



ВІСНИК the HERALD

• LE MESSAGER • LE MESSAGER •



1924 – Birth of *The Herald* 95th Anniversary of the *Visnyk / The Herald*

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95th Anniversary of the *Visnyk / The Herald*

In April 1924 the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada launched its official informational organ *The Orthodox Herald / Pravoslavnyi Vistnyk*. 2019 year marks 95 years of publication. Over the course of the celebratory year, we will feature historical materials about the UOCC through the eyes of the *Visnyk / The Herald*. We begin with the highlights of the very first issue and the first year of publication.

The paper was originally named *Pravoslavnyi Vistnyk / Православний Вістник*, or *The Orthodox Herald* in English. The editor was listed as Rev. Wasyl Kudryk, but then—Chancellor Rev. Semen Sawchuk had a large hand in shaping the paper's direction. Fr. Sawchuk was a prominent Church leader who played a great role in the missionary work and development of the UOCC.

The front cover of the first issue featured a Resurrectional icon with the *Христос Воскрес / Christ is Risen* greeting of Easter and an editorial message introducing the new publication and its purpose. "*The Orthodox Herald* has appeared in order to promote the interests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada." The message expressed gratitude to the *Ukrainian Voice*, which had been printing the Church's articles, but this backing had cost the *Voice* readership by 1924. It was time that the Church had its own paper, noted the message. Growing rapidly with the influx of the post-WWI wave of Ukrainian immigrants,

the Church required a forum to feature materials exclusively for its mission. It aimed to "provide a place for articles on purely religious matters."

"The English papers are writing more and more about the degradation of English society. Religious attendance is down, moral standards have fallen. The home has stopped being the hearth of family life, children lack respect for parents..." This is not last week's homily from 2014, but a moral essay by Fr. Sawchuk in the summer of 1924. The article reflects the great need at that time for what was called "moral topics"—basic catechism and religious education to instill and explain Orthodox Christian virtues and morality for leading a pious life.

Most importantly, *The Orthodox Herald* came out in Ukrainian using the colourful dialect predominant at this time. While it may be hard to fathom in our information age, a century ago there was an information vacuum. Many of the new immigrants lacked sufficient fluency to read the local English-language press. There was little space in the Ukrainian language press for the desired "social-moral" topics that the Church leaders had in mind. Furthermore, without regular worship services, especially during the harsh prairie winters, the printed homilies and educational materials solidified the connection to Church life.

continued on the inside back cover

In *The Orthodox Herald* Fr. Sawchuk fashioned a unique Ukrainian Orthodox educational tool. With zeal and pride, he wrote many articles over the first year about Orthodoxy and Ukrainian heritage. Putting his public relations and marketing skills to work, Fr. Sawchuk transmitted the vision of the young Church through the pages of the paper. At the same time, he shaped the mindset of its readers, hoping to instill Orthodox values into the lifestyles of the readers and grow the Church. Fr. Sawchuk's many articles also helped to foster the Ukrainian identity in Canada. A sizeable chunk of the membership came from Bukovyna and Volyn. 1924 saw many articles devoted to the history of Orthodoxy in Bukovyna and Volyn, such as the long running series, "Orthodoxy in Bukovyna and a Bukovynian in Canada."

The first issue was 8 pages long, coming out once a month with 12 issues per year. By December 1925 the paper doubled its size to 16 pages. The subscription cost was \$1 per year, which equals about \$13 today. Notably, this is half of the present cost of an annual subscription—at a dramatically different earning power. In 1924 most of the Ukrainian immigrants could hope to make about 10 cents per hour, or \$1 per day. The first *Ridna Nyva* in 1926 called *The Almanac of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada* cost a whopping \$5, the equivalent of \$68. This is more than double the price of the *Ridna Nyva* today.

The editors filled the pages with both serious and lighter materials. Topics included: salvation, the history of Christianity, writings by the Church Fathers and saints, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, Bible

readings, Christmas carols with music, poetry, parish announcements, worship schedules and news items about Canadian society. Later, it took on the role of explaining aspects of Canadian life to the newcomers. The early years of the paper also provide for us today a valuable record of social life in the parishes through announcements, visitations listings and stories about parish building plans. Jokes and anecdotal stories offered some entertainment, but they always ended with a moral teaching. While Canada may have experienced a post-war boom in the 1920s, some stories reminded readers why many left their homeland. One news report in Spring 1924 told of a Bolshevik court in Odesa reversing a death penalty sentence for a Kherson bishop for contra-revolutionary activities, instead exiling him.

By 1925 donations to the UGOCC were being printed, testifying to the generosity of the faithful and importance of their Orthodox faith. The largest donation was \$50, equal to \$682 today. Most donations were in the \$5-\$10 range, equal to \$68-\$137. Nevertheless, Fr. Sawchuk appeared to encounter the same problem of encouraging donations as found today. Viewing this challenge as a teaching opportunity, Fr. Sawchuk penned a set of articles in 1925 called, "The people who do not care about their institutions and organizations: Generosity and miserliness and their consequences."

The Church's official newspaper paints a fascinating picture of the UOCC faithful, parish growth and the role of the media in religious education over the course of 95 years. We will be sharing this heritage with our readers over the anniversary year.