

# CHRISTIANITY in UKRAINE

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## Christianization of Ukraine

St. Basil's Parish  
7007 - 109 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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## Acknowledgements

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The content of this booklet is based predominantly on the monumental historical studies of the late Very Reverend Father Athanasius Welykyj, O.S.B.M., at one time Protoarchimandrita (Superior General) of the Order of Saint Basil the Great.

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May the Good Lord bless each and every one of you, kind people, and may our joint effort help our readers to know better the Ukrainians and Ukraine - the land of our ancestors.

Edmonton, Alberta.  
December 1987.

M.M.Gnesko, O.S.B.M.

## **Introduction -**

To Ukrainians, 1988 will be a year of utmost importance. In fact, 1988 is the Millennium.

No one should be too surprised when we say that "Millennium" is an accepted - almost sacred - word in conversation and in writing. It focusses on the importance of the forthcoming celebrations and, at the same time, it gives credence to an historic realization which identifies and mirrors our coming of age.

In short, we are preparing to celebrate the thousandth anniversary which marks the official Christianization of the Ukrainian nation.

Much material is being prepared and it is being distributed as useful information. The author expects that this booklet, too, in its pocket-size format, will be a readily-accessible and a useful tool to allay, perhaps, some doubts many Canadians and others harbor - doubts that continue to tarnish our ancestral, political and religious background.

As we revitalize our awareness, we have to re-examine the past and ourselves to understand better and to appreciate more our roots.

Ukraine is the homeland of our ancestors. Divided over the centuries several times, it was occupied, exploited and abused by militarily-stronger forces. For many centuries, freedom, as such, was unknown.

At about the turn of the twentieth century, our forefathers emigrated to new lands - Canada, the United States of America, Brazil, Argentina, and other countries. They emigrated to acquire economic, political and

religious freedom.

Many obstacles lay in their pathways. They brought with them no earthly riches since they had none. Instead, they brought their poverty, their outlandish clothing, their so-called foreign language and, above all, their strong faith. Often, they were laughed at; many times they were discriminated against. In brief, they were settlers who were poor materially, but were rich spiritually.

No matter how reprehensible certain traits, or labels may appear, always there is room for a more supportive and a more deserving score. Counting back a few generations, these same pioneers could have been our parents; they could have been our grandparents; they could have been our great-grandparents. We have to accept and to compliment them for loving their eloquent Ukrainian language and their religious and cultural traditions, and we must commend them for their deep-rooted love for honest and courageous labor. We benefit because they passed their courage, faith and perseverance to us, their descendants. So, resting on the benefits of their labor, we are that much more rewarded.

Some may say that all we have said so far is a matter for individual interpretation. Suffice to say, there are, and there will be, those whose knowledge of Ukraine could be somewhat minimal. Moreover, for them, the historical celebrations of 1988 would appear, by comparison, to be a mere petty matter and of minor importance. For so many more, the image suffers from much inaccurate information which is circulated by hostile and expressly-designated rival sources.

From such reporting, one could assume wrongly that Ukraine never existed, and what we refer to as "Ukraine" was and is part and parcel of Russia. Such a dreadful twisting of facts pleases enormously the regime which

always persecuted, and still continues to persecute, the Ukrainian Church and our very national awareness. Therein, lies a deliberate attempt to undermine the true meaning and significance of the Millennium.

The whole point of the celebration lies in the assumption that all Ukrainians, no matter where they live, have one and the same opportunity to celebrate this exclusively-authentic Ukrainian Millennium. That is not true! There will be many unfulfilled expectations for our brethren living in the Fatherland. Their identity denied, whatever semblance of the celebration takes place there, will be more seeming than real. Therefore, it is up to us Free World Christians **to remember them and to pray for them and with them** in the unity of Christ.

The author of this booklet, of course, is very hopeful. He anticipates that there will be an awakening and an appreciation and, thereby, a more acceptable understanding of Ukrainians. He hopes, too, that the perusal of the pages of this booklet will help us, firstly, to understand our history and, secondly, that it will make us justly proud of our ancestors, our forefathers and, of course, of us, their descendants.



## The Apostles of Christianity in Ukraine.



Saint Olha.



Saint Volodymyr the Great.



Yaroslav the Wise

## Pre-Volodymyr Era.

### **Ukraine – Neither Moscovy nor Russia.**

Ukraine, the land of our ancestors, is a country with its own particular culture, traditions and language. Its territory, covering 740,000 square kilometers, is situated on the North shore of the Black Sea. Today, Ukraine's population is over 50 million inhabitants - 76% of them Ukrainians. Except for the Black Sea, Ukraine has no natural boundaries and for this reason its territory always has been difficult to defend.

The Ukrainians are not, and never were, Russians. There is a marked difference between the two peoples as to their origin, culture and language. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Ukraine, known as Rus', was an independent and powerful state. Muscovy - Russia was unknown and did not exist for another couple of centuries. It never was an integral part of Kievan-Rus'. In the course of later history, Russia might have occupied and enslaved Ukraine. It might have appropriated its early history but, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, neither Moscovy, nor Russia, nor the Russian people existed.

On the territory of today's Russia there were only some northern Slav and scattered Fino-Ugric tribes, who in the 12<sup>th</sup> century intermingled more freely with the invaders from Asia and especially with the Mongols. The extensive period of time spent under Mongol occupation greatly influenced the formation of the character, culture, traditions and language of the Russian people, totally different from those of the Ukrainians.

The Moscovite Principality entered the scene of East European history only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This young state was known as Moscovy, and its inhabitants were



called Moscovites.

In time, Moscovy, having developed into a powerful political and military state, raised pretensions to hegemony in Eastern Europe, replacing the fallen Byzantine Empire. Moscovy assumed for itself the history of the Rus'-Ukrainian Kievan state and, likewise, the name "Rus'". But it was not only this appropriation of name that enabled Moscovy to establish its powerful position; various political circumstances favored its development, to the detriment of Ukraine. The misrepresented concept of an alleged unity of "all the Russians" - the Great-Russians, the Little-Russians (name given the Ukrainians by Moscow), and the Byelorussians, also greatly contributed to this development. In reality, these were, and still are, three different nationalities - Ukrainians, Moscovites and Byelorussians.

In later years, the true descendants of the medieval state of Rus' adopted the modern name "Ukrainians" to replace the old name "Rus'", which had been used until that time.

The name "Ukraine" is not new. It had already appeared on many occasions in the ancient Chronicles. Its use remains to this very day.

### **Beginnings of Christianity in our Lands.**

The arrival of Christianity to the lands that came to be known as Ukraine is connected with the apostolic activity of Saint Andrew, the Apostle. A legend, recorded in the Lavrentyev Chronicle, relates that Saint Andrew was preaching the Christian faith in these lands. Eusebius Pamphilius writes that, after the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles went into various directions to preach the Gospel of Salvation to all nations; Saint Andrew was destined to preach in Scythia, on the North Shore of the

Black Sea. His name and his apostolic work are mentioned by early historians of the Church. Besides these recorded facts, much information about Saint Andrew has survived by word of mouth. The writers of the Chronicles, no doubt, drew abundantly upon these oral traditions.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century of our era, the Roman Emperor Trajan conquered lands that later became part of Rus'. These were the years of persecutions of Christians; the followers of Christ were condemned, among other penalties, to deportation and exile to these faraway lands. The exiled Christians brought with them their Christian faith, and propagated it among the natives.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries the territories between the Don River and the Carpathian Mountains were settled by Goths, people of Germanic origin. For some unknown reason, they were compelled to migrate from the North-Western lands to the East-Southern steppes. Although they conquered the Slavs, a friendly relation prevailed between the two people. By this time, the Goths were Christians.

Theophilos Bishop of Kerch was among the Fathers of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Kerch was a peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. At that time, Christianity was already known in the land of our ancestors.

Later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Huns invaded the land and drove the Goths westward. In spite of various invasions and nomadic migrations, the Christian faith was not lost. It survived in Crimea in the Bosphoric country where the Bishop's See was located at Tmoutorakan. The enormous destruction inflicted by the Asiatic nomadic hordes may have weakened the external efficacy of Christianity to a great extent, but the faith, a spiritual gift of God, remained in the hearts of the people.

Ukraine constituted herself into an independent nation in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. During the flourishing development of the Kievan state, definite and authentic Christian tokens were found. Thereafter, when the Kievan Princes, Askold and Dyr, raided Byzantium, a great number of their retinue and troops already were Christians.

After the return from their last unsuccessful raid, the two princes themselves became Christians. The enmity between Kiev and Byzantium leads us to believe that, very likely, the princes were baptized not by Byzantine priests but by priests from Tmoutorakan.

After his death, a church was erected on Askold's grave.

### **Saints Cyril and Methodius.**

Speaking of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine, we must mention the apostolic work of two great men, Saints Cyril and Methodius who, without doubt, played a paramount, though indirect, role in the official acceptance of Christianity in Ukraine.

The brothers Cyril and Methodius were born of Greek parents in the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in today's Salonica in Macedonia. At that time, many Slavs lived in Salonica and the two brothers were well versed not only in the Greek but, also, in Slavonic languages.

