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WINTER 2011

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MISSION AMERICA

PEOPLE OF *Hope,* ROOTED IN *Faith*

THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

BY BETH GRIFFIN

Ukrainian Catholics in the United States face challenges familiar to every immigrant group that has reached these shores: How do you support the enculturation of newcomers while retaining the values and traditions of those established for generations? And how do you maintain rites and religious traditions with young people who do not understand the language or meanings behind the traditions?

The Ukrainian Catholic Church is one of several Eastern Catholic Churches that enjoy the same dignity, rights, and obligations as the Latin Church to which the majority of Catholic Americans belong. Eastern Catholic Churches have distinctive liturgical and legal systems that reflect the national or ethnic character of their region of origin.

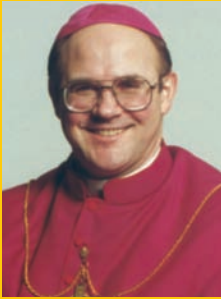
Archbishop Stefan Soroka is the spiritual leader, or metropolitan, of Ukrainian Catholics throughout the United States. He heads the Archeparchy of Philadelphia, which includes Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. (Eparchies and archeparchies in the Eastern Catholic Church are akin to dioceses and archdioceses in the Latin Church.) As the metropolitan, Archbishop Soroka also has jurisdiction over the three other U.S. eparchies in Chicago; Stamford, Connecticut; and Parma, Ohio. Catholic Home Missions supports the Archeparchy of Philadelphia with grants for evangelization, vocations, and communications.

There are some 60,000 Ukrainian Catholics in the United States. Catholics fleeing hardships in Ukraine began to immigrate to Pennsylvania in the 1880s. They found work in coal mines near Scranton and Harrisburg. Archbishop Soroka says, "Their faith came first. They built their churches before they built homes." The churches were centers of social and worship life and bastions of Ukrainian language and culture. The first Ukrainian Catholic bishop in the United States was appointed in 1907 as the Church spread.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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DEAR FRIENDS,

From its earliest times, Christianity was made up of local churches that developed different liturgies and disciplines while maintaining one Catholic faith. Today, there are over 15 million Eastern Catholics worldwide in different churches in full communion with Rome. Although their ancient traditions are from the East, these churches are fully Catholic. Years ago, Pope John Paul II referred to the Latin and Eastern Churches as “the two lungs of the Catholic Church.”

During the past century, immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Near East have brought their vibrant cultures and faith to the United States. They have often worked at miners’ and laborers’ wages to support their parishes and families. More recently, uprooted Eastern immigrants to our country have struggled to learn a new culture and way of life. While they may want to help their Church, the reverse is often true—they need their Church’s help even more.

However, Eastern Catholic eparchies (dioceses) face unique challenges of their own in this country. Often, their parishes or missions are quite small and isolated, located hours apart and scattered throughout the United States. In fact, many of the Eastern dioceses cover, geographically, more than half the size of the entire United States. Because parishes have only 100 to 250 families on average, they can neither meet their operating expenses nor support full-time priests. More often, the bishop and chancery staff travel extensively to ensure that Sunday liturgy is celebrated where a full-time pastor is not present.

The Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions provides needed assistance by funding many of the pastoral ministries of 16 Eastern Catholic dioceses in this country. This year, the subcommittee will allocate close to 20% of its total funds to support their creative pastoral programs and keep both chancery and parish doors open.

Ministering within a Western culture and a predominately Latin Church, the Eastern Catholic Churches struggle for their own voice and dignity. In choosing to maintain their Eastern roots and traditions here in this country, they enrich us all.

Most Rev. Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings
Chairman, USCCB Subcommittee
on Catholic Home Missions



- The Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States has more than 60,000 members belonging to 180 parishes. Most of the parishes have 100 to 250 families.
- Eastern Catholics are in full communion with Rome. Latin Rite Catholics may receive the sacraments in Eastern Churches.
- Weekly attendance at Ukrainian Catholic Sunday liturgies averages 45% of registered parishioners.
- Ukrainian Catholics in the United States are served by 211 priests and 92 religious sisters. The sisters belong to three congregations: Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great, Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, and Missionary Sisters of the Mother of God.
- Catholic Home Missions supports 25% of the budget of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia and is the sole funder of its religious education and youth ministry programs.
- The small number of parochial schools makes parish religious education programs an urgent necessity for faith formation in youth. The Archeparchy of Philadelphia maintains four K-8 parochial schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and one private girls’ high school, St. Basil Academy, in Jenkintown, PA.

