

# Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS STATEMENT

Христос Воскрес!

Christ is Risen!

DATE: June 12, 2013

### Statement from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada on Inaccurate Media Reports

**WINNIPEG, MB** - The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada wishes to draw the attention of the media and members of the public to inaccurate references in reporting on the Archbishop Seraphim (Storheim) trial currently taking place in Winnipeg, MB.

Our concern stems from these inaccurate references possibly damaging the reputations of other jurisdictions, such as our own, and misinforming the public not well versed in the specifics of Orthodox Church administrative divisions.

In particular, we note the following media reports containing erroneous references. We highlight the incorrect wording and provide explanations below:

- 1) The CBC news posted on its website on June 10, 2013 an article titled “Orthodox archbishop's sex assault trial set to begin: Kenneth William Storheim on trial for alleged abuse involving boys.” This article states in its first sentence, “The trial of Canada's **highest-ranking Orthodox Church cleric**, accused of sexually abusing boys over two decades ago, is set to begin today in Winnipeg”;
- 2) The CBC radio Winnipeg morning news on June 10, 2013 carried a similar report at 8:34 a.m. about the commencement of this trial. This news report also cited the term “**highest-ranking Orthodox Church cleric**”;
- 3) Global news on June 10 carried a television report and posted a website news report titled “Ex-altar boy testifies at archbishop’s sex trial” that stated, “A man who was an altar boy years ago testified Monday that a **cleric in the Orthodox Church in America...**”

We wish to point out that the references used in relation to the Orthodox Church and to Archbishop Seraphim in these news reports are inaccurate and that these incorrect references impact on the reputations of other Orthodox Church jurisdictions.

- 1) Firstly, Archbishop Seraphim is a hierarch within the Orthodox Church of America. It is important to distinguish that the Orthodox Church has many jurisdictions in the world and specifically in Canada. For example, in Canada some of the jurisdictions include: the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada), Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada and Coptic Orthodox Church. Further, each of these examples of Orthodox Church jurisdictions is part of a different Patriarchal administration. In other words, Archbishop Seraphim is attached to a particular Orthodox

Church in a particular administrative region. He does not have administrative or ecclesiastical privileges in the other Orthodox Church jurisdictions unless he has been granted permission to do so by the ruling hierarchs of his Church and the other jurisdictions, should he wish to serve or act outside his administrative territory. By way of comparison, a police chief in Toronto and the police chief in Winnipeg, both refer to each other as “chief”, but they have no administrative powers in each other’s city unless seconded to do so.

- 2) Archbishop Seraphim has been referenced as a “cleric”, but is in fact a “hierarch”, one of the bishop ranks above the clergy.
- 3) Archbishop Seraphim has been referenced as “*the highest-ranking Orthodox Church cleric.*” While Archbishop Seraphim may be the highest-ranking in his own jurisdiction, it is erroneous to state that he is the highest in the entire Orthodox Church. In many of the various jurisdictions in Canada, including in our own Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, there are higher-ranking hierarchs. In his own jurisdiction, Archbishop Seraphim is responsible to those of higher rank, such as the ranks of Metropolitan and Patriarch.

Our concern with these media references regards the reputation of our Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. We draw attention to the fact that such inaccurate references have the potential to taint the reputation, to lead to public misinformation and to damage public perception of the Orthodox Churches of other jurisdictions. The error in reporting by those who lack appropriate knowledge of religious jurisdictions can lead to erroneous perceptions due to incorrect references.

We suggest that reporters in the future take particular care in explicitly distinguishing between jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, it is suggested that reporters refer for background to the various websites of the Orthodox Church jurisdictions in Canada. They will find that each Church clearly states its proper titles, leadership positions and administrative structure. They also have media contacts to clarify any questions.

We welcome members of the media to contact our Office of Communications for background information and clarification of ecclesiastical details.