

## Without Vision the People Perish: An Appreciation of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation on its Twentieth Anniversary

Twenty years ago, during the Labour Day weekend of 1989, a group of visionaries met in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to found the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation (MASIF). They were determined to set a course for the future of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the western world. Each of the five Ukrainian Catholic eparchies of Canada would send a representative:

- Eparchy of New Westminster, British Columbia: Orest Smysniuk
- Eparchy of Edmonton, Alberta: Peter Kule
- Eparchy of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Mary Cherneskey
- Archeparchy of Winnipeg, Manitoba: Eugene Cherwick and Fr. Jaroslav Radkewycz
- Eparchy of Toronto: Luba Zaraska and Ihor Bardyn

In addition, there would be representatives from the Brotherhood of Ukrainian Catholics and the St. Sophia Society. These two organizations, however, did not continue to attend the meetings of the foundation. As founder and first director of the Sheptytsky Institute, I was also present.

The meeting was opened by its convener, Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk, the archbishop of Winnipeg, who explained that the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy of Canada had accepted the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies under its aegis and was proceeding with

negotiations to relocate the Institute from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (where it had been founded in 1986) to Saint Paul University in Ottawa. This effort was proclaimed the official project of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada to mark the centennial of Ukrainian settlement in Canada, which was rapidly approaching.

The singularly amazing fact is that this Church decided not to build a monument or dedicate a building somewhere to the commemoration of the great courage and determination of those Ukrainian pioneers who were so responsible for the settling of the Canadian prairies. This is what was expected. A bricks-and-mortar approach to things had long established itself as the preferred *modus operandi*. Instead, recognizing the challenges that the Church faced and the needs of their people, the Ukrainian Catholic bishops of Canada decided to invest in the intellectual and spiritual formation of human beings.

Let us remember some of the context. In September 1989, the Soviet Union was still in existence. The Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church in Ukraine was still a completely illegal entity. There was no theological faculty anywhere in the world that was sponsored and directed by Ukrainian Catholics, whose candidates for the priesthood had to do their theological education in Roman Catholic institutions, which may have been friendly and supportive, but were not offering a genuine theological immersion in the Eastern Christian tradition. To strike out into this field was risky business. Perhaps the undaunted pioneers who had left everything familiar and comfortable in order to venture out into the “last, best west” of Canada had prayed up a storm. They had arrived in the wilderness of western Canada with nary a roof over their heads, and they had made a go of it. Now, perhaps, they were egging on their descendants to venture out into similarly unfamiliar territory with the Sheptytsky Institute.

In September of 1989, the Sheptytsky Institute was a tiny undertaking with big dreams. Three rather successful summer programs at Holy Transfiguration (Mount Tabor) Monastery in Redwood Valley, California, had demonstrated that there was indeed demand for accredited, university-level education in Eastern Christian studies. Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk had

been watching the developments with keen interest. He kept in touch with me as the institute's founder, in order to remain well-informed. In fact, in those early years, it seems, Metropolitan Maxim was the only hierarch in the Ukrainian Catholic Church who took the Sheptytsky Institute seriously. This was unfortunate but not surprising because the institute was at best a fledgling enterprise. That is why Metropolitan Maxim's ability to see the potential of the Sheptytsky Institute is something that deserves mention and gratitude.

But the story of the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation goes far beyond the vision of Metropolitan Maxim and his brother bishops. It is the story, first of all, of great generosity and dedication on the part of the laypeople who have always made up the majority of its members. The bishops never chose to become members of the foundation or to have any guaranteed seats for themselves on its board of directors. They decided instead to entrust this work to a group of very gifted and very giving individuals.

All the members of the board have received the blessing of their own bishop to participate in this important undertaking. The story of Peter and Doris Kule and their deep philanthropic engagement with the Sheptytsky Institute and its Foundation have moved into the realm of both legend and history.<sup>1</sup> Their funding of two endowed chairs (with no government matching programs or anything of the like to lessen the load) was an integral part of the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation's overall achievement. There can be no doubt that it fostered trust in the Institute from both Saint Paul University and the general public, who were called upon to further fund the Institute's development.

