

UKRAINIAN UKRAЇНСЬКІ ВІСТІ NEWS

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Canada



Orthodox faithful deserve an open dialogue

In a letter to the editor, published alongside this editorial, the Rev. Fr. Cornell Zubritsky of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada (UOCC) takes exception to my editorial decision to run a recent opinion piece entitled "Christian? No. Orthodox? Apparently so." by Larissa Bayrachny, who submitted it on behalf of the Brotherhood for the Revitalization of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in Canada, which she described as "a group of private individuals concerned about the future of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada".

In his letter Fr. Zubritsky takes me to task for deciding "to forego any fact-finding about the issues raised in this opinion piece" before printing it. While he refers to "facts", he neglects to mention any concrete facts in his letter, nor does he address any of the issues raised by Bayrachny. It appears that Fr. Zubritsky's main objection is to the fact I allowed it to be printed in the first place. Printing an opinion piece doesn't necessarily mean that it is the position of a newspaper, nor even that we agree with it. It is simply a recognition of the fact that the writer has addressed an issue that deserves to be aired in a public debate, and done so in a thoughtful manner. Basically it's called freedom of expression.

Back in April, when I reported on the issue which generated this opinion piece, namely the order issued by His Eminence, The Most Rev. Metropolitan Yuriy (Kalistchuk), forbidding UOCC clergy from meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC – KP) during his visit to Canada, I attempted to consult with Metropolitan Yuriy to get his side of the story. I contacted Marusia Kaweski of the Office of Communications of the UOCC with a request for a statement from Metropolitan Yuriy and was told to contact him personally. I sent an e-mail to his address and left voice messages on both his telephone lines, but got no response.

When Bayrachny sent me her article, I read it and found it to be a thoughtful and articulate piece by a devoted believer who is deeply concerned about the direction her Church is heading in, particularly in respect to its relations with the Church in Ukraine. Also from talking with Orthodox faithful I understand that many others are also concerned about relations with the Church in Ukraine and what Bayrachny says reflects the views of a significant group. Her piece could be considered a plea for transparency and an open discussion of some very serious issues. As such, that article deserved to see the light of day.

I can appreciate that the UOCC finds itself in a very difficult and painful position regarding its relationship with the Kyiv Patriarchate. I am quite certain that deep in their hearts, the clergy of the UOCC would like nothing better than to recognize the Kyiv Patriarchate as a canonical church for Ukraine and maintain normal relations with it. Doing so, however, goes against the position of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople who recognizes the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate as the only canonical church in Ukraine. Defying the Ecumenical Patriarch by recognizing the Kyiv Patriarchate runs the risk of repercussions that may even lead to the UOCC itself losing its canonical status.

However, I do not believe that Ukrainian News was promoting divisive behaviour by printing Bayrachny's piece. Instead we were allowing a voice to some devout believers who were expressing some very serious concerns. I would certainly welcome a response from the hierarchy of the UOCC to the issues raised by Bayrachny, including a rebuttal of any of the claims she makes that the UOCC believes are incorrect and would gladly publish them. An independent press should provide a forum for a wide range of opinion. But, painful as the whole matter of relations between the UOCC and the UOC – KP can be, I do not believe this is an issue that should be ignored – instead it is one that needs to be addressed in an open dialogue. (Marco Levytsky)

Harper commemorates Holodomor

(PMO)—Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Nov. 21 issued the following statement commemorating the 79th anniversary of the Holodomor:

"I invite all Canadians to pause this Saturday and honour the millions of men, women and children — mostly Ukrainian, but also some Kazakhs and Russians — who perished during the 1932-1933 famine-genocide perpetrated by the barbaric communist regime of Josef Stalin.

"By sending political leaders, clergy and academics to gulags, and cruelly depriving innocent families of the crops and livestock necessary to live, the Soviets sought to extinguish Ukrainian nationalism.

"But the spirit of the Ukrainian people could not be vanquished. Its sons and daughters persevered through those and other dark times to rebuild and ultimately cast off Soviet shackles, fighting for the values we

cherish today: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

"We are very proud to have more than one million people of Ukrainian descent in our country, many of whom lost loved ones in this atrocious act of malevolence, the Holodomor. Our Government recognizes their loss. In 2008, Canada became the first country to recognize this stain on humanity as an act of genocide, and was the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Two years ago, I had the honour of paying my respects to victims at the Holodomor Memorial and Museum in Kyiv, Ukraine.

"This weekend, I encourage Canadians to join Ukrainian Canadians at Holodomor ceremonies across the country commemorating those who perished during this sad chapter in their history.

"Vichnaya Pamyat (in everlasting remembrance)."

Bezan remembers Holodomor victims

(Office of MP James Bezan)—In recognition of the 79th anniversary of the Holodomor genocide in Ukraine, James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, spoke at a number of events during Holodomor Awareness Week.