Both brothers were monks and in 860 they worked as missionaries among the Khazars, in lands neighbouring what was to become Ukraine. When in 863, the Moravian King Rostyslav asked Michael II of Constantinople for missionaries who could speak the Slavonic language, the Emperor sent Cyril and Methodius. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Moravia was a great and powerful country which

embraced various Slavs living in today's Czechoslovakia, Sub-Carpathia, Hungary and Croatia.

Before leaving for Moravia, and knowing the difficulties for the Slavs to understand the Greek language, Cyril and Methodius translated into Slav the Greek Liturgical Books and the Holy Scriptures, creating for this purpose a particular alphabet, known today as the Cyrillic alphabet. It is an adaptation of the Greek alphabet, complemented with necessary relative new letters. This Cyrillic alphabet became the basis for the contemporary Ukrainian alphabet.

Preaching the Holy Gospel and celebrating the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical offices in Slavonic, the two brothers had great success in their mission. This caused jealous German missionaries, who did not speak or understand the Slavonic language, to report Cyril and Methodius to the Holy See, accusing them of propagating heresy, because they did not celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Latin or in Greek. Forthright, Pope Hadrian summoned Cyril and Methodius to Rome to justify their actions. After studying the matter, the Pope congratulated the two brothers for their laborious efforts and he approved the Slavonic as a third official liturgical language of the Christian Church. It is used to this day by various Slav catholic Churches and "orthodox" Churches, evangelized by Greeks.

While in Rome, Cyril entered a monastery where he lived out his life until his death in 869. The following year, the Pope named and consecrated Methodius Archbishop. He returned to his faithful in Moravia, where he continued his missionary work among the Slavs until his death in 885.

Methodius was named and consecrated in Rome, bishop for the Church that he helped establish in Moravia. There is no evidence that this Moravian Church

automatically became part of the Byzantine Church. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, however, all the Christian Churches, although independent one from another, were in communion with the Holy See, to which they had recourse for decisions in matters of faith and morals.

### **Christianity in our Lands in the 8-th and 9th centuries**

Following the baptism of Askold and Dyr towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity was tolerated in the Principality as a matter of personal choice. True to fact, there were no religious persecutions in Ukraine, not till Moscovy-Russia appeared on the European scene.

The geographical location of Rus'-Ukraine favored the spread of Christianity in its territory. Rus'-Ukraine was situated at the crossroads of caravans between East and West and between North and South. For this reason, it is safe to assume that a great role in the dissemination of Christianity was also played by the travelling merchants, who brought with them not only their merchandise but, also, their Christian fervor and convictions.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Ukrainian state had already reached a high level in its development and organization. It had commercial, cultural and diplomatic relations with Byzantium, the See of the Eastern Roman Empire and, also, with other various European powers. Volodymyr the Great (+1015) and his son, Yaroslav the Wise (+1054), known as the "Father-in-law" of Europe because of marriage bonds of his children with members of the various European monarchies, led Rus'-Ukraine to its most glorious days. Their rule marks the golden age of Rus'-Ukraine.

Christianity existed in Rus'-Ukraine for sometime, but it did not become widespread and firmly rooted until the reign of Kniaz Ihor (913-945). In Ihor's time there were many Christians in Rus'. Christian and the pagan factions were treated equally and they enjoyed equal rights.

Kniaz Ihor raided Byzantium twice - first, in 941 and, then, in 944. The following year a peace treaty was signed between Ihor, Kniaz of Rus', and the Byzantine emperor. Ihor's representatives, most of them Christians, since the legation was sent to a Christian country, included in the text of the treaty the following:

"... let our Christians of Rus' take an oath according to their faith, and the pagans of Rus' take an oath according to their customs and laws... and let those of us that are baptized swear by the honour of the Church of (Saint) Elias."

The Ancient Chronicle relates Ihor's oath as follows:

"On the next day Ihor summoned his envoys and came to the hillock where Perun was standing. Putting down his arms, shield and gold, Ihor and his people who were pagans still, took an oath before Perun. The Christian Rus' people took an oath in the Church of Saint Elias."

Thus, during Ihor's reign, Christianity had reached a high point in social recognition, and made its way to the top of the state leadership. In that capacity, it could advise and influence the throne.

After Ihor's untimely and tragic death in 948, the Kievan state was ruled by his widow, Olha, as Regent for her eight year old son, Sviatoslav.

## **Regency of Princess Olha.**

As Regent, Olha was a mature and wise ruler. What prompted her to become a Christian - we are not certain. However, during an official diplomatic visit to Constantinople (about 955), she was baptized by Patriarch Theophilactos, who himself had been consecrated bishop by Pope Leo VII.

On her return from Constantinople, Olha did not impose her newly-acquired Faith upon her subjects. Instead, she gathered her energies and prayed devoutly for the acceptance, the growth, and the strengthening of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine.

Wishing to include Rus'-Ukraine in the European Family of Christian Countries, Princess Olha understood that she needed not only priests but, also, a bishop to create a genuinely Ukrainian Christian Church. Although baptized in Constantinople, Olha wanted no part of Byzantium in the founding and the organization of the Ukrainian Church. From a Byzantine Chronicle, which relates Olha's visit to Constantinople and her baptism there, we learn that she asked neither the Emperor nor the Patriarch to organize a Church in Rus'-Ukraine, be it as an independent Church, or as a Church under the jurisdiction of the Byzantine Patriarch.

Olha understood too well the far-reaching ambitions of Byzantium and, therefore, she did not wish to surrender Kiev to Byzantium's ruinous influence. When Olha visited Constantinople, she witnessed there the pompous splendour and lavish display of the Byzantine court. Her obvious conclusion was that she would withhold any alliance, even in Church matters, with Byzantium, as such alliances would be detrimental to Rus'-Ukraine.

There was another reason to avoid any alliance with Byzantium. It was preached and believed in Byzantium

that the Emperor was God-appointed to rule over all Christian nations in the East, even over those that never before had belonged to the Eastern Roman Empire.

Moreover, Olha also recognized the turn of events in Bulgaria - events that made King Petro answerable to Byzantium. In the end, the king and the patriarch of Bulgaria were mere bearers of empty titles.

Olha did not wish to see this happen in Rus'-Ukraine.

Searching for a solution to this problem, Olha turned her eyes to the West and to Otto I, a powerful and genuinely Christian German king, and future emperor of the newly-reconstructed Roman Empire of the West. Olha asked him to send a bishop and several priests to Rus'. Otto sent to the Kievan lands Bishop Adalbert, newly consecrated for this mission and, also, a few priests. By the time they arrived, Olha had ceded the throne to her son, Sviatoslav, who, being a pagan, had surrounded himself with younger followers who shared his views and convictions. Being pagan, this new generation at the Kievan Court did not look approvingly at the Germanic missionaries. Some of the priests were killed. What hindered these missionaries most was their ignorance of the Slav language - an obstacle too great for the German-speaking missionaries. After two years, Adalbert returned to the West with only a small number of his missionaries.

We may wonder what contemporary history might have been, had Olha reigned for several more years.

### **Sviatoslav the Conqueror - Yaropolk**

Olha's son, Sviatoslav the Conqueror, loved war. Because he had no aspiration for the Christian faith, he did not wish to antagonize his court and his retinue by



becoming a Christian. Thus, he remained a pagan, in spite of his mother's fondest hopes and warmest pleas. He knew that conversion to Christianity would require from him a change in a life style which he was not prepared to abandon.

Despite disagreements in religious and personal matters, Sviatoslav respected his mother and her faith. When Olha died, she was given a Christian burial without the then-customary pagan funeral banquet.

Sviatoslav died in 972. His eldest son, Yaropolk, succeeded him to the throne of the Principality of Kiev. Perhaps, Yaropolk was a Christian, considering that for many years he was brought up and educated by his grandmother, the great Olha.

A Chronicler records that in 979 Pope Benedict VII sent a delegation to Yaropolk in the matter of the Christianization of Rus'-Ukraine. This would indicate that, Christian or not, Yaropolk, in the eyes of Rome, was a perceptive and judicious ruler who was sympathetic to Christianity. Otherwise, the Pope would not have sent a delegation to him. This Papal delegation, however, could not achieve its purpose. Sviatoslav's sons were absorbed in internal strife.

Apparently, Yaropolk wanted to unify Rus' by annexing to Kiev the Principalities of his brothers - Oleh of Iskorosten and Volodymyr of Novhorod. In a war against Oleh, Yaropolk defeated him and Oleh died in battle. It was a different matter with Volodymyr. The pagan citizens of Kiev were not content with Yaropolk's power in Kiev because the Christians enjoyed immense and unwarranted privileges.

Thereupon, the pagans of Kiev decided to remove Yaropolk from the Kievan throne and to replace him with Volodymyr, Kniaz of Novhorod. In the war that followed, Volodymyr requested and received, military help from

the Scandinavians, known as "Varangians". In 980 Yaropolk died in battle; Volodymyr acceded to the throne of the Principality of Kiev.

