

Guiding Principles of Vision 2000: A Bible Study



STUDY 3

The Diocese and the Metropolia

Prepared by Rev. Fr. Andrew Jarmus,
Office of Missions and Education, UOCC
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FORWARD

In July of 2000, at the 20th Sobor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, a series of resolutions were passed under the title "Vision 2000". These resolutions covered the areas of spiritual renewal, educational development, effective communication and responsible stewardship; they gave the UOCC a mandate touching upon our internal life, our relations with other Orthodox Churches, and our outreach to the wider community.

These resolutions were founded upon a set of "Guiding Principles"; these principles outline fundamental Orthodox teachings on the nature of the human journey, and on the Church in which we are called to carry out this journey. This Bible study series is designed to offer a closer look at the Guiding Principles that formed "Vision 2000". It is hoped that this endeavour will be of benefit to all who continue the spiritual journey of life in the Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada.

Rev. Fr. Andrew Jarmus, Winnipeg, 2003

Guiding Principles of Vision 2000: A Bible Study

PART 3. The Diocese and the Metropolia

- 3.1 All of the parishes in one specific region are united as a diocese, under the guidance of their local bishop.**
- 3.2 Every diocese located in the same larger geographical area (usually a sovereign nation) is united as a “Local Church” (Pomisna Tserkva) that is supervised by one common governing hierarch.**
- 3.3 Parishes, dioceses and the local Church are all organically linked through the sacramental life, especially the Holy Eucharist, and through mutual allegiance to its leadership, the local Council of Bishops.**
- 3.4 There is a mutually supportive relationship existing between the local community, with its specific leadership, focus and work, and the diocese and the local Church, with their leadership and their wider spheres of ministry and administration.**
- 3.5 As the Church is viewed as an organic body – the Body of Christ – it must be kept in mind that the well-being of one member affects all the other members as well. This applies to parishes (both clergy and laity), to congregations, to dioceses and to the Church as a whole.**
- 3.6 The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, which is rooted in the ecclesiastical tradition of the Kyivan Ukrainian Metropolia and its thousand-year history, has its own unique character, distinguishing it from other Orthodox Churches. In addition, another dimension of the ethos of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been added during the more than eighty years of its existence and development in Canada.**

3.1 All of the parishes in one specific region are united as a diocese, under the guidance of their local bishop.

• Since Her earliest days, the Christian Church has had a clear and identifiable hierarchical structure. Jesus Himself sets His Church up in this fashion during the time He walked

with us, preaching the Kingdom of God. In Gospel of Mark, we see how Jesus selected from among His followers twelve men who would form His inner circle.

Mark 3:14,15

• In the book of Acts, when the Church is selecting someone to take Judas Iscariot’s place among the Twelve Apostles (see Acts 1:15-26), St. Peter makes a reference to Psalm 109:8. In the English translation of Psalm 109:8, we read: “Let another take his office.”(NKJV) This word “office” in the Greek language, in which Acts was originally written, literally means “episcopacy”. (KJV reads “bishopric”) In Acts 1:20, St.

Peter is literally saying “Let Judas’ *episcopacy* be taken by another.”

The biblical word for bishop is “episcopos” (the origin of the Ukrainian word “iepyskop”). “Episcopos” literally means “supervisor” or “overseer”. The role of the bishop is to oversee the life of the Christian community under his care.

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, we find this advice from St. Paul about the ministry of the bishop:

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:7-9

- What these scriptural passages show us is that the ministry of the bishop has been part of the Church since apostolic times. The apostles themselves were the first bishops.

We also find in the Scriptures that the bishop's authority in the Church is given to them by Christ Himself.

Matthew 18:18

John 20:21

Matthew 10:40

- This episcopal mandate to oversee the life of the Church, first given to the apostles by Christ, is passed on from bishop to bishop through the generations. This succession of authority fulfills Christ’s will that the Church maintain cohesiveness, continuity and good order.

