

## ***The Process of the Selection of a Metropolitan for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada***

As Orthodox Christians, we believe that there is ONE God, who has revealed Himself in THREE persons. This is why our faith life and experience always calls us to live in community, and to live out our salvation in, with and through *community*. This may be put another way – we are all part of something greater.

It is in this same vein that the process of selecting a metropolitan, primate, and chief hierarch for our beloved Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada (UOCC) is very much a “*sobornyj*” (“conciliar”) process that involves the whole of the church, all the people of God that make up the Church here on earth. In the case of the UOCC, this now *also* includes the involvement and participation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, acting through her Holy and Sacred Synod of Bishops, presided over by His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew.

The purpose of this article is to attempt to lay out the necessary and sequential steps involved in this process. The Consistory Board of the UOCC, at its Spring meeting on Friday afternoon, April 16, 2010, collectively discerned that there are *eight (8)* steps in this process, pursuant to the *By-Laws of the UOCC, (2008,)* the “*Articles of Agreement Between the UOC of Canada and (the) Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople,*” as well as pursuant to the established norms and practices of the UOCC, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

It is perhaps noteworthy that during the Consistory Board’s collective deliberations, the eighth (and last,) step was identified first – that is the formal installation of a new metropolitan in his see, in his cathedral, that is in Winnipeg. This step *cannot under the present procedures occur on the Sunday at the conclusion of a Sobor*. This is a change from the practice that the UOCC had, prior to our agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, (1990,) through the selection of His Beatitude Metropolitan Wasyly, of blessed memory, at the XVIIth Sobor in 1985.

The installation cannot happen on the Sunday concluding the Sobor because *the decision of the Sobor of the UOCC* requires the *ratification* of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the

Patriarchate of Constantinople, *prior to* the installation. (Article #6 in the *Articles of Agreement*)

The seven preceding steps, before the eighth step of the installation of a new metropolitan are as follows.

### **First**

The metropolitan “shall serve as such until: ... he resigns or retires...” (By-Law 5.02(b)) The immediate question that arises is who is informed of this, or more precisely, to whom does the metropolitan submit a notice to this effect? The response is that this notice is submitted (as noted in the “Visnyk,” May 2010 issue on the front page,) to the Council of Bishops, the Consistory Board, and the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The first step then is that, in addition to the hierarchy and administration of the UOCC, the Ecumenical Patriarch receives the notice seeking, in the present case, retirement.

### **Second**

The Ecumenical Patriarch presides over the Holy and Sacred Synod. (This currently is a body of twelve further bishops, [in addition to the Ecumenical Patriarch himself,] who gather monthly in Istanbul from all over the world for these two to three day meetings.) The notice seeking retirement is presented by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew, to the Holy and Sacred Synod for the Synod’s acceptance.

### **Third**

Pursuant to the By-Laws of the UOCC, (5.12) there are two bodies that have to come to an agreement *before* a candidate can be presented to a Sobor for election as a metropolitan.

In the first place, the ***Sobor (Council) of Bishops*** meet and select *name(s) of candidate(s)*. (By-Law 5.12) The Sobor of Bishops is at liberty to propose ***one or more candidates***. It is further noteworthy that the Sobor of Bishops, *including the present metropolitan, as chairman*, has, at this point in the process, the freedom to select from its own ranks, and / or can select a candidate(s) from beyond the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. As well, the Sobor of Bishops can choose to present candidates who are not bishops, or even priests or deacons.

### **Fourth**

Once the Sobor of Bishops has met, and determined the *name(s) of candidate(s)*, it presents these names to the Consistory Board. (By-Law 5.12)

The Consistory Board then meets, to accept the decision of the Sobor of Bishops regarding the name (or names) of the candidate(s) for metropolitan.

It is implicitly taken that the Sobor of Bishops may recommend to the Consistory Board a preference in the order of the candidates, if more than one are presented. It is further understood that the Consistory Board may accept such a preference, or may express an alternate order of preference. Pursuant to the By-Laws of the UOCC, long-standing practice, and especially in deference to the principle of “sobornopravnist,” there must however, be a consensus, or “meeting of the minds” as between the Sobor of Bishops and the rest of the Consistory Board in order for the Consistory Board to present a candidate(s) to the Sobor.