Within a few years, Volodymyr, as head of state, strengthened his official status when he united the various Slav tribes into one state with Kiev as its capital. For centuries thereafter, the state that was consolidated by Volodymyr the Great formed a strong support that sustained the protection of Europe against further invasions by Asiatic hordes..

Here is a question to satisfy mere curiosity. How long would it have taken the countries of Western Europe to develop politically and culturally without the protective barrier provided by Volodymyr's Rus'-Ukraine.



## Volodymyr the Great.

### **Kniaz Volodymyr.**

The plan initiated by Olha in 955 to Christianize Rus'-Ukraine, was fulfilled some 30 years later by her grandson, Volodymyr the Great.

When his grandmother, Olha, died, Volodymyr was very young. Therefore, he lacked a Christian upbringing. Which explains why, at the beginning of his reign, Volodymyr was a pagan.

There was no single motive that persuaded Volodymyr to be baptized and to accept Christianity for his people. There were various motives, both political and religious, as well as psychological and personal. The historian, Holubinsky, explains that Volodymyr's brother-in-law, the Scandinavian Prince Olaf, influenced him to convert to Christianity. Also, the late Metropolitan Andrey Sheptycky held this opinion. From the statements of his contemporaries, Volodymyr's decision was based on his intense belief in the truthfulness, wholesomeness, and vitality of the Christian religion.

Volodymyr was baptized in 987, most probably in Kiev, or in Yasyliv, a suburb of Kiev. The place became known as Yasyliv because, at his, baptism Volodymyr chose the name "Yasyl" (Basil). The substantially weighty political tensions between Rus' and Byzantium, on one hand, and the friendly relations between Rus' and Bulgaria, on the other, motivate our belief that Volodymyr and some members of his court were baptized by Slav-speaking priests from Bulgaria. The Byzantine Chronicle, however does not mention Volodymyr's

baptism.

Also, let us bear in mind that Volodymyr was influenced by internal and external political motives. He saw how Christianity had closely united the neighboring peoples. He understood, too, that without spiritual unity it would be impossible to head a state like Rus'-Ukraine.

Volodymyr realized that the erroneous principles of paganism were not relevant for the spirit of the time. Personally, he was convinced that Christianity was more relevant and that paganism was ineffectual and, therefore, an obstacle in cultural development. The Greeks, a definitely influential power in the East, labelled the pagans "barbarians" because their beliefs did not uphold the dignity of man nor that of the society. To sum up, paganism was a mark of illiteracy.

Volodymyr understood that paganism offered very little assurance for the individual or for society. Moreover, to be accepted completely by the rest of the civilized world, and not to be regarded as a backward barbarian land, Rus'-Ukraine would have to become a Christian state. The authenticity of Christianity was deeply rooted in Volodymyr's soul. Realizing it as his own personal blessing, he foresaw, as well, an important future for his kingdom in the missionary field.

It follows, then, that the people and the state of Rus'-Ukraine were not Christianized because of external pressures from foreign missionaries. Rather, it was an independent preference by Volodymyr, his court and the people of Rus'.

### **Baptism of Ukraine.**

Becoming a Christian, Volodymyr devoted serious effort and much energy to Christianize his kingdom, too. Having defeated the Byzantines in Chersonese,

Volodymyr settled there for several months preparing plans that were necessary to introduce Christianity to Rus'-Ukraine. Here he searched Slav-speaking priests who would be flexible and adaptable in missionary work amongst the peoples of Rus'-Ukraine.

Among the first to be baptized were Volodymyr's sons, his court and the boyars. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August in the year 988, all inhabitants of Kiev were baptized. We read in the Chronicle that the Kievans - young and old, rich and poor, - came free-willingly and cheerfully to the River Dnipro to be baptized. Amongst themselves they remarked: "If the new faith were not good, it would not have been accepted by the Kniaz and the boyars".

The adults entered the waters up to their necks; the younger ones were closer to the shore. The mothers held their little children in their arms.

Kniaz Volodymyr and his family, the boyars and the priests approached the banks of the river where the ceremony of baptism was to be conducted. The priests recited the prescribed prayers and baptized the people. Volodymyr and his court stood on elevated ground on the river bank. Lifting his eyes to heaven, he prayed fervently: "Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, bless these Your new children. Grant them the grace to know you, the true God, as other Christian nations do. Strengthen them in Your holy faith!" And the Chronicle adds, - "the Kniaz was gratified that he and his people came to the knowledge of God."

Following the baptism of the Kievan population, missionaries spread to other cities and villages preaching the Good News of the Gospel and preparing their inhabitants for the eventual baptismal. Also, Volodymyr brought in Slav-speaking missionaries from the land which today is known as Subcarpathian Ukraine.

Christianity in the Kievan state was a symbol of the

Way, Truth and Life. Various cities and towns had schools, and the boyars' children were compelled to attend. In time, Christianity extended into every town and village of the kingdom.

Through Christianization, Volodymyr united all his tribes into one powerful nation. The people of Rus' accepted Christianity with great enthusiasm, notwithstanding some setbacks, and each individual tribe entered the unity of faith with the conviction that by God's grace they will attain a prosperous and glorious future. Because of Christianity the people were regenerated spiritually, the nation progressed morally and culturally, and the Kievan state became an equal in the family of the existing Christian Powers.

With the acceptance of Christianity, there begins a renewed and a more progressive life for the Ukrainian nation.

### **One Christian Faith.**

During the reign of Volodymyr there was but one Christian faith and one Universal Church. At that time there was no division between East and West, between Rome and Constantinople (Byzantium). There were no distinctly separate faiths - "Orthodox" and "Catholic" in the modern meaning of the words. The people and the Churches were simply Christian. Eastern and Western Christians were of one faith although, because of the particularities in the development of their individual cultures, the communities of Christians differed among themselves in Church rituals and customs. All the Christians recognized the Supremacy of the Successors of Saint Peter, the bishop of Rome. The Christians called themselves "orthodox" to indicate that they were of the

**true faith**, which was "catholic", from the Greek word "katholikos", meaning "universal".

During the time of Volodymyr's rule, harmony prevailed between Byzantium and Rome. The Patriarch of Constantinople, recognizing the Supremacy of the Pope of Rome, commemorated Him in the Liturgical Celebrations.

About half a century after the death of Volodymyr, and over 60 years after the official Christianization of Rus'-Ukraine, serious disagreements divided Byzantium and Rome. In 1054, relations were severed irreparably between the See of Rome and Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople.

In view of the conflict that had developed in 1051 between Kiev and Byzantium, it is obvious that the Byzantine Patriarch Michael Cerularius did not have any effective authority or any influence on Kiev or the Kievan Church. Nor was the Kievan Church involved in any manner in the short-lived division of Rome and Constantinople in 863 with Patriarch Photius. In 863 Rus' was not yet Christian.

The misunderstanding between Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and the Pope of Rome was duly rectified. Immediately after the death of Patriarch Ignatius, who had replaced Photius on the See of Constantinople, Photius, once again, was appointed and he assumed the Patriarchate as its titular. To have this new appointment confirmed by the Bishop of Rome, Pope John VIII, formal requests were forwarded to the Pope by Photius, the Emperor of Byzantium and by Greek bishops. Thereupon, the Pope, on the advice of a special Synod of seventeen bishops, "by way of grace and mercy", acknowledged Photius - Patriarch of Constantinople.

The successors of Photius not only recognized the Pope but, in fact, they asked for the Pope's confirmation

of their appointment to the Patriarchal See. Moreover, even in Cerularius's time, the Pope's name was mentioned in the diptychs of the Byzantine Church.

As it is documented from the records of the various good-will missions to and from Kiev, Volodymyr the Great was in mutual communication with the Apostolic See in Rome. More than that, he maintained pertinent contact with the Western Christian powers rather than with Byzantium. Byzantium, from earliest times, regarded Kiev and the Kievan Church with suspicion.

From this, we are able to conclude that Ukrainian Christianity had its beginnings while the Church founded by Christ was united under the spiritual guidance of its visible Head, Saint Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome.

### **Effects of Christianity in Ukraine.**

For Ukrainians, the development of Christianity was a decisive historical event of foremost importance. Undeniably, Christianity provided Ukraine with a spiritual rebirth, as well as with a moral and a cultural uplifting. Ukraine, thereafter, was an "equal" with other Christian countries.

By adopting Christianity, the inhabitants of Rus'-Ukraine assumed a new and a better outlook on life. Enslavement, pride and gloom gradually were removed. World outlook was much enhanced. In conforming to the Holy Scriptures, the people abandoned low passions in favor of an elevated recognition of brotherly love and compassion for the poor and the wretched.

Above all, Christian faith and Christian teachings ennobled the institution of marriage and family life and enhanced the inter-relationship of parents and children, as well as between closer and more-distant relatives. In



short, the love of one's fellow man overshadowed the pagan customs that hitherto prevailed in Rus'-Ukraine.

It is abundantly clear that in Rus-Ukraine Christianity developed and flourished, that is, it became guardian and protector of social justice. Above all, it combatted slavery and bondage - both contrary to Christian principles.

