

IV.

ROMAN SHEPTYTSKY AS AS A BASILIAN MONK

On Sunday, May 28, 1883, Count Ivan and Countess Sophia Sheptytsky brought their 23-year old son Roman Alexander to the Basilian novitiate in Dobromyl. With their own hands they surrendered him to the superiors of the Order for service to God. In her diary Countess Sophia Sheptytsky recorded the following about the difficulty her husband had in accepting his son's decision: "*His (her husband's) sacrifice was truly pure for he kept repeating that we should be grateful to God for our son, though we are not worthy of such a child. And he offered him whole-heartedly to God.*"

News about young Count Sheptytsky's joining the Ukrainian Basilian Order spread throughout Galicia. All the newspapers reported this event. Commentaries about the step taken by the young Polish Count abounded. The best explanation, however, was to be found later in his life. The step he had taken was completely voluntary and devoid of wordly calculations. His decision was as pure as the tears his father shed on parting with his son and as pure as the soul that burned in him with the sole desire of fulfilling God's holy will.

At the time young Count Sheptytsky joined the

Basilians, the Order was undergoing major reforms; discipline in the Order had become too lax and the Order was no longer carrying out its purpose. At that time, moreover, it was the only remaining Ukrainian monastic community. Reform of the Order was entrusted to Polish Jesuits, who for a number of reasons were not historically acceptable to Ukrainians. This caused discontent and precipitated protests among them. (Possibly it would have been better to commit the task of reformation to the Benedictines, the oldest monastic community in the Western Church. Besides, they shared a monastic spirit and structure common with the Basilian Order).

The Jesuit reform gave the Basilians centralization, an attribute so characteristic of later Western religious communities. Hitherto self-governing Basilian monasteries were gathered together into a province, with a protohegumen at the head. As more provinces were formed, they then were subordinated to a single protoarchimandrite with residence in Rome.

Without doubt this reform conducted by the Jesuits saved the Basilian Order and proved most beneficial for the Ukrainian Church. The reformers did not interfere with prevailing ritual matters or Basilian traditions; they limited themselves to reorganizing and strengthening discipline in the Order. To be sure, this reform broke with Eastern mo-