So important was the ministry of the bishop as overseer of the Church that the first-century Christian martyr St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch would write the following:

“Let no one, apart from the bishop, do any of the things that pertain to the Church. Let that Eucharist alone be considered valid which is celebrated in the presence of the bishop, or of him to whom he shall have entrusted it. Wherever the bishop appears, there let the multitude be; even as wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Church catholic. It is not lawful either to baptise, or to hold an agape meal without the consent of the bishop; but whatever he shall approve of, that also is well pleasing to God, to the end that whatever is done may be safe and sure.”(Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, 8:1,2)*

***NOTE:** “Church catholic” means the Church in all Her fullness.

3.2 Every diocese located in the same larger geographical area (usually a sovereign nation) is united as a “Local Church” (Pomisna Tserkva) that is supervised by one common governing hierarch.

- In its earliest times, Christianity was largely an urban movement. This is evident from the accounts of the

Apostles’ preaching in the Book of Acts, such as those found in Acts, chapter 14.

Acts 14:21,24,25

This explains why most of the epistles of the New Testament are written to specific cities. Likewise, we find that the Book of Revelation was written to

encourage and warn the believers in “the seven churches of Asia”(Rev. 1:4), each Church being located in a different city.

	City	Issue / Concern
Revelation 2:1-5		
Revelation 2:8-10		
Revelation 2:12-16		
Revelation 2:18-28		
Revelation 3:1-5		
Revelation 3:7-13		
Revelation 3:14-20		

- Each of these city-Churches was administered by its own local bishop (“overseer”) with the assistance of a college of presbyters (“elders” / priests). This leadership was elected by the people. At first they were ordained by the Apostles. Later they were ordained by the bishops who

took over for the Apostles as they moved on to preach the Good News elsewhere.

Back in Acts 14, we find that this is what the Apostles were doing as they traveled from city to city:

Acts 14:23

- As the Church continued to grow, the ministry of the bishop evolved from being the overseer of an city, to leading the faithful in a larger geographical region (eventually called a “diocese”). In turn, the specific Christian communities in that diocese were lead by presbyters appointed by the local bishop.

This administrative pattern continued to evolve in the early centuries of Church life. By the fourth century, the Church consisted of five large geographic regions. Each region was considered a self-governing (“autocephalous”) “Local Church” (“pomisna tserkva”). Each Church was centered in a major city of the Roman Empire (Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria), and each was administered by a patriarch who was the bishop of that

city. This structure was called the “pentarchy” (a Greek word meaning “five leaders”). Each patriarch carried out his ministry with a council of the other bishops in his region that were responsible for smaller subdivisions (called dioceses) of the patriarchate.

Already by the 300’s then we see the establishment of the basic Church structure that we still have today. Parishes, under the pastoral leadership of a presbyter, are all part of a diocese, under the leadership of a local bishop, who are organized under a regional primate -- called either a “patriarch”, an “archbishop” or a “metropolitan”. This primate is the spiritual leader of all the faithful of the “Local Church” (“pomisna tserkva”) under his charge.

3.3 Parishes, dioceses and the local Church are all organically linked through the sacramental life, especially the Holy Eucharist, and through mutual allegiance to its leadership, the local Council of Bishops.

• At the Mystical Supper, before going to His voluntary passion and death for us, Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father for His followers. These words are known as Jesus “Great High-Priestly” prayer. This

prayer is read on Holy Thursday at the service of the 12 Passion Gospels (*Strasti*); it is part of the first Gospel reading. In His High-priestly Prayer, Jesus makes a profound statement about the unity of all the faithful:

John 17:20-23

• From these words of Christ, we learn a number of important things about the Church. First, that unity is the primary mark of the Church. “The Church” consists of those people who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,17 and 16:12-14), are one with Christ, and through Christ are one with God the Father.

This unity with Christ is also a bond of unity between each believer. If each believer is personally one with Christ, then through Christ all believers are one with each other. Thus, St. Paul teaches the following:

Romans 12:4,