It is equally true that Christianity enlightened its people - to love their fatherland and, if need arises, to defend it. By the will of God all nations have the right to live independent lives and the right to expand freely their innate abilities, thereby, enhancing their culture.

Let us bear in mind, too, that the Holy Scriptures taught the people that they and their state would flourish if harmony and consent co-exist.

Taking advantage of a common religious culture and an undivided Church Organization, Volodymyr the Great created an effective base that unified all the tribes in his territory into a singular Ukrainian nation. Neither the invasions of the Tatars, nor the various foreign occupations were ever strong enough to eradicate from the hearts of the people the conviction of their Ukrainian identity. Our own Christian culture and glorious living tradition provided a defensive bulwark for our Ukrainian people and saved it from complete annihilation.

### **Ukrainian Christianity.**

Historically, the people of Ukraine endured some of the stormiest and most-troubled times. Yet, despite these periods of unrest, the Ukrainian nation prevailed in a prolonged struggle for its rightful existence. It survived because of an inner strength - Christianity.

The Christianization is of major importance in the

history of Ukraine. It defies a mere superficial view of a people's life struggles by emphasizing its essential relevance to the Ukrainian nation. Otherwise, there would be an unfair and distorted view that would regard Christianity too lightly, that is, making it neither basic nor fundamental to Ukraine. In other words, that would be a one-sided view.

Rather narrowly, a socialist might attempt to defend a social view with a mere single interpretation most significant to him. A nationalist would do similarly with reference, for example, to contemporary nationalism. In both cases, the interpretation would be exclusive and restricted. It is not so with Christianity.

When we look at the Church as a whole, that is, in "totality," we gain insight into the life of the Ukrainian nation. Christianity and the history of Ukraine date back more than a thousand years. We cannot review our history by considering problems that surfaced in our nation and in other nations, perhaps, in the last several decades. Christianity is the spiritual conscience of Ukraine. It molded the peoples' lives and, because of Christianity, the Ukrainians continue to survive.

The independent states of Volodymyr the Great and of Yaroslav the Wise, the Kingdom of Danylo, the Latvian-Polish Era - all are historical by-gones.

The Cossack state loomed and then disappeared, and so did Tzarist Russia and Constitutional Austria. Poland, also, was partitioned. Then, arose the mighty Soviet Union but it, too, will not last forever.

Christianity, however, is constant and everlasting and it has triumphed amongst Ukrainian people in the Fatherland and amongst those who emigrated. It bears the same national-cultural makeup that was handed over to us by our ancestors of the distant past.

It is not surprising, then, that every enemy of the

Ukrainian nation wishes to erase completely our name from the list of surviving nations and, therefore, attacks it in all the manifestations of its national identity. The significantly strongest blows always were directed on the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Church which was united with the Successor of Saint Peter - the Bishop of Rome. The Ukrainian Church, God's masterful manifestation of love, graces each person with a supernatural reality and guards the rights of the individual to live and to prosper.

That explains why today's pervasive Bolshevism unrelentingly persists in its endeavours to annihilate the Ukrainian Catholic Church from the face of the earth. This vile and inhumane attempt is intended to wrench from the Ukrainian soul this most precious spirituality grafted by Volodymyr. To sever our ties with our 1000-year tradition is to sever our virtuous past. To repeat, Bolshevism, in its undiminished intent, is determined to deny our rightful claim to the 1000-year tradition. It claims that the tradition is Russian.

When we come to retrace the history of our Ukrainian Christianity, we realize fully that only our Christian culture - whether in the past or at present - has the means to endow the Ukrainian nation with an everlasting effectiveness to surmount all odds. Moreover, an enlightened Christian culture can fulfill effectively the historical mission of the Ukrainian nation, as intended by the Creator.

Sooner or later, we should be enjoying a better and glorious future!

### **Ukrainians not Russians.**

Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Halych, Patriarchal Exarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, in his "Season's

Greetings" to the readers of the English language "News from Ukraine" states:" The Russian Orthodox Church is entering the eve of its great anniversary; the year 1988 marks the Millennium of the Baptism of Rus' by prince St.Vladimir. At that time the Russian Church came into being and Christianity began to spread everywhere."

The Moscow Patriarchate, with the consent and financial assistance of the Soviet government, resolved that the main celebrations relating to the 1000-year anniversary of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine will be in Saint Daniel's Monastery in Moscow. The Soviet government donated this monastery, currently being restored at great cost, to the Russian Orthodox Church. In this new centre of Russian Orthodoxy, Divine Liturgy is scheduled to be celebrated on June 12, 1988.

Therefore, the Millennium celebration is not scheduled for the Kievan Pecherska Lavra (Monastery of the Caves), nor for the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kiev, nor will it be in the Kievan hills, even though these three witnessed the descent of God's grace on the historic Kievan Rus'.

It is ironical that Moscow, whose rulers were the first to destroy Kiev in 1169, has been designated as the historical centre, even though we well know that in 988 neither Muscovy nor Moscow were in existence - not even in anyone's dreams.

The Rus' baptized by Saint Volodymyr in 988, did not include within its borders neither Moscow nor Muscovy, nor today's Russia. Once again, they did not exist. In 988, the territory of Muscovy, and of Moscow itself, generally was an uninhabited wilderness, except for some Fino-Ugric families or small tribes, who had no knowledge of Christianity, of Byzantium, of Europe, or of any of the civilized world. The Russians stubbornly reject their own origins because, to acknowledge them would be to

recognize that they are truly distinct from Rus'-Ukraine, and that they do not form one and the same people together with the Ukrainians and the people of Byelo-Rus'. To justify his expansionist policies, Tzar Peter I changed Moscovy's name to Russia, as though "Moscovy" was the legitimate continuation of Rus'-Ukraine.

Volodymyr's Rus' was inhabited by Slav tribes, from whom originated the Ukrainian people. In those days, Slovene and Fino-Ugric tribes established themselves north of Rus', and became the ancestors of the Moscovite-Russian people. Now and then, Rus'-Ukraine may have colonized the lands beyond its northern boundaries, but it never extended its name to these lands and it never made them an integral part of its territory. On the contrary, these northern territories eventually became part of Muscovy. Therefore, in 988 Volodymyr baptized in the Dnipro River the inhabitants of Rus'-Ukraine and not those beyond its boundaries, where Christianity did not become known till the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In spite of this historical reality, Moscow has been spreading, and still spreads, the false theory that the Russians, the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians are all one and the same Russian people. This falsely claims for Moscow the historical tradition of Rus'-Ukraine, and inaccurately justifies its pan-Russian ambitions.

### **Hierarchy of the Kievan Church.**

The history of the Ukrainian Christianity begins with the Baptism of Rus' in 988. The clergy and a hierarchy came to Rus'-Ukraine, thereby, initiating the organization and the history of the Ukrainian Church. The newest findings indicate that, most likely, Christianity did not

come to Rus'-Ukraine directly from Byzantium but indirectly and in a Slav form, through Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Church at that time was not part of the Byzantine Patriarchate.

The history of the Christianization of Bulgaria in the second half of the 9-th century is based mostly on its earnest attempts towards an independent and autonomous Church Hierarchy, independent from Byzantium. Bulgaria, willingly or out of necessity, ultimately, bowed to favor Byzantium and its Church organization. However, the ideal of independence remained for all time.

King Simeon of Bulgaria proclaimed his country independent from Byzantium and, having appointed a Bulgarian as Patriarch, he had himself crowned "tzar" of Bulgaria. Apparently, Byzantium was opposed to such a turn of events and it even appealed to the Pope of Rome against Bulgaria's action. But Simeon already had come to an understanding with Rome, which recognized him as "tzar" and, consequently, recognized the Bulgarian Patriarchate, as well.

Simeon's achievements did not last. His successor Peter was drawn over to the Byzantine diplomacy. In return for his subjection to its policies, Byzantium recognized Peter as "tzar" and, also, recognized the title of Patriarchate for the Bulgarian Church.

During the rule of Kniaz Sviatoslav (+ 972) in Kiev, there erupted in Bulgaria an internal revolt against the Byzantine-inspired policies of tzar Peter. Sviatoslav marched against Bulgaria. Byzantium intervened militarily as if to defend Bulgaria. Instead, it annexed Bulgaria directly and did away with the Bulgarian Patriarchate. Also, tzar Peter's sons were imprisoned.

Only the western portion of Bulgaria was safeguarded from annexation. From its centre in Ochrida, Macedonia,

Western Bulgaria maintained its political and ecclesiastical self-determination.

The Bulgarian tzars, Roman and Samuel, slowly regained what had been lost and they achieved a successful renewal. Volodymyr had witnessed this renewal in Bulgaria, and he must have paid great attention to what was happening there when he began contemplating the organization of the Kievan Church. Kiev had nothing to fear from Bulgaria. To the contrary, both countries had a common language, both opposed Byzantium and both had friendly relations with the West.