In any event, the Consistory Board is then called to make a decision for the presenting of a (or the) name(s) of candidate(s) for election as Metropolitan to the Sobor of the UOCC.

#### **Fifth**

The Sobor of the UOCC convenes. (In this case, on Wed. July 14, 2010.) The Consistory Board presents the candidate(s) for the office of Metropolitan to the Sobor. *It is the SOBOR (General Council) that elects the metropolitan of the church.* (By-Law 5.02) The reason that such an individual *does not immediately become metropolitan* is further contained in the same By-Law, (5.02,) “... and shall be presented to the Patriarchal Synod for approval.”

#### **Sixth**

As noted in the “Visnyk,” May, 2010, on the front page, our current metropolitan’s retirement is effective the end of the Sobor, (July 18, 2010.) At this point in time, By-Law 5.03 would be applicable. “In the event the office of Metropolitan shall be vacated, (in this case by the retirement becoming effective,) the next ranking senior Bishop shall serve in that office on *an interim basis* with the title of locum tenens.” (Emphasis added.) At this point in time, the “chief hierarch” of the UOCC carries the “title” of *locum tenens* (*Latin for “one filling an office for a time or temporarily taking the place of another.”*)

#### **Seventh**

The decision of the Sobor (General Council) of the UOCC (regarding specifically the *election of the (new) Metropolitan*) is conveyed by the *locum tenens* to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

As in the second step, above, the Ecumenical Patriarch, presiding over the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, then presents the decision of the Sobor of the UOCC to the Holy and Sacred Synod.

\*\*\* It is at this point in time that there is a little understood divergence in practice as between the internal governance of the UOCC, and the practice of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, particularly with respect to the “*election*” (or “*approval*”) by the Holy and Sacred Synod of metropolitans, (and bishops, generally.)

In the first place, as noted above, the candidate for metropolitan of the UOCC may not necessarily be a bishop, or even a priest or deacon. (He would however, by this point in time need to be a monastic.) The Holy and Sacred Synod would need to approve his consecration as a bishop, *since he would thereby become a bishop of the Ecumenical Throne.*

In the second place, and more relevant to the process for the UOCC of selecting a metropolitan is the following. The long-standing practice of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is that a metropolitan is always “*elected*” or chosen out of a “slate” of candidates, which numbers three individuals.

In other words, for the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to “*elect*” (or “*approve*”) or “ratify” the choice for metropolitan of the UOCC, *as elected by the Sobor of the UOCC*, the practice of the Holy and Sacred Synod is such that the Synod chooses one from a “slate” of three.

The Holy and Sacred Synod then “elects” (or “approves,” or “ratifies”) the candidate for metropolitan, thereby making him *metropolitan-elect* of the UOCC. This completes the seventh step, but for communicating this decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod back to the UOCC.

### **Eighth**

The installation of a new metropolitan is a most significant event in the life of a church body such as our UOCC. It is a widely announced proclamation and inauguration into the

highest office of the church. It is for this reason that every effort needs to be made to make such an event worthy of the office, and especially for the glory of God.

In the case of the UOCC, this event necessarily takes place in Winnipeg, where the new metropolitan is formally enthroned in his cathedral, by the Ecumenical Patriarch, or usually, someone acting in his place to do so.

### Concluding thoughts

As one can see, the process for the selection of a metropolitan for our UOCC involves numerous meetings, deliberations, and communication.

Above all else though, this process calls for the active, fervent participation by the whole church in praying for God's blessings on and through this whole process.

“Our” Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada – God’s Holy Church is near and dear to us all. We wish and therefore need to pray that God guide and inspire us all to do the very best we can for our church, and at this time, that includes praying that the process of selecting a new metropolitan be a unifying and sanctifying one for all the members of the church, and for all God’s children beyond our church that they too, may come to the “knowledge of the True Light”. May God help us all.

*by Fr. Taras Udod, Secretary of the Presidium of the Consistory, and Fr. Gregory Mielnik, Vice-Chair of the Presidium of the Consistory, members of the “Episcopal Search and Development Committee,” (of the Consistory of the UOCC.)*