

## Pope John Paul II and Ukrainian Catholic Liturgical Life: Renewal of Eastern Identity<sup>1</sup>

Mark M. Morozowich

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### ***Introduction***

The identity of a Church – especially in the Christian East – is mirrored in its liturgy, the core expression of a worshipping community. If this is so, then analyzing the role of Pope John Paul II in the liturgical life of the Ukrainian Catholic Church presents a formidable challenge. His impact was not in the issuing of new decrees or the revision of liturgical books, but rather in creating the ecclesiological climate for the realities of the liturgical change, already enacted in the reformed liturgical texts produced by and in Rome in the 1940s and explicated in the principles of the Second Vatican Council, to take deeper root and become effective. Moreover, he played a pivotal role in the establishment of a true synodal system of government in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. These important steps helped to stimulate an ecclesiological reality of esteem for its own Eastern identity and bring to maturity a new understanding of what it means to be a Church *sui iuris* in unity with (rather than in imitation of) the Church of Rome.

To understand this relationship, let us compare the reality of liturgical life with the ideal reflected in the official texts

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<sup>1</sup> This is the text of a speech given to the Saint Sophia Religious Association at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 4, 2005, during their conference entitled “The Legacy of Pope John Paul II and Ukraine: An International Conference.” This study does not pretend to be an exhaustive analysis of the subject.