Volodymyr, too, put together plans for the Kievan Church to be independent of Byzantium-Constantinople as was the Church of Bulgaria. The Kievan Church would adopt certain aspects from Byzantium, without abandoning the good relations with Rome. Volodymyr could take from Bulgaria the necessary people, not only for the conversion and baptism of his subjects but, also, people capable of assuming responsibilities to lead the new Church in its development and expansion.

Today the historians generally acknowledge the Bulgarian influence as a sort of foundation in the growth of the Ukrainian Church Hierarchy and in the prevailing organization of the Ukrainian Church. At that time, there was no hostility in Bulgaria against the West and against Rome, as there was in Byzantium.

### **Education and Culture.**

In the early years of Christianity in Ukraine, all priests and all bishops were foreigners. Some were Greek but, most of them, came from the Bulgarian Patriarchate of Ochrida. Ochrida was self-governing and it was not under Byzantium's jurisdiction.

One of the first tasks that Volodymyr undertook was to establish ecclesiastical schools for the sons of the boyars and of the more notable people, conjointly with the episcopal sees. Many highly-educated priests graduated from these schools. They carried out their priestly duties successfully among their own Ukrainian people.

In earlier times, there lived by the Church not only the priest but, also, many people - all co-workers in various services in the Church. Volodymyr the Great very generously endowed the Ukrainian Church and granted it many privileges and rights. A tenth of his income was given for its support.

Thus, the Ukrainian people, as soon as they accepted Christianity, became richer culturally, that is, through learning, education and the arts. Moreover, they benefitted from the Bulgarian literature. Generally speaking, Bulgarian literature intensified the development and growth of the old-Ukrainian literature. Our early Ukrainian language was greatly enriched by the living language of the Bulgarians after Ukrainization.

Initially, very few knew the Greek language. Therefore, Greek writings had a difficult access to Ukraine. Before long, however, our scholars took general advantage of this source, as well.

Volodymyr the Great ardently inspired and encouraged literacy and the extension of the written word in his Kievan state. Defying difficulties and possible hindrances or drawbacks, Volodymyr firmly established an educational system - a sort of firm cultural base for Ukraine.

To facilitate learning, Volodymyr established schools in the larger cities, at his own court, near court churches and near Cathedrals. In smaller towns he founded elementary schools and brought in teachers from abroad.



These came, particularly, from Bulgaria, seeing that there were no native teachers available. The higher level of education consisted of learning foreign languages, especially Greek. Greek was considered necessary for political relations and for the translation of the Greek writings.

Our ancestors did not understand readily the importance of education and, at first, did not want to send their children to school. Volodymyr ordered that the children of the more notable citizens be educated. With a broadened education base, the number of learned people in Rus'-Ukraine increased markedly. These educators worked diligently to further education and promote cultural growth.

With the dissemination of Christianity in the Kievan state, there began the development of our arts. To hasten this development, Volodymyr engaged renowned artists from Bulgaria and from Greece. These were proficient craftsmen and skilled builders and their skills helped to construct the elaborate churches in Kiev, as well as in other cities. These were special churches and they were richly embellished with frescoes, mosaics and paintings.

Volodymyr beautified Kiev, his capital city, with various forms of art. Some of this art came from the cultures of antiquity. Also, there was a liberal use of Christian art. Volodymyr's chief aim was to guarantee Kiev an equal cultural level with the other cultured Christian states.

### **Death of Volodymyr.**

The fame of Volodymyr the Great - a wise and benevolent ruler - extended far and wide and reached beyond the boundaries of Rus'. He was a respected and

powerful ruler of the Kievan state.

In the latter half of his reign, Volodymyr did not wage many wars. Rather, he lived in peace with the neighboring countries, except for the nomadic tribes who, quite often, invaded and brought destruction to the south-eastern part of the country.

Volodymyr worked assiduously for the welfare of his people. He did his best to unite all the lands of Rus' into one strong constituent unit, a voluntarily-accepted internal harmony. He wished that his subjects obey him not out of fear but out of love, and that they realize that it was to their advantage to belong to the vast state of Volodymyr. To gain the love and confidence of the masses, Volodymyr met with senior pious citizens and conferred with them in the matter of better laws and statutes and an improved social order.

Overburdened with organizational work and perturbed by the insubordination of some of his sons and the enmity between them, Volodymyr became seriously ill. Foreseeing an untimely death, he called to Kiev his beloved son, Borys, to whom he wished to entrust the continuity to the Kievan throne. Volodymyr was convinced that Borys, because of his genuine Christian spirit and because of his strong faith, would be a worthy successor. At that time, news came to Kiev that the Polovtsi had invaded the Kievan state. Volodymyr assigned Borys to head an army to repel the invaders. Borys was on the battlefield when the news came that his father died. Volodymyr died on July 15, 1015. He was 55 years old.

When the boyars learned of Volodymyr's death, they came and wrapped his body in a tapestry, as was then the custom and, from nearby Berestiv where he had died, they brought his remains to Kiev. Volodymyr's body was laid in a marble sacrophagus and was entombed in a vault

in the Desiatyna Church which he had built and embellished at his own expense. A Chronicler states that a great multitude of sincerely-grieving people attended the funeral of their beloved ruler. For a long time, thereafter, Volodymyr's subjects talked with nostalgia about the glory of his reign.

Of Volodymyr there remains an indelible memory. Among his glorious achievements are the baptizing of his nation and the propagation of Christianity in the land of Rus'-Ukraine. His unceasing and untiring efforts resulted in admirable material, spiritual and cultural betterment for his subjects.

It is regrettable that the political achievements of Volodymyr did not survive him. His Kievan state became the object of a long fratricidal confrontation in which foreign political forces participated. Only his Christian achievement survived among his people. The Ukrainian Church records him among its saints because of his great virtues of true Christian love, specifically, towards the needy and the suffering.

Also, because of his exceptional and meritorious introduction and propagation of Christianity, the name of "Volodymyr" became immortal.



## Volodymyr's Succession.

### Sviatopolk.

Volodymyr, remembering his personal experience with the succession to the throne of his father, Sviatoslav, made plans pertaining to his succession in the event of his death. Therefore, he instructed his sons in the art of statecraft by apportioning to each individual principalities of the Kievan state. Two, perhaps three, times Volodymyr reviewed and modified the appointments of his sons.

Some of Volodymyr's sons did not live up to the expectations of their father. Sviatopolk, for example, revolted against Volodymyr. As a result, Volodymyr was forced to recall him from the Principality of Turiv and to confine him to Kiev, placing him under the surveillance of the central government. Even his son, Yaroslav, refused to pay his dues to the coffers of the central government. Thereupon, Volodymyr contemplated using military force to make him respect the general interests of the state.

Volodymyr died without having resolved the matter of his succession. He indicated only that he wished his son, Borys, whom he considered to be the more competent and capable, to rule over the newly-Christianized nation, to succeed him to the Kievan throne.

When Sviatopolk heard that Volodymyr had died, he followed the advice of his father-in-law, Polish King Boleslaw, that is, to use to his own advantage the absence of Borys. Meantime, Borys had gone to defend the lands of Rus', which were invaded by the Polovtsi. Sviatopolk,

aided by his allies and his followers, usurped the Kievan throne, even though the Kievan people, knowing Volodymyr's last wishes, would have preferred to have Borys, rather than Sviatopolk, as their ruler.

Though he seized his father's throne, Sviatopolk appeared courteous and good-mannered and made new friends and allies for himself and his cause. He was unduly generous when he squandered haphazardly his father's possessions. Consequently, he precipitated in the state a crisis that eventually developed into a bloody war among the brothers for their father's inheritance, namely, the Kievan throne.

This fratricidal war was wholly political and did not affect the new Christianity. Nor was it a war by reacting pagan factions, as it had been the case in other newly-Christianized nations. To repeat, the conflict had nothing to do with Christianity, as such. The matter at hand was to decide who, ultimately, would reign on the Kievan throne.

Volodymyr's family, his court, and the Kievan people knew that Volodymyr had intended to leave the succession to his son, Borys. For greedy reasons, the usurper Sviatopolk decided to rid himself of Borys.

### **Kniaz Borys.**

At the moment of Volodymyr's death, Borys, the son and intended successor, was returning to Kiev after defeating the Polovtsi at the river Alta. Messengers brought him, first the news, of his father's death and, secondly, that Sviatoslav had usurped the Kievan throne.

Borys knew that his late father, Volodymyr, intended him to succeed as the Great Kniaz and, moreover, that the people of Kiev were supportive. Even though he felt

militarily capable to overthrow Sviatoslav, a bloody war against a brother would be contrary to his Christian convictions. For this reason, Borys halted his return to Kiev and awaited further developments to assess better his own situation.

His retinue advised Borys to continue his march to Kiev and to occupy his late father's throne. Borys, however, did not wish to enter into a fratricidal conflict and, therefore, declined the advice of his men, saying: "I shall not raise my hands against my older brother; even though my father has died, he (my older brother) will replace for me my father." Such was Borys's last political, humane, and Christian decision. Thereupon, Borys disbanded his army, retaining only his most faithful followers.