2011 CATHOLIC HOME MISSION EASTERN RITE GRANTEES

Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma
Chaldean Eparchy of St. Peter the Apostle
Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn
Melkite Eparchy of Newton
Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese in the United States and Canada
Romanian Catholic Canton
Ruthenian Byzantine Eparchy of Van Nuys
Ruthenian Metropolitan Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Chicago
Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate
Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Ukrainian Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma
Ukrainian Eparchy of St. Nicholas in Chicago
Ukrainian Eparchy of Stamford

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After the Second World War, the Church in Ukraine had to go underground to escape persecution. At that time many people left Ukraine to join relatives in the United States. The next large wave of immigrants came after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Archbishop Soroka says the recent arrivals are more skilled and better educated than their predecessors, but less churched. “They had to hide to go to church,” he says. “It’s a real challenge for us today. [The newcomers] are drawn to the Church for social support, but they lack knowledge of the faith. We need to catechize them.”

Ukrainian Catholic liturgy is rich in tradition and is generally conducted in Ukrainian. This is a mixed blessing, because children of immigrants may hear their mother tongue only at home and at church, and the liturgy helps keep the language alive. But young people more comfortable with English may have a hard time following the rituals and stop attending.

Archbishop Soroka acknowledges that the Church did not respond quickly enough to immigrants as they assimilated. The result is a drift away from the Ukrainian Catholic Church. “This really is the challenge of our Church right now—to reach out to those who have wandered.”



Photos courtesy of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia

Archbishop Stefan Soroka celebrates the traditional blessing of flowers on the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

Liturgies are now bilingual, and some parishes have separate services in Ukrainian and English to meet the different needs of their parishioners. Archbishop Soroka explains, “Language is such an important part of our tradition. We want to worship and pray in the language that nourishes and comforts us.”

The Archeparchy of Philadelphia includes 67 parishes served by 48 active priests. Many of the parishes are in former industrial areas and old coal-mining towns, and their members are retired on fixed incomes. Others are

in more active urban centers and include young families that are trying to establish themselves in their new country.

“I marvel that we are a Church of many small, isolated communities,” says Archbishop Soroka. “These are hard financial times, but they’re coping,

and attendance is up this year. Perhaps that’s because of the times and maybe because people are searching more.”

The Eastern Catholic tradition includes a married priesthood, and Archbishop Soroka says about 40% of his clergy is married. He observes, however, that allowing marriage is not a silver bullet for the vocation shortage in the Catholic Church. “They’re not breaking down the door to get in,” he smiles.

Archbishop Soroka said that in ten years as metropolitan, he has ordained more celibate than married men. “It’s a tremendous sacrifice to be a priest, and a family has to be very accepting of that. Historically, wives often came from priestly families and knew what was entailed” in sharing a husband and father with a congregation. This is not as common now, he said.

With the help of Catholic Home Missions, the Archeparchy of Philadelphia operates a seminary in Washington, D.C., for the four eparchies. Three priests were ordained last year, and three men are in their final year of preparation. Students attend the Catholic University of America; they study Ukrainian Catholic liturgy, catechism, and



Archbishop Emeritus Stephen Sulyk and Archbishop Stefan Soroka enter Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral for Divine Liturgy and the ordination of a seminarian to the holy priesthood.

tradition at the seminary and help out at an adjacent parish.

Most of the priestly vocations have been from the immigrant groups, Archbishop Soroka says, but the number of American-born seminarians is growing, thanks in part to a renewed focus on vocations. With help from Catholic Home Missions, the archeparchy now has its first full-time vocation director.

“We’ve been in the mindset of an immigrant Church, where people are more comfortable and feel that they are better understood by ‘one of their own,’” Archbishop Soroka says. “But we need more American-born priests, and we are now seeing men in their late twenties and thirties drawn to the priesthood. I prefer that, because they have gone through life’s challenges, and they’re answering the call.”

Archbishop Soroka says Catholic Home Missions and his brother bishops are responsive to the needs of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. “Catholic Home Missions’ critical help lets us take on challenges and responsibilities we could not manage on our own. It helps us achieve what we are called to be in the mosaic of the Church in the United States.”

“These are people of hope whose roots are in a faithful group that fled persecution and hardship,” says Archbishop Soroka. “There is a reason our Church was scattered. It was not happenstance. God meant for us to take the roots of our faith seriously.”



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Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions

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In this issue . . .

From its earliest times, Christianity was made up of local churches that developed different liturgies and disciplines while maintaining one Catholic faith. Today, there are over 15 million Eastern Catholics worldwide in different churches in full communion with Rome. One of those churches is profiled here.

For more information about the Catholic Home Missions, visit www.usccb.org/hm.

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The bishops and staff of the Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions congratulate
MOST REV. PAUL S. COAKLEY
on his appointment as
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
and
MOST REV. JOSEPH S. VASQUEZ
on his appointment as
Bishop of Austin.
The subcommittee values their faith and commitment to our country's mission dioceses.