The Kules, however, were not simply passive donors who made an incredibly generous donation and let others sweat out the details. Since the very beginning, Peter and Doris Kule have attended all meetings of the board, except when impeded

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<sup>1</sup> A recently published book gives a broad picture of the educational endowments created by Peter and Doris Kule, starting from the Sheptytsky Institute, but continuing throughout a number of post-secondary institutions across Canada. See Serge Cipko and Natalie Kononenko, eds., *Champions of Philanthropy: Peter and Doris Kule and their Endowments* (Edmonton and Ottawa: Kule Endowment Group, 2009), 27–39.

by a hospital stay. Peter Kule, a gifted accountant, would meticulously peruse every financial statement and look through the numbers regarding past performance or future expectation from the investment committee. Working out sums, percentages, and other formulae in his head, he could outdo the occasional calculator brought to the table by others. And then came his own work in the Edmonton Eparchy, where he tirelessly approached both individuals and organizations to have them invest in the enterprise of forming leaders for the future.

A special place in the history of the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation will always be reserved for its founding president, Eugene Cherwick. At the helm of the organization for all but three of its first twenty years, the representative of the Winnipeg archeparchy was always a key figure in the growth of MASIF and its relationship with Saint Paul University. Painstakingly attentive to the need for good lines of communication with the hierarchy and especially with the three metropolitans under whom he served, Eugene Cherwick donated untold hours of his expertise and his negotiating skills to ensure that the Sheptytsky Institute would have the best possible situation in the ever-developing arrangement with Saint Paul University. A fixture in the advisory committee that oversees the smooth working of this relationship, Eugene Cherwick has always brought his business savvy and his passion for the institute's mission to bear on each negotiation, large or small. It is no wonder that Eugene is welcomed by the university administration both as a friend of the university and a knowledgeable advocate for the institute. Eugene Cherwick also served on numerous occasions as an advisor and confidante to the Directors of the Sheptytsky Institute. The level of his dedication to the Institute can hardly be described. Eugene has dedicated himself to many cultural, educational and fraternal and religious causes over the more than two decades since he sold his own profitable business and became a "professional volunteer." They all have benefited from his leadership. But the Sheptytsky Institute would hardly be where it is at today without Eugene Cherwick so faithfully and so enduringly at the helm of its Foundation. Certainly, his long-suffering wife Lillian would have seen more of him in the last two decades! To them both the Sheptytsky Institute owes a deep debt of gratitude.

One of the greatest achievements of the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation was the working out of a fruitful funding relationship with Saint Paul University. A carefully negotiated agreement between the parties spells out who is responsible for funding which parts of the institute's programs. MASIF holds the endowments of the Sheptytsky Institute and makes periodic *donations* to Saint Paul University to assist with the budget of the institute. To date some eleven million dollars have flowed to the foundation with nearly five million having been donated to Saint Paul University. The balance is invested by the foundation to produce income out of which will come future donations to the university to support the institute.

In order to accomplish its goal of supporting the operation and development of the Sheptytsky Institute, immediately after its establishment, MASIF sought and received registration as a federally recognized charitable organization, from both the Canadian and United States governments. This status brings with it clear benefits for donors and for the management of the foundation's assets. It also brings with it strict reporting and accounting requirements. The officers of the foundation have done an outstanding job in this regard over two decades. In 1996 a parallel group, American Friends of the Sheptytsky Institute, based in Chicago, and headed by Dr. Andrew Browar, merged with the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation. Much of the legal work involved in the incorporation of the foundation, its charitable registration and the agreements with Saint Paul University were worked out by Toronto attorney Ihor Bardyn, whose efforts were so appreciated by the university that he was appointed to their council of administration by then-rector Dale Schlitt. This was an important sign of recognition both for the foundation and for Mr. Bardyn personally.

MASIF rightly concentrates its efforts on issues of the development and management of the institute's endowments. It has never been the case, however, that the board of directors limited itself to these matters. Intensely interested in the concrete activity of the institute, the board members tirelessly engage themselves in understanding every aspect of the institute's work. Detailed reports on both the academic and ad-

ministrative sides of the institute are received and actively discussed at each board meeting.

The director of the institute has always been present for each meeting of the foundation. When I, as institute founder, stepped down from the position of director for reasons of health in 2002, I was graciously given a permanent seat on the board. From that point on the acting director, Fr. Andrew Onuferko and then the current director, Fr. Stephen Wojcichowsky took over the role of reporting to the foundation (and through them to the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy of Canada). These reports offer a broad picture of the institute's work and will remain a critical resource for historians. At MASIF meetings they serve to assist the Board in understanding at some depth the mission and the breadth of activities of the Sheptytsky Institute.