Evidently, Sviatopolk was not fully at ease even though Borys refused to wage war for the Kievan throne. He knew that if Borys were to remain alive, he would be, at all times, a suspect and, invariably, a very dangerous contender. Besides, he knew that the people and the army in Kiev wanted Borys rather than him. In an uncontrollable desire to remain on the Kievan throne, Sviatopolk decided to commit the most hateful crime of fratricide. He decided to kill Borys.

Thereupon, Sviatopolk sent his tight-lipped henchmen with a secret command to murder his brother, Borys. Meanwhile, Borys learned of Sviatopolk's criminal intention. He could not believe that one brother would take the life of another brother. So, deeply troubled, Borys entered his tent to pray, to shed tears of grief for his deceased father and to sing religious hymns.

It was Saturday. Borys prayed all night, thereby, committing himself to God's Holy Providence. Before morning Sviatopolk's henchmen, undiscovered by the guards, cunningly entered Borys's tent and pierced him

repeatedly with their lances. Borys fell bathed in his own blood. Thinking that Borys was dead, the perpetrators of the hideous crime left the tent. Meanwhile, Borys, with a last effort of dwindling strength, slowly and laboriously moved out of the tent. At that instant, one of the lingering assassins felled him with a blow of his lance.

Assuming that Borys was dead, the assassins wrapped his blood-covered body in tent material and brought him to Sviatopolk. Sviatopolk at that time was in the city of Vyshhorod near Kiev. Having discovered that Borys was still alive, Sviatopolk sent two of his soldiers to deliver the coup-de-grace, a decisive finishing blow. This happened on Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1015. Borys died upholding the peace and Christ's commandment of love - love that was more important to him than the Kievan throne.

Borys was the trusted hope of the Ukrainian people. He was the one who set the example of fraternal Christian love. But he was dead. However, the spirit that he aroused - the spirit to strengthen and to save the Ukrainian people - did not die with him.

Friends of Borys entombed him in Saint Basil Church in Vyshhorod.

### **Kniaz Hlib.**

Borys's death did not appease fully Sviatopolk's troubled mind. He schemed the death of all his brothers - the sons of Volodymyr. Thus, without contest, he would become the supreme ruler of his father's vast empire. Becoming informed of Sviatopolk's plans, brother Sviatoslav fled to Hungary to save his life. However, Sviatopolk's henchmen intercepted him and killed him outright.

Then, following the murder of Borys and Sviatoslav, Sviatopolk was determined to see that his brother Hlib – loved and respected by all – be murdered, too. Hlib, Kniaz of Murom, had no knowledge of his father's death, nor did he know that his brother Borys had been murdered. Strange as it may seem, he did not know that Sviatopolk had usurped the throne of Kiev. And, this served Sviatopolk's plans. Cunningly, he sent messengers to Hlib advising him that their father was gravely ill and that he asked for him.

The guileless Hlib, not suspecting that the message could be a trap, immediately left for Kiev.

On his way to what he thought to be his father's bedside, Hlib was met by messengers from his brother Yaropolk, Kniaz of Novhorod, informing him about Volodymyr's death and about the murder of Borys. The messengers warned Hlib to be very careful and not to continue his trip to Kiev because Sviatopolk was determined to have him killed, also.

Hlib ignored the warning and left for Kiev in boats by way of Smolensk. On the river the Prince's vessels were intercepted by Sviatopolk's henchmen. They murdered him and hid his body under some underbrush on the shore of the river. Hlib's tragic death followed Borys's murder by just about two weeks.

For a long time, thereafter, no one knew the whereabouts of Hlib's body but, in time, a heavenly light illuminated the place. The body, found intact, was transported and was buried in a church in Smolensk. A few years later, there followed the solemn canonization of Borys and of Hlib. By joint arrangements, Kniaz Yaroslav and Archbishop Ivan of Kiev had built a spacious and beautiful wooden Church in Vyshhorod. After the ceremonies of canonization, with the participation of Kniaz Yaroslav and his family, and of the various princes,



bishops, nobles and clergy, as well as of a great multitude of people, Archbishop Ivan consecrated the new Church in honor of Saints Borys and Hlib. Moreover, he established that each 24<sup>th</sup> of July - the date of death of Kniaz Borys - be an annual commemoration for the two brothers

Archbishop Ivan composed a liturgical in honor of Saints Borys and Hlib. In it he proclaimed that the two brothers were the glorious Christian adornments of the Ukrainian land. Moreover, he praised and glorified them for emulating Great Kniaz Volodymyr. Like Volodymyr the Great, they disseminated the Christian faith and, because of their genuine Christian love, they, unquestionably, are Rus'-Ukraine's glorious radiance in Christ's Church.



## Yaroslav the Wise.

### Yaroslav - Great Kniaz of Kiev.

Great Kniaz Volodymyr had entrusted the Principality of Novhorod to his son, Yaroslav, who later, during Volodymyr's lifetime, made efforts to make his principality independent of Kiev. As Yaroslav and Volodymyr were preparing for an armed confrontation, Volodymyr died. Yaroslav, now having assembled an imposing military force, was ready to face the usurper, Sviatopolk. He prepared to defend himself, to avenge the killing of his three brothers and, eventually, to resolve the question of the succession to Volodymyr's throne.

The war between Yaroslav and Sviatopolk lasted four years (1015-1019). Eventually, Sviatopolk was defeated and died in battle. Thereafter, Yaroslav became Grand Kniaz of Kiev.

Due to new external political developments of that time, the future of Kievan Ukraine came under the influence of new political forces. This brought about certain complications in the internal and external administration of Yaroslav's Ukraine.

During the years 1017 and 1018 Byzantium finally had defeated and subjugated Bulgaria, together with other smaller Balkan countries. Thereby, Byzantium reached the peak of its political power. As a consequence, Byzantium became interested in the affairs of Ukraine. As it happened, the unsuccessful bid of Sviatopolk to take over the Kievan throne had been supported effectively by Poland, and by Poland's ally, Byzantium. Sviatopolk's defeat forced Byzantium to await new political dissensions in Ukraine. Byzantium foresaw in Rus'-Ukraine

a new power capable of reaching a greatness equal, if not superior, to that of Byzantium. Therefore, Byzantium had to make certain that she would control the destiny of Rus-Ukraine

In 1021, Kniaz Briachyslav of Polotsk decided to annex Novhorod, to his own principality. Yaroslav who was quick to react had repulsed the invasion. Then, in 1023 and, again, without any apparent political or other reason, Mstyslav, Kniaz of Tmoutorokan, attacked Yaroslav and, laying siege on Kiev, fortified his positions in Chernihiv. It is probable that a foreign authority instigated the offensive.

Yaroslav appealed to the Scandinavians for help and moved hastily to save his Capital. Thus, another fratricidal war began in which Yaroslav was defeated but with great losses for Mstyslav. It seemed that nothing stood in Mstyslav's way to take over the throne of Kiev. But, here again, without any apparently sufficient political reason, Mstyslav halted his advance and proposed to Yaroslav a division of their father's empire. The dividing line was to be the river Dnipro.

In 1026, peace was concluded between Mstyslav and Yaroslav on the basis of the proposed division of the lands. Peace and quiet descended upon the country, but it was a peace and quiet of political impotence of an internally divided country. Thus, Byzantium achieved its purpose to slow down the political growth and development of Ukraine, adding it to the growing number of its vassal countries.

This internal paralysis lasted for ten years. It was only in 1036, after the death of Mstyslav, that Yaroslav took over the government of the whole country - the reunified heritage of the Great Volodymyr.

## **Ukrainian Church in 1036.**

When Mstyslav died in 1036, Yaroslav became the sole ruler of Volodymyr's Rus'-Ukraine. Byzantium saw that her political influence and encroachments were inadequate and that she could do better through control of the growth and of the development of the religious life in Rus'-Ukraine.

At the beginning of Yaroslav's rule of Rus'-Ukraine, the head of the Kievan Church was Archbishop Ivan, most likely of Bulgarian birth. At his initiative, the brothers Borys and Hlib were canonized. For this occasion, in 1020, assisted by Yaroslav, Archbishop Ivan built and artistically endowed a beautiful Church in Vyshhorod. Participating in the solemnities were Grand Kniaz Yaroslav, Archbishop Ivan, bishops, numerous clergy and a great multitude of people. Within a short time, and still in 1020, Archbishop Ivan died.

The Chronicles refer to Archbishop Ivan as "Metropolitan." We believe that this title was inserted by later chroniclers under the influence of the Byzantines to promote the idea that from its beginnings the Ukrainian Church was not independent. Instead, it always was a part of the Byzantine Church and that the Head of the Ukrainian Church always was a Metropolitan under the Byzantine ecclesiastical jurisdiction. But, it is most unlikely that, in the political circumstances of that era, Volodymyr would ever dream of affiliating the newly-formed Ukrainian Church with the Byzantine Patriarchate. He knew that any affiliation with Byzantium would open fully the doors for the Byzantine policies to establish a strong foothold in his lands.

Volodymyr must have followed the example of the independent Church of Ochrida, and his wish was to have a similarly independent Ukrainian Church. His son, Yaroslav,

following Volodymyr's example, also wanted an independent Ukrainian Church in communion with the See of Rome.

