

Vocations in the Ukrainian Church

This report is taken from an address by His Excellency Monsignor Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, coadjutor with right of succession to His Eminence Cardinal Slipyj, Archbishop of Lviv, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. It was delivered at the International Congress on Vocations in Rome from 10-16 May 1981.

The report gives some useful statistical information on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and also shows that it is continuing to flourish despite the peculiarly difficult situation in which it finds itself both in its native land of Ukraine and in the diaspora. The Church in the Soviet Union has been outlawed since 1946, when it was compelled to accept "union" with the Russian Orthodox Church. (See p. 72 for further details —Ed.) The training, ordination and ministry of priests, bishops and religious is obviously extremely difficult for a church obliged to operate under conditions of total secrecy, and at the same time is of prime importance if the church is to survive. The two million Ukrainians living in emigration in various western countries have kept their religious traditions alive and seen them prosper despite being uprooted from their homeland.

On the eve of the Second World War, the Ukrainian Catholic Church was the largest branch of the eastern churches united to the Holy Apostolic See of Rome. Altogether, in the ecclesiastical province of Galicia and in Carpathian Ukraine there were five dioceses with ten bishops and two visitors, or apostolic administrators with the jurisdiction of bishops, in addition to 4,300,000 believers with 2,950 priests, 520 monks and friars, 1,000 nuns and 650 theological students. Organized religious life went on in 3,040 parishes with 4,400 churches and chapels and had a considerable influence on all social life, and so for example, the 9,900 elementary, 380 middle and, 56 higher schools remained under some direct influence of the Church. There were, besides, 41 Catholic organizations and together 38 Catholic newspapers and magazines.

This flourishing state of the Church changed radically with the occupation of Western Ukraine by Soviet troops who destroyed the whole administrative organization of the Ukrainian Church, making it illegal. It lives still in the catacombs and in a

clandestine manner. As we know, it is alive, there is no scarcity of new priests, men and women consecrate themselves to the Lord by monastic vows; even without the habit they lead a truly angelic life. Vocations continue to multiply. How, where, with what criteria?—no one can say and it is better for the present not to say. Our own reasons and considerations here cannot have any relevance. Often even parents themselves do not know that their daughter has become a nun, and workmates do not know that their friend is a priest if not a bishop. And no one says that they are not adequately prepared theologically and pastorally. The nun who has copied out the entire Bible by hand in order to read it subsequently to various ecclesiastical groups is sufficiently prepared to preach the Kingdom of Christ and to die for Christ.

The Ukrainian Church in the free world, scattered in western Europe, Canada, the United States of America, South America and Australia, has its own hierarchy with two ecclesiastical provinces, different dioceses and apostolic exarchates. It looks after diocesan and monastic clergy. Catholics of the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite total approximately 1,235,000; Orthodox brothers are fewer, that is to say around 645,000 in number, while about 100,000 Ukrainians are Protestants. Secular and monastic priests, including Basilians, Redemptorists, Salesians and Studiti number around 900 and these run 800 churches and chapels. They have 3 major and 3 minor seminaries. The 1,400 nuns, including Basilians, Handmaidens of the Immaculate Virgin, Catechists, and certain others, work in 335 Ukrainian schools, 12 hospitals and 8 orphanages. The Ukrainian Catholics have their own daily and 7 weekly newspapers, quite a few Catholic editions, cultural and social centres like kindergartens, nursery-schools, old people's homes, hostels, etc. I have named here those Catholic works in the measure that they are groups from which good vocations spring. So this year in the Pontifical Ukrainian Seminary of Saint Jehosaphat in Rome 28 pupils are studying, while in the Minor Ukrainian Seminary in Rome there are some 40 young people who come not only from the countries of Europe but also from other continents. Vocations depend in large measure on the spiritual

climate of the respective countries where our compatriots live. So, for example, Brazil with its rural emigration and with large families is for us a precious source of vocations with regard both to monastic and priestly life. The monastic province of the Basilians Fathers and the Maiden Sisters in Brazil is truly flourishing. The religious orders mentioned above, whether male or female, have their own study centres, novitiates and educational centres, where religious vocations grow and develop. Their number does not diminish, but is rather stable and highly qualified.

The Ukrainian Church, whether in its own country or in the diaspora, makes efforts successfully to resolve the question of vocations. The Lord helps visibly, send-

ing priests, monks and nuns full of apostolic zeal, abnegation and sacrifice. The sons of this Church can be found also in some countries of central Europe: about half a million in Poland, in the Diocese of Presov in Czechoslovakia, and in that of Krizevic in Yugoslavia.

The problem of vocations in the Ukrainian Church, which finds itself in a quite exceptional situation, is posed in a very real way every day and is resolved everywhere in a quite satisfactory manner. We can say with true satisfaction that the Lord watches over it and sends his labourers to the vineyard, as he promised.

Translated from Italian by Anne Walters

Study Course 1983

During the period February to May 1983, Keston College plans to hold a thirteen-week study course for graduates and undergraduates. Lectures will be given by Keston College staff and others, including Professor Leonard Schapiro, Peter Reddaway and Vladimir Bukovsky. A foundation course and eight elective courses including various aspects of religious life in the Soviet Union and Poland, Christianity and Communism, and nationality and religion under communism, will be offered. Students are to be located with local families.

Provisional cost: \$4,000.

Prospectus available from:

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(Information only available from:
SSRC, P.O. Box 2310, Orange, CA. 92669.)