Each eparchial representative is the focal point of communication between the community at large and the institute and foundation. Various eparchial representatives have made their mark in many ways, dedicating extensive time and energy to the effort. Whether it is organizing local events in the various provinces of Canada and venues in the United States, contacting and assisting donors with various questions, helping to find the best avenue for donation in particular cases, or performing such mundane tasks as tracking down addresses, the eparchial representatives have expended incredible efforts in some cases. One might call to mind such labours as that of Mrs. Mary Cherneskey, who single-handedly pulled together the address lists of all of the Ukrainian Catholic parishes of Saskatchewan for the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation, and as a fruit of her labours presented her own bishop with the first full mailing list of his eparchy. She thus enabled her own bishop to communicate effectively with his faithful, while providing the Sheptytsky Institute Foundation with a list of potential donors. Because the Sheptytsky Institute foundation has never had so much as a single collection in the churches of the various eparchies, mail communication was extremely important to inform the faithful of the Ukrainian Catholic Church across Canada about this official project of their Church. Of course, such mailing lists (more complete for some eparchies than others) have always been zealously protected from any untoward ex-

exploitation and in more recent years the Canadian government's privacy guidelines were adopted in order to further protect such mailing lists and all donor information. No address lists have ever been rented or sold to outside agencies.

The Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation is more than just an organization doing business on behalf of the Sheptytsky Institute: it has become a family. When MASIF veterans gather, they see in each other's faces a deep affection that has grown out of facing enormous challenges and meeting them together, year after year. New members are continually added to the roster. Some are there for a year or two, but others have dedicated themselves tirelessly for a decade or more. Luba Zaraska of Toronto has found ingenious ways to support the mission of the institute from the beginning right up to the present. Ed Hladunewich of Edmonton served as president for three years and has been on the board for many more. Walter Bilous dedicated himself to bringing the archives into top-notch condition, and Susanna Letwin continues. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the many professional accountants who have produced MASIF financial statements and filed our charitable returns over two decades.

Several bishops, including Stefan Soroka (now metropolitan of Philadelphia) and David Motiuk, have been elected to the board of directors. Recently, the Ukrainian Catholic bishops of Canada have decided to have an official liaison in the person of Bishop Stephen Chmilar. Whenever possible over the years, the board has tried to meet with the entire Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy of Canada. Metropolitans Maxim and Michael attended the meetings regularly, even though they chose not to be elected members. Every Ukrainian Catholic bishop is heartily welcomed to any meeting. Moreover, on many occasions the rector of Saint Paul University has made the effort to attend personally and offer greetings and thanks from the university administration. Additionally, the rector of Holy Spirit Seminary is always invited to board meetings given the important "feeder" relationship of seminary students into the institute. Both institutions, though clearly distinct, are the only two national projects of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada.

The foundation has a tradition of holding a festive dinner on the occasion of the annual general meeting. Since meetings, in recent years have most often been held in Ottawa, this affords the opportunity to foster excellent relations with top officials of the university, the chancellor (who is always the current archbishop of Ottawa), and the teaching and support staff of the Sheptytsky Institute. This is an occasion for the foundation to thank the indefatigable staff of the institute for all the work they do behind the scenes. These labours make possible not only the educational efforts of the institute, but also the development work of the foundation.

The foundation has also created a Friends of MASI/MASIF association whose purpose is to assist the eparchial directors at the parish level in promotion and development work. In the last few years the creation of an alumni association has become a priority. Such a group will be invaluable in encouraging future religious vocations and promoting post-graduate studies at the institute.

This is but the beginning of the story of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation. There are many more individual names without whom the chronicles of this entirely volunteer organization would be incomplete. Let this first attempt at telling their tale be accepted as the tip of the iceberg. To the president, the founding members, and to all who have given selflessly of themselves to further the aims of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation, including all the donors who have entrusted their generosity to the guidance of the board of directors, God grant life, health, visitation of the Holy Spirit, and keep and protect them for many blessed years: Многая літа!

Andriy Chirovsky  
Founder of the Sheptytsky Institute  
Editor-in-Chief

