

## From Sheptytsky to Shevchuk: The Maturation of Ecclesial Autonomy in the Catholic Church of Kyiv

The Catholic Church of Kyiv has seen its protohierarchs appointed and elected amid a wide variety of circumstances in the more than four centuries since it re-established full communion with the Church of Rome in 1596. Pope Clement VIII's apostolic letter *Decret Romanum Pontificem* of 23 February 1596 made it clear that in the Metropolia of Kyiv the confirmation of the lawful election of bishops and their consecration and enthronement was the prerogative of the metropolitan of Kyiv, who confirms in the name of Rome without any further required recourse to it. While the rationale presented for this is rather contrived (namely, that the given province is distant from Rome and confirmation would therefore be difficult and costly), nonetheless the principle is established and made inviolable. That same document establishes that the metropolitan of Kyiv-Halych, upon lawful election or nomination, is to seek confirmation from the pope of Rome before taking office. Although it is not clearly stated in the document, the net effect was to free the process of nomination of bishops from the control of secular powers. While at first this seemed like a great triumph for a synodal process for the election of bishops, in time the intervention of the Roman Curia in all episcopal appointments became the rule, and secular governments would also have a role to play.

It is good for us to examine at least briefly certain important recent developments regarding the election of bishops and especially of the protohierarch of the Catholic Church of Kyiv, the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (UGCC). If the UGCC has any claim to being an autonomous Church of the Catholic communion, then the way that it elects bishops is a crucial test of this autonomy. It is common knowledge that the

last century has seen hitherto unheard of centralization of the process of episcopal nomination in the Catholic world. During this same period, the UGCC has been working in a determined fashion to avoid undue intrusion by both secular authorities and the Roman Curia in this central aspect of ecclesial life.

Fast forward from the immediate aftermath of the Union of Brest to the figure of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, leader of Ukrainian Catholics for the first forty-four years of the twentieth century. By virtue of the Concordat of 1885, the Viennese government had the authority to nominate bishops for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Confirmation of the candidates was left to the pope, who would then provide the canonical decrees. In the case of suffragan bishoprics of the Metropolia of Halych (since 1807 united to the Eparchy of L'viv and the successor to the Catholic Metropolia of Kyiv, which had become impossible for the Greco-Catholics to administer after the partitions of Poland and the occupation of much of Ukraine by Russia), the imperial government in Vienna would issue nominations, but the installation of the bishops would be decreed by the metropolitan.

In the case of Andrey Sheptytsky, the scion of a Polonized Ukrainian noble family, as Cyril Korolevsky points out in his biography, it is not likely that the government of Emperor Franz Josef was the initiator of his appointment as bishop of Stanyslaviv, since he was probably not known among government circles in Vienna. It is much more likely that this was initiated by Cardinal Ledochowski, prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (and thus in charge of Eastern Church affairs) who knew the young count personally. In any event, the imperial nomination was made on 2 February 1899, and accepted by the young monk Fr. Andrey some time after that, and only after Pope Leo XIII had personally ordered him to accept it. On 19 June his nomination was proclaimed in consistory and he was ordained a bishop 17 September and enthroned in Stanyslaviv three days later. When Metropolitan Julian Sas-Kuilovsky died eight months later, on 4 May 1900, Pope Leo XIII decided to make Sheptytsky the archbishop of L'viv and metropolitan of Halych. He personally informed Bishop Andrey of this on 29 October during an audience.

Franz Josef nominated him to this position two days later. He was proclaimed metropolitan on 17 December 1900 and enthroned in L'viv's St. George Cathedral on 12 January 1901. The whole affair had been orchestrated by Rome and Vienna without Sheptytsky's involvement in any negotiations. Leo XIII was not one to take a passive stance on matters that were of interest and concern to him.

Metropolitan Andrey faced enormous challenges as he led the UGCC through two World Wars and the successive regimes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, tsarist Russia, Poland, the USSR, and Nazi Germany. Even the title of metropolitan of Halych was denied him at times because – among other things – the Poles were hypersensitive to any claims that might see his jurisdiction enlarged to so-called Western Galicia, which stretched as far as Krakow. Like all of his predecessors in the archeparchy of L'viv, he also claimed the title of bishop of Kamianets-Podil'skyi (a see which was actually just across the border, within the Russian Empire), something that he saw as legitimating his aspirations to work for Church union in that empire. Sometime in early 1907 Metropolitan Andrey explained to Pope Pius X his interpretation of this title and the authority to work in the Russian Empire that it should carry with it. The pope agreed and told him to “use his right.” This was confirmed in writing by the pope in another audience on 14 February 1908. On 18 February he asked the Pope to grant him the rather broad faculties which Benedict XIV had approved *in forma specifica* for the Maronite patriarch after the 1736 Maronite Synod of Mount Lebanon.

Thus Metropolitan Andrey not only became the administrator of all the inactive Greco-Catholic eparchies of Ukraine and Belarus, but also received for the entire territory of the Russian Empire the same authority and jurisdiction that the Maronite patriarch had over his patriarchate. These faculties were supplemented on 28 December 1908 by those which were given to apostolic delegates in the Americas, also quite broad. All of this was done by Pope Pius X personally, without the knowledge of the Secretariat of State. The pope reconfirmed all of these faculties in 1909, 1910, and 1914. Thus, Metropolitan Andrey had the authority to elect and ordain