latin America, the United States and Australia. We wish to address you with the Word of God in hope. We wish to strengthen you in faith, being filled with great joy in our anticipated meeting with you.

We are convinced, that the Synod event will fill all our Canadian community with the special blessing of the Holy Spirit, blowing the fresh wind of this Spirit into the sails of the Ukrainian Church in this country, giving you the strength and courage to continue living the Christian life and faith of your ancestors.

When Blessed Nykyta arrived in Canada in 1912, he found our faithful striving to establish their lives in a new land with many challenges and hurdles. The people knew well the customs and lifestyle in their Ukrainian homeland. They knew how to till the soil. They knew how to raise their children. They knew how to live their Ukrainian Catholic faith. But now it was as if they had come to a new world. There were different ways of working the land. There were different kinds of government. There were new languages and customs. There were many churches and religions that confused them. How could Bishop Nykyta tend the Church of God in such a challenging land? How could he help our faithful keep their Christian faith and Ukrainian heritage in a world that was often very alien and inhospitable?

Trusting totally in God, filled with great courage and evangelical dedication, working together with the clergy, the monastics and active laity, the bishop strove to strengthen and build the Ukrainian Church and

community life across the vast terrain of Canada. Because of his efforts and the dedicated work of his successors over the last one hundred years our Church in Canada has accomplished much. It developed into the first Metropolitan See outside of Ukraine. It has given many bishops, priests, monastics and sisters for our UGCC not just in Canada, but also throughout the world. Many of the laity have achieved great success in the Canadian society as teachers and lawyers, doctors and engineers, politicians and military officials. Our people have built many beautiful church buildings, schools, cultural centers, printing presses and seniors homes. Our laity belong to various organizations by which they live out their faith and help spread the Word of God.

You, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, together with your priests and bishops, are the inheritors and witnesses of this glorious church and national legacy, which our Ukrainian people brought with them and preserved in this land. On this occasion we desire to express to you our sincere recognition and gratitude for your attachment to the faith of your ancestors and for the preservation of our national and cultural traditions.

Your dedication and faithfulness to the divine matters of our Church in Ukraine were especially felt during the 80's and 90's of the last century, when after the long decades of persecution the Lord granted freedom to her and to our people. Then you willingly hastened to help with your prayers, generous donations and by your direct participation, contributing to the rebirth and rebuilding of the Ukrainian nation and our native Church. We remember this and we thank you for this!

Today, as we prepare to celebrate the 1025 anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' Ukraine and to consecrate the Patriarchal (Cathedral) Sobor of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv, which, we hope, will occur in 2013, together with you we offer at the altar of the Almighty our prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts of holy faith and freedom for our people, beseeching the Lord for the blessing of continued work, so that God's truth and national unity would be made firm on our motherland's soil.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ! Spiritually united with all of you, on September the 9th we will begin this year's Holy Synod of the UGCC. Together with the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of your first bishop, we wish to know better the life of our Ukrainian community in this country, with all the successes and challenges with which you live. Thus with holy impatience we await this time of encounter, prayer and sharing with you. We pray, that this Synod will be an occasion for the breath of the Holy Spirit to fill our Church, leading us into the future that lies ahead.

During this important moment in our pilgrim journey towards the Kingdom of God, we appeal to you with the request for prayer and support. Pray that through the 2012 UGCC Synod all members of our Church will grow in faith and wisdom, always ready to spread the Gospel message of the Lord.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

In the name of the UGCC Synod of Bishops

+ Sviatoslav

Given at the Patriarchal (Cathedral) Sobor of the Resurrection of Christ, on the 25th of August, in the year of the Lord 2012, on the day of the holy martyrs Photius and Anicetus.