



*УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦЕРКВА В КАНАДІ*  
*UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA*  
*L'ÉGLISE ORTHODOXE UKRAINIENNE DU CANADA*

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**PRIMATIAL ENCYCLICAL**  
**TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA:**  
**REGARDING THE QUESTION OF ADOPTION OF THE**  
**REVISED JULIAN CALENDAR BY THE**  
**UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA**

Your Grace Bishop Andriy,  
Honourable Father Presbyters & Deacons in Christ,  
Beloved in Christ Brothers & Sisters!

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The XXIII Sobor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, convened in the God-protected city of Winnipeg in July 2015, referred Resolution R3 (on “the adoption of the Gregorian or Revised Julian Calendar”) to the Council of Bishops and Liturgical Commission. Admittedly, this topic quickly descended on the list of concerns and priorities in the UOCC and was left virtually unattended to. So much has changed, however, since 2015 and the XXIII Sobor of our Church! Most impactful and dramatic among these, particularly for Ukrainians both in our ancestral homeland and in dispersion around the globe, is the illegal and genocidal full-scale war waged by Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022.

The resolution of the XXIII Sobor is, most certainly, not the only instance of discussion of the relevance of continuing to employ the Julian Calendar in the liturgical life of the UOCC – the topic has been discussed regularly and frequently in our parishes and at eparchial assemblies. Without doubt, however, the need for a decision in the UOCC on this issue has been expedited by the war in Ukraine. In particular, the recent decision by the All-Ukrainian Sobor of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to adopt the Revised Julian Calendar (commencing 01 September 2023) has resulted in greatly amplified interest in deciding the “calendar question” in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada.

My beloved ones, your Metropolitan hears you! I understand and acknowledge fully that further delay of discussion of this topic is no longer viable nor is it beneficial for the UOCC.

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To begin the process of formulating my decision regarding adoption of the Revised Julian Calendar by the UOCC, I convened an online All-Canada Clergy Conference on 18 August 2023. Following this informative gathering, I now wish to hear from you, the faithful of our beloved Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. While the goal is not to hear, “what the Metropolitan must do,” or to “take a vote on the calendar,” I do hope to hear your *thoughts, concerns, and opinions* on the matter of a potential modification of our liturgical life by adopting an alternative ecclesiastical calendar. To this end, I offer the following for your consideration...

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As Canadians of Ukrainian descent, Ukrainians for whom Canada is home, spouses of the latter or former – regardless our identity, we have regulated our ecclesiastical life according to the Julian (“Old”) Calendar as Ukrainian Orthodox in this country for approximately five generations. On the one hand, it has been a cherished mark of our uniqueness within our nation’s multicultural mosaic and has offered a measure of comfort, allowing us to celebrate our Church feasts and fasts, removed from Western ecclesiastical tradition, secularism, and commercialism; simply put, it has defined “who we aren’t.”

On the other hand, as each successive generation has had to confront the usual consequences of assimilation, inter-marriage, etc., our sustained adherence to the Julian Calendar has, unfortunately, diminished its value as a missionary instrument for growing the Orthodox faith in Canada and sanctification or churching of our nation. In reality, there are hundreds of faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada who have, for many years, taken advantage of the presence of two calendars and adopted a “blend” of both worlds. This is, of course, most apparent during the Nativity season, for example. How many times has the following been expressed by our faithful: “December 25<sup>th</sup> is commercialized, but we still celebrate and exchange gifts because that’s when everyone has time off. ‘Our Christmas’ on January 7<sup>th</sup> – that’s more of a religious holiday.” In summary, in the Canadian context, the “calendrical line” for Ukrainian Orthodox has become increasingly blurred with the passing of time. Finally, the reality that most Orthodox in Canada, today, have worshipped according to the Revised Julian Calendar for decades deserves our consideration as well.

My intent is not to reproduce in this encyclical an entire comprehensive, detailed list of facts about the calendars. I do want to ensure, nevertheless, that we have a clear understanding of the function of the calendar in the life of the Church:

1) The calendar is an instrument by which the Church sanctifies time. That is to say, we are in a constant struggle for our salvation and eternal life, and that struggle is ordered liturgically throughout the year by a calendar that allows our full participation in the life Christ, through feasts and fasts commemorating essential aspects in our Lord’s earthly sojourn, those of His Most Holy Mother, the Theotokos, and of the saints of His Holy Church, who left us a rich inheritance of good examples of success in this struggle for holiness.

