

**APPEAL OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS TO HIS
HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI EXPRESSED IN AN ADDRESS BY
HIS BEATITUDE JOSYF CARDINAL SLIPYJ**

Your Holiness:

We, the Bishops of the Ukrainian Church, come to you as successor of the Apostle St. Peter, Head of the holy apostolic Church.

The Vatican Council called upon the faithful to preserve the traditions and the precious heritage of the Eastern Church, and where due to various circumstances they were nearly forgotten or lost, these rich Christian traditions (theological, priestly-canonical, administrative, organizational, ritual and liturgical in character) are to be restored. Ukrainian Christianity is an ancient Christianity, and soon the Church of which we are the Pastors will be celebrating its 1000th anniversary of the official christening of the Ukrainian land and its people.

At this point it should be emphasized that the beginnings of our Christianity reach back to the apostolic times of St. Andrew, as evidenced by the unusual veneration, from the very inception of our Christianity, of the Roman Archbishops - saintly martyrs Pope Clement and Pope Martin.

We especially wish to emphasize the veneration of Pope Clement whose sacred relics have been found and preserved on the territory of our Church, and whose relics our Slavic teachers Saints Cyril and Methodius brought to the Roman Apostolic Throne. At their election the Kievan Metropolitans were blessed on the relics of this saintly Pope. Thus the unity between the Kiev Metropolia and the Roman Apostolic Throne was manifested even after the official split had occurred between the Roman and the Greek churches.

We are the Pastors of this Church which, as the Metropolia of Kiev and the entire Rus'-Ukraine, is known in historical documents and acts of the Roman Apostolic See up to the most recent times as the "Ruthenian Church", which also by its very name affirms the fact that this Metropolia is the Particular Church. The autonomy of this Church had also been guaranteed by the acts of the Florentine Council which was signed, as a fifth signatory, by our predecessor Izydor, Metropolitan of Kiev and the entire Rus'-Ukraine. For his loyalty and his efforts to restore unity in the Church of Christ, the Roman Pontiff honoured this Metropolitan by naming him a cardinal. The rights of our Church, as Particular Church in the Universal Church, were guaranteed also by the Council of Brest. We are the heirs to the inheritance of the Great Pastors of our Church led by Metropolitans, such as Izydor Rutsky, etc.

But leaving aside all documents and ancient history, we wish to stress the fact which is most painful to us and at the same time is the strength of our whole Church: Our Church is the Church of Martyrs and Confessors of the Faith. Since the beginning of the persecution of Christians in latter-day history, which by its brutality surpassed by far the persecutions of the early ages, our Church has given us thousands and hundreds of thousands Martyrs and Witnesses for the Faith who suffered for their loyalty to Christ and for their loyalty to the throne of Saint Peter. And this was the reason for my plea at