On the death of Archbishop Ivan of Kiev, Grand Kniaz Yaroslav did not approach Byzantium for a successor. Instead, he asked Pope Benedict VIII to appoint a new Head of the Ukrainian Church. The Holy See appointed as Archbishop of Kiev a Bulgarian named Oleksij - a learned, devout man. He took official canonical possession of the Kievan See in 1021. By giving Oleksij the title of "Archbishop," the Holy See recognized and stressed the independence of the Ukrainian Church. Because there was a lack of an adequate number of Ukrainian priests, the title of Patriarch was not given to Oleksij. But the Archbishop's ecclesiastical rights and privileges in Rus'-Ukraine were equal to those of a Patriarch.

How long Archbishop Oleksij remained Head of the See of Kiev, we do not know. Neither do we know the date of his death. Considering that Yaroslav was not yet a firmly established ruler of Rus'-Ukraine, historians believe that Byzantium hastened Oleksij's resignation.

Happening as it did, Yaroslav in 1037 reluctantly accepted Byzantium's imposed appointment of a "Metropolitan," a Greek named Theotempt. As Head of the Ukrainian Church, he monitored and controlled the political growth of Kniaz Yaroslav and, at the same time, he safeguarded the interests of Byzantium by subjugating to it the Ukrainian Church. Neither Volodymyr nor Yaroslav had envisioned such a destiny for the Kievan Church.

### **Byzantium and the Ukrainian Church.**

Shortly after Yaroslav became the sole ruler of

Volodymyr's empire, and while he was occupied at reunifying the country after the bloody fratricidal wars, the Polovtsi - long-time allies of Byzantium - invaded Ukraine. The Byzantine Patriarch, with the "blessing" of the emperor, chose this occasion to appoint Theotempt to the See of Kiev with the title of "Metropolitan." Theotempt was a Greek in whom the Byzantine Patriarch could place unreserved trust.

With the help of Scandinavian mercenaries, Yaroslav defeated the invading hordes. The defeated Polovtsi sought refuge in the Balkans under the protection of Byzantium. Yaroslav understood the political designs of Byzantium. For this reason, he returned to his policy of immunity from Byzantium's preponderant influence.

In a vain attempt to duplicate the elder Ihor's march on Byzantium a hundred years before, Yaroslav sent his son, Volodymyr, to head his army and to contest Byzantium. However, this campaign failed. As a result, Byzantium repaid harshly for all the past defeats as well as for Yaroslav's current unyielding political views. Byzantium released 6,000 forcibly-blinded Ukrainian prisoners and returned them home as a forewarning to Yaroslav.

Moreover, we are not certain of the exact terms of the peace treaty between Byzantium and Yaroslav. In all likelihood, the terms forced Yaroslav to surrender the Ukrainian Church to full control by the Byzantine Patriarch. By so doing, the Kievan Church became a direct subordinate of the Byzantine Patriarchy, as one of its 70 Metropolies. The Archbishop of Kiev, hitherto independent, became Metropolitan under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Byzantine Patriarch. What is more, the Ukrainian Church was reduced to a manipulating tool of Byzantium's political and religious measures.

Yaroslav was quick to see the danger of Byzantium's Church domination – a detriment to the Kievan Church and to the Ukrainian people.

When his term of duty in Kiev ended, Metropolitan Theotempt returned to Byzantium. Thereupon, Yaroslav the Wise made a firm decision that he would not accept Greek Metropolitans to his state. Thus, for some time thereafter, there was no Byzantine representative on the See of Kiev.

A mission which was directed by two bishops appeared in Kiev in the year 1049. The mission was from France and it came to seek in marriage Yaroslav's daughter, Anna Yaroslavna, to France's king, Henry I. At the same time, the French bishop-delegates held talks concerning matters of Church and other matters relative to the East.

As Queen of France, Anna Yaroslavna had access to the Apostolic See. It is assumed that she could have influenced her father's decision to sever all ties with Byzantium and, consequently, to declare the autonomy of the Kievan Church.

Without arranging any understanding with the Patriarch of Constantinople, Yaroslav in 1051 named Ilarion, a native priest, to assume the post of Metropolitan of the Kievan Church. A Synod of Bishops was called and, without delay, the appointment of Ilarion was confirmed. Ilarion was consecrated "Head of the Ukrainian Church," in accordance with Apostolic tradition.

To appoint Ilarion "Metropolitan" and to call a national Synod of Bishops was to witness Yaroslav's new political point of view, that is, shouldering Byzantium and facing the West, that is, facing Rome.

By this move, Kniaz Yaroslav emphasized, also, the independence of the Ukrainian Church.

Regrettably, Yaroslav lacked the means and the time

to link the Kievan Church with the See of Rome. Had that been possible, Rome would have come to be an effective entity able to defend the Kievan state from political division and cultural decline.

### **Yaroslav's Achievements.**

When the Chronicles describe the achievements of Yaroslav, the Chroniclers say that Volodymyr had plowed and tilled the field, that is, he enlightened the country through baptism. And it was Yaroslav who had sown the knowledge of books into the hearts of his subjects. Actually, Yaroslav's religious pursuits to heighten Christianity were an extension of Volodymyr's efforts. Both leaders strived to broaden an outermost Christian appearance while, at the same time they satisfied the spiritual needs of Christian life.

The building of Christian temples was a visible fact of life in the first decades of the Ukrainian Christianity. The newly-baptized people needed places of Christian worship and the new temples would replace the former pagan altars. Moreover, it became evident to the rulers of Ukraine, that the sacred temple was an edifice for all people independently of their social status and it welded them into one community. Sacred temples contributed to the establishment of a nation - a nation of people who would be aware of its linking roots and its co-dependence.

Eventually, the whole Rus'-Ukraine took example of Yaroslav's more-advanced regions. The result was that more and more churches were constructed. This gave the Ukrainian countryside a truly Christian outward appearance.

In like manner, monasteries were being constructed



with attached monastic churches. We do not know who the first monastery dwellers were. Perhaps, they were monks and nuns from Constantinople. Or, on the other hand, they might have been local candidates embracing religious monastic life. The Kievo-Pecherska Lavra (Kievan Monastery of the Caves), which later became the centre of Christian worship and the source of Ukrainian culture, dates back to the days of Yaroslav the Wise. Most certainly, the renowned monastery enshrines Yaroslav's memory in the undiminishing Christian history of Ukraine.

In point of fact, we also must look with admiration at the great educational endeavors of Kniaz Yaroslav. Firstly, he realized that the whole population needed educators. Furthermore, to further education he considered that no one was more qualified for educational enlightenment than the clergy. Considering the generous endowments of the clergy, he commanded them to dedicate their lives fully to matters of the Church and to the education of the people. This receptivity on the part of the clergy is echoed favorably in the chronicles - "the number of clergy grew... and so did the number of Christians." The monasteries built by Yaroslav contributed considerably to educational enlightenment.

Another factor in Yaroslav's all-embracing educational program was the introduction of the printed word. Yaroslav himself gave the example of appreciation of the value of books. The Chronicles state that he "was very diligent in matters of books. He read them, day and night". Amidst the difficult internal and external political problems that beset him, he found time, even if only at night, to read. It is no wonder that an ardent reader like Yaroslav brought together many scribes who translated into the Slavonic language numerous important Greek works. Also, he wrote many books, for a receptive populace.

We may conclude that with Yaroslav there began the growth of Christian culture in Ukraine.

### **"Ruska Pravda" – a Code of Laws.**

We know that Kniaz Yaroslav paid much attention to the continued well-being of the internal order in his state. At first, this was maintained by way of a mutual understanding between himself and his brother, Mstyslav. Later, his success in the matter was due to his own initiative. Towards the end of his life, some of the more prominent and outstanding foreigners who had visited Kiev and the Kievan state praised what they saw.

Foreign chroniclers, relating what they had heard from well-informed people who had visited Rus'-Ukraine, spoke about Kiev as a rival of Constantinople. Gauthier, the French Bishop of Meaux, who came to Kiev to ask for the hand of Anna, Yaroslav's daughter, in marriage to Henry I, king of France, reported that Ukraine was "more united, more fortunate, more powerful, more important and with a higher degree of culture than France."

An important accomplishment – one which engraved Yaroslav's name into the history of Ukraine, and of all humanity – was his compilation of state, civil, judicial and Church laws, known as "Ruska Pravda."

Beginning with the law court judgments and the decrees of Princess Olha, Volodymyr was the first to review partially the ancient pagan common law and to adapt it to the new standards of Christian religion. Yaroslav undertook to perfect this existing compilation of laws into a systematic collection – the "Ruska Pravda" i.e. "Ruska Justice." Later, his successors included new additions.

"Ruska Pravda" is considered to be the oldest and

most important commemorative document of Ukrainian common law based on Christian concepts. As the Kievan state and the Ukrainian society developed, the need for up-to-date laws and rights increased day by day, first and foremost, for practical daily needs.

