Aspects of Liturgical Prayer Life in the Diaspora
Presentation to the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church
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Your Beatitude, Patriarch Sviatoslav,
Most Reverend Metropolitans, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church,

It is an honour for me to inform you about a matter that is central to the life of our global Church, namely the liturgical life of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (UGCC) in the diaspora. This presentation sets out the current state of affairs concerning the liturgical life of the UGCC – both problems and successes – and concludes with concrete and practical suggestions for the continued fostering of liturgical practices in order to give liturgy – the worship of the Living God – its due place as the central act of the assembled Church – the Body of Christ. Before arriving at the heart of this presentation, I would first like to clarify some key terms, in order that no confusion should arise regarding the topic of this presentation.

1. Introduction: Definition of Key Terms and Context

First, when speaking of “liturgy” I hope that we all understand that we are speaking of the divine work of both God and people, which is the “summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed [and] at the same time … the font from
which all her power flows,”¹ that which makes present today what was visible in our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ,² and is the heart of theology — not just a discussion of rubrics. Just as in any discipline, a fuller knowledge of liturgy (namely, the proper celebration of liturgical rites, as well as their history and theology) requires greater study than offered by an introductory (i.e. seminary) education and demands experience that not every member of the clergy possesses;³ yet, even without a


degree in liturgical studies and without significant experience, it is quite common in our Church for everyone to hold a personal opinion on what they themselves consider to be right and wrong. Nonetheless, to return to our discussion of what liturgy is, one can summarize its meaning by stating that liturgy is the life of the Church in action: “church” is the noun, “liturgy” is the verb.⁴

Second, the label “diaspora” is an unfortunate term because it allows one to assume that our Church is not really the Church of the people of God in the place where they are found, whether in the suburbs of Chicago, or North Battleford, Saskatchewan, or Paris, France, but rather, that it is somehow more authentically a Church when it is in Vynnyky or Buchach, Ukraine. Moreover, today the “diaspora” of our Church is very diverse, both in terms of its global reach and its history. Simple geography explains why North and South America, as well as Australia, have less connection to Ukraine than Europe does.⁵ The various histories and completely different contexts of these regions explain why it is dangerous to speak of “the diaspora” as a monolithic whole, just as it is dangerous to speak of Ukraine without recognizing differences between, for example, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Gal-

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⁵ In some parts of Europe, it is possible to have breakfast at home, get in your car, and be in Western Ukraine for dinner – depending, of course, on how fast you drive. The distance – both physical and psychological – between Europe and North America created by the Atlantic Ocean makes it impossible to think in similar terms.