Bezan said in the House of Commons, "Mr. Speaker, this week we remember and raise awareness of the Holodomor, the horrific and catastrophic famine of 1932-33 that claimed the lives of millions of Ukrainian men, women and children. The Holodomor was a genocide by starvation, perpetrated by the ruthless regime of Joseph Stalin, in an attempt to stamp out the people of Ukraine's aspirations for a free and independent country. Communities across Canada this week will be holding memorial services to honour the memory of those who perished."

At the Holodomor service on the Hill, Bezan shared his thoughts on the tragic anniversary of this event.

Bezan stressed how important it was "to honour the memories of those who suffered and those who perished in one of the worst genocides that the world has ever witnessed. We need to always remember those victims and remember the horror that was poured out on Ukraine in 1932 and 1933."

"Josef Stalin and his communist thugs, and his sympathizers... invaded the homes of Ukrainian nationalists, not for collectivization, not to force their ideology upon them, but they wanted to extinguish the Ukrainian nationalist dream," stated Bezan.

Bezan put forward a Private Member's Bill in 2008, The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, that officially recognized the fourth Saturday of every November as Holodomor Memorial Day and that Canada officially recognizing the Holodomor as genocide.

Duncan remembers Holodomor victims

(Office of MP Linda Duncan)—Linda Duncan NDP, Edmonton-Strathcona rose in Parliament on Nov. 22 to remember the victims of the Ukrainian "Holodomor" famine/genocide.

Below is the text of her statement.

"Mr. Speaker, this week, we remember Ukrainians who died tragically in the Holodomor famine genocide of 1932 to 1933. In Ukrainian, the term Holodomor means death by starvation. This deadly famine genocide was engineered and organized on a vast scale by Stalin and the Soviet authorities, causing the deaths of millions due to imposed starvation.

"I was deeply moved on one of my recent trips to Ukraine to visit the Holodomor memorial in Kyiv to pay my respects.

"Commemoration of the Holodomor is particularly important given that this terrible crime against Ukrainian people was denied and unspoken for so many decades. However, no more. Every fourth Saturday in November, the Ukrainian community and all Canadians commemorate the victims of the Holodomor.

"This Saturday, I will stand with the Ukrainian Canadian community at the Holodomor memorial in Edmonton, the first public monument in the world to commemorate the victims of the famine genocide in Ukraine.

"I encourage all Canadians to learn more about the Holodomor and to take a moment this week to reflect upon this tragedy and its impact on its victims and all Ukrainians."

Editor blasted for providing a voice for dissident Orthodox faithful

Re: "Christian? No. Orthodox? Apparently so." by Larissa Bayrachny (*Ukrainian News*, October 25 – November 7, 2012, Vol. LXXXV, No. 21, p. 6)

Mr. Levytsky:

I wish to express my extreme disappointment with your choice to print the above-mentioned opinion piece. Quite frankly, I consider it very insulting to suggest (by the title) that I or my church is somehow "not Christian" because the Church does not march to the decision-making drum of special interests who are determined to weave their own politics into the life of the Body of Christ. It is fascinating how much we as a Ukrainian community continually become engaged with and pay attention to those who *speak* of unity while, quite ironically, *act* by working to divide...

Considering you know the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada has a ruling bishop of its Western Eparchy resident here, in Edmonton (along with three members of its Consistory; two more in Calgary), available for consultation about such matters, I am surprised that you, Mr. Levytsky, made the decision to forego any fact-finding about the issues raised in this opinion piece and opted instead for sensation and controversy. While that may sell newspapers, can you expect me to support *Ukrainian News* when it seems you are more than willing to use it to insult me and the church I serve?

Letter to the Editor

This type of polemic is, for me, reminiscent of the religion-based "smear wars" battled out on the pages of Ukrainian-Canadian periodicals of decades past. Thankfully, that destructive and divisive behaviour has long-since disappeared. Alas, there are those who, for whatever reason, are unhappy "де згода в родині, де мир і тишина" in the Church and need to stir the proverbial pot to be happy; now, it seems you, Mr. Levytsky, are willing to sacrifice the integrity of *Ukrainian News* in support of this attempt at disharmony and to be a platform and voice for "a group of private individuals concerned for the future of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada..." rather than a *conveyor of the facts* about how the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada makes its decisions and forms opinions about the various challenges this age presents us.

Should you choose to continue to promote this divisive behaviour, I'm sure you'll understand that as a priest of the very church you have played a part in insulting, I cannot continue to endorse *Ukrainian News* in my community. If however, you wish to report the facts about issues in the UOCC, we are at your disposal...

Priest Cornell Zubritsky, Edmonton, AB