

The Ukrainian Catholic Church
in the USA:
Relations with the Mother Church
of Kyiv and the Sister Churches
in the United States

Bishop Basil Losten

Abstract

(Українське резюме на ст. 87)

In his far-ranging article on the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Bishop Basil Losten touches upon a series of important issues. In dealing with the question of a tight relationship with the Mother Church, the author emphasises an ardent desire to see the full recognition of the patriarchal status of the Kyivan Church. Moving to relations with Sister Churches, Bishop Basil begins with the Roman Church in the U.S.A., with whom relations were sometimes quite difficult, especially in the past (although there were always some very eminent exceptions), and with whom relations are today much improved. The author then moves to other Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine tradition: Ruthenians, Melkites, Belarusians, Romanians, and Russians. He then treats the Eastern Catholic Churches beyond the Byzantine tradition: Maronites, Armenians, Chaldeans, Syrians, all of whom have their own hierarchy in the U.S.A., and those Churches still without an American hierarchy: the Syro-Malabarese, Syro-Malankarese, Copts, and Ethiopians. In the case of these churches, what is needed is much deeper knowledge.

The author then moves to Orthodox Sister Churches. He dwells on relations with the Ukrainian Orthodox, as well as with other Orthodox Churches. In lieu of a conclusion, Bishop Basil offers advice, emphasizing an even greater co-

operation among the various Eastern Catholic Churches as well as closer relations between Catholics and Orthodox.



Of necessity, these comments are largely restricted to the American situation, since that is where my experience lies. Much will be applicable to other English-speaking countries, and I hope eventually to expand this overview to include Canada, Australia, and England.

In the United States the faithful arrived before the clergy. The faithful first came in the late nineteenth century, seeking employment. They hoped to work in America for a number of years, save money, and eventually return to Ukraine. Few of these people ever returned to Ukraine; almost all the Ukrainian Catholics who came to America remained, married (often bringing wives or prospective brides from Ukraine), founded families; and left descendants – to this day in our earliest parishes there are still families active in the parish who proudly claim descent from the founders. All this meant the need for a church, and a priest, without which no stable community could be organized and maintained.¹

From the first arrival of Ukrainian Catholics in America, all of these sets of relationships began to be perceived in quite different and often mutually exclusive ways by the parties concerned. There has been important progress, but the problems which presented themselves in the late nineteenth century are still with us.

A. Relations with the Mother Church of Kyiv

The very first group of Ukrainian Catholics in America who organized themselves into a community founded Saint Michael's Parish in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania in 1884.² Spontaneously and instinctively they turned to the Mother

¹ Sociologists are aware that no ethnic group survives in the United States without a church, synagogue, temple or the equivalent.

² Saint Michael's Parish in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, published a richly-illustrated book in 1984, to mark the centenary of the parish. This book contains much information of historic importance.