Justice meted by Yaroslav was extraordinarily humane in regard to capital punishment very much in use in the Western-European countries. The aim of Yaroslav's administration of justice was as follows: good upbringing, prevention and correction. There is no doubt that the teachings of the Christian religion were the foundation of "Ruska Pravda."

Yaroslav did not legislate in civil matters only. Also, he reviewed and extended the laws governing the Church and the Church's relationship with the state.

Noteworthy, too, is the fact that the norms and practices of the Church at the time of Yaroslav were not based on Byzantine but, rather, on the western-Roman legislation. We understand this better from the fact that the vital and dynastic bonds were inter-related more with the West, and less with Byzantium. Appropriate influences, therefore, as to form and substance of state and social regulation, likewise, were more Western than Byzantine.

Yaroslav's "Ruska Pravda" brings recognition and honor to its author and, also, to the Ukrainians who lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, it is recognized for its Christian spirituality, which thoroughly imbued the Ukrainian hearts, as well as, their social and political institutions.

## **Consecration of Rus'-Ukraine to The Most Holy Mother of God.**

Ilarion, the first non-Byzantine Archbishop-Primate to head the Ukrainian Church was one of the first Ukrainian writers. His principal work is his marvelous "Discourse on Law and Mercy - in Praise of Our Kniaz Volodymyr." Written in a grand style, this work qualifies the greatness of his mind, and his masterful artistry as an orator. Moreover, it is a testimony of the national and religious consciousness of the Ukrainian citizenry during the reign of Yaroslav the Wise.

The "Discourse" is written in three parts. In the first part, Ilarion compares the New with the Old Testament and praises God for the Redemption of the human race through the Sacrifice of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In the second part of the "Discourse," Ilarion narrates, in detail, the spreading of Christianity and its benefits in the world and, specifically, in Ukraine. In the last part of the "Discourse" Ilarion commends Kniaz Volodymyr and Yaropolk for their noteworthy and meritorious achievements. Yaroslav the Wise who, at his baptism was named Yuriij, did not diminish the outstanding deeds of Volodymyr, but enhanced them with his own achievements.

Ilarion expresses credit to Yaroslav when he mentions the construction of St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev: "... he (Yaroslav) erected a great house of God dedicated to the Divine Wisdom (Sophia = Wisdom in Greek) of God for the sanctity and sanctification of your city (Volodymyr's Kiev). He endowed it with great beauty, with gold and silver and precious stones, which made the church marvelous and glorious among all the neighboring countries. From East to West no such church is to be found in the northern world."

Kniaz Yaroslav, having dispersed for many decades the hordes of the vanquished Polovtsi, Kniaz Yaroslav had encircled Kiev with high walls. Over the gate that was exposed most to enemy attacks, he built a church, that was solemnly dedicated in 1037 to the Holy Annunciation. The Church was covered with gold. To this gateway is imparted the name "Zoloti Vorota" - "Golden Gate" of Kiev. At the solemn blessing of the church, Yaroslav consecrated his city and his people to the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God. She was then declared **Queen of Rus'-Ukraine**.

In his "Discourse," Ilarion illustrates this event: "He (Yaroslav) encircled the city (Kiev) with greatness as with a garland, and he entrusted his people and his holy city to the most glorious and always available Help of Christians, the Holy Mother of God, in whose honor he built a church on the Great Gate, and he dedicated it to the first feast of Our Lord, the Holy Annunciation. Thus, whenever the Angel greets the Virgin, he also greets the city. To her - "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with you!" To the city - "Hail! faithful city, the Lord is with you."

This was history's first such sacred proclamation in Europe. Other states declared the Virgin Mary their Heavenly Queen but that was much later. Yaroslav had assumed rightly that under no other spiritual protection will the state hold out as under the scepter and protection of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. Thus, our reverence to the Blessed Virgin Mary is as old as Christianity is old in Ukraine.

In all likelihood, no other nation has as warm and as sincere a devotion to Mary Mother of God as the Ukrainians do.

## **Death of Yaroslav the Wise.**

Kniaz Yaroslav the Wise was perceivably aware that after his death the great Kievan state could break up into mere small individual principalities and that, consequently, it would lose its original prestige and mightiness. Therefore, he included into the laws of succession the principle of seniority which, at that time, was accepted widely by the reigning houses of Europe. By this enactment, the oldest of Yaroslav's sons and descendants was to be the head of the state with patriarchal rights over the others. Yaroslav strongly believed that, by making this principle into law, he would assure the continued unity of the Kievan state.

Before his death, Yaroslav the Wise had the opportunity to make all the necessary dispositions. Forthwith, he called his sons to Kiev. He appointed as his successor and head of all the family his eldest son, Iziaslav, and handed over to him the reins of government in Kiev. He assigned his son, Sviatoslav, to Chernihiv, and to Ysevolod he ceded Pereiaslav. To Ihor he granted Volodymyr and to Viacheslav Smolensk. When the appointments to the various principalities were completed, Yaroslav commanded his sons to respect, above all else, each other's boundaries. From his deathbed Yaroslav strongly cautioned his sons to live in harmony and love, to help each other, and to defend jointly the Fatherland from invasions. In addition, he stressed that they do not take over arbitrarily each other's lands, and that all successions be effected legally.

Yaroslav's last words to his sons set up a rule of life - a testament - for all heartfelt Ukrainians: "Love each other, my sons; you are the children of one and the same father and mother. If you live in love, God will be with you. He will make you victorious over your enemies and you

shall live in peace. But, if there be hatred and dissension among you, you yourselves shall perish and you shall do away with the land of your fathers and ancestors, which they conquered with much difficulty. Live in peace obeying each other."

Yaroslav the Wise was recognized and praised by all. He died in Vyshhorod in 1054 on the first Sunday of the Great Lent in the arms of his favorite son, Ysevolod, whom he kept always at his side. He was 75 years old. Ysevolod brought Yaroslav's body to Kiev, and buried him in a white marble sacrophagus in the Cathedral Church of Saint Sophia - a Cathedral built by Yaroslav himself. Saint Sophia remains a glorious monument to the great ruler, builder and protector of the Ukrainian Church and to an illustrious champion of our Ukrainian culture.

Yaroslav reigned over the Kievan state for 35 years and he endowed it with great military, political, cultural, and religious relevance. His successes were great because Kniaz Yaroslav was such an illustrious legislator and a skillful organizer. Yaroslav the Wise, to his utmost, actualized the independence of the Ukrainian Church from Byzantium.

Yaroslav died in the spring of 1054. His was an untimely death, so to speak, because he did not witness a strikingly-decisive development in the life of Christianity later in 1054.

This new development took place in Byzantium. It was the Byzantine Schism which, in the course of history, had a great and unhappy influence on the development of the Kievan Church and of Rus'-Ukraine.

# **C O N C L U S I O N .**

## **An Annual Celebration! - Why not?**

In the year 988, the famous and great Kievan Kniaz Volodymyr officially introduced Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine. This was an inimitable turning point in the lives of our ancestors and in the lives of their descendants.

Christianity brought into Ukraine the guiding light of God's Truth. Moreover, it introduced a new institution - the Church. The Church unified in faith the individual tribes, organized and, eventually, consolidated them into one great and powerful nation. In particular, Christianity influenced their way of thinking. It refined their personal, family, social and political life, and it gave them many distinguished personalities - religious and secular. Among them were renowned rulers, monks, chroniclers, priests, bishops, metropolitans and organizers who laid the required foundations of social, political and Church life.

Christianity that Volodymyr the Great and our ancestors accepted contributed immensely to the development of a new culture. As examples we have literary works, education, music, architecture, legislation, religion, national politics, social understanding and a host of new organizations within and outside the Church. With Christianity there came a great development in national vitality, and for their descendants it brought a great and glorious inheritance,



one which our enemies envy and want to usurp as their own. The remembrance of Ukraine's Christianization simultaneously commemorates the birth and the consolidation of the ideal of national unity which were initiated by the Great Kniaz Volodymyr.

In the true sense of the term, "the Millennium 1988" will be an actual ceremonial observance of a thousandth-year anniversary of the Christianization of Ukraine. In the Free World, of course, we are at liberty to celebrate without restriction. However, we are saddened that in Ukraine - the land where our ancestors accepted the Christian Faith through Volodymyr the Great a thousand years ago - there is no freedom for the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

To so many people in Ukraine, God exists only in the catacombs, in the hearts of inmates in prisons and in concentration camps, in the hearts of those who are condemned to slave labor in factories or in mines.

In Ukraine, in their own Fatherland, so many of our people are denied freedom of assembly and, therefore, they are not free to partake in a conventional celebration of the Millennium of their Christianity.

Therefore, may we recommend to all Ukrainians that this solemn remembrance (1988) be considered all-important and that it not be limited to a one-time, nor to a one-year celebration. More realistically, it should be allowed to continue annually beyond 1988.

Such a yearly remembrance would provide a reinforcement - a community and a national-religious discipline - to fortify our Ukrainian conscience. Also, it would defend our great historical heritage and it would give it a legitimate value in the eyes of the entire civilized world.