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2) The ecclesiastical calendar does not regulate how we mark these salvific events with our “small ‘t’ traditions” or folk customs. The ecclesiastical calendar does note, each year, *when* the feasts and fasts of the Church take place (and their duration), because of canonical decisions establishing the dates on which these commemorations/fasts are to be marked. For example, Nativity Eve will always be a day of strict fasting, whether it falls on January 6<sup>th</sup> – at present – or – potentially – on December 24<sup>th</sup>. If families prefer to gather for a “Holy Supper” on a specific day, the ecclesiastical calendar “offers no comment” regarding such a decision. Another example: we commemorate the Holy Hierarch and Wonderworker Nicholas of Myra in Lycia on December 19<sup>th</sup> – at present – and could – potentially – commemorate him on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Which day families choose to exchange gifts, however, is not an issue relevant to the ecclesiastical calendar.

3) Our determination to change calendars ought not be driven by secular politics, nostalgia, or emotion based on the present state of our world. As a person born and raised in Ukraine, a country neighbouring a despotic and ruinous neighbour who has, throughout history, utterly denied the very existence of the Ukrainian nation, people, culture, and language, I understand completely the present logic and desire of Ukrainians to eliminate any commonality with Russia. However, I serve in the office of Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada – I must ensure that any decision regarding our ecclesiastical calendar *will be first and foremost beneficial for the salvation of the faithful comprising the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*. I must ensure that whatever calendar we adhere to, we are edified by it and, by it, are able to sanctify this nation and evangelize Canada, calling her people to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) and into His Holy Orthodox Church.

### III. ENGAGEMENT IN CHURCH-WIDE DISCUSSION

Having presented the above for your prayerful consideration, **I bless all parish priests and the faithful in all parishes and parish districts of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to begin engaging, without delay, in discussion regarding the potential change of ecclesiastical calendar.** The discussion of this issue and submission of comments resulting from this discussion shall take place according to the following order and guidelines:

- 1) Each parish priest is instructed to convene a gathering in their parish or parish district and lead the discussion on the potential change of the ecclesiastical calendar in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to the Revised Julian Calendar. The session will open with prayer and the reading of this encyclical. Each parish priest is responsible for recruiting any assistant(s) he may require to aid in maintaining good order and record comments expressed at these gatherings and, if needed, help compile these comments into a summary document which accurately reflects the opinions of the participants at the gathering.
- 2) Each participant should feel free to express their opinion on the matter. All statements should be expressed in a calm, respectful manner, with concise statements, and without imposition of individual will on others. No individual participant should seek to monopolize or dominate the discussion. At the conclusion of the gathering the priest ought to seek the collective opinion of the parish – whether a change of calendar is supported or not supported.

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- 3) Following these parish gatherings, each parish priest is to share the summary document with their parish or parish district council and have it entered as information into the minutes of the meeting at which it was presented. The summary document is to be sent to the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, together with a covering letter signed by the parish priest and the parish council president.
- 4) **All summary documents should be submitted electronically (e-mail: [rudnyk1@telus.net](mailto:rudnyk1@telus.net)) or in hard copy (11404-112 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5G 0H6) to the Metropolitan by 01 October 2023.**
- 5) **The Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, on behalf of the Council of Bishops, will announce his decision on the potential change of ecclesiastical calendar for the UOCC by 01 December 2023.**

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Beloved in Christ! The decision to change the calendar which has navigated the liturgical life of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada for more than a century is not a simple one, nor should it be considered lightly. I trust in your good discernment and in your desire to help your Metropolitan decide on a good solution which will help us, our children, and our children's children struggle for holiness, salvation, and eternal life the God's Heavenly Kingdom!

May God help us all in our good works!

With primatial blessings &  
paternal love in Christ, the Lord,



ILARION, METROPOLITAN  
ARCHBISHOP OF WINNIPEG & THE CENTRAL EPARCHY  
PRIMATE OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA

**Proclaimed: 25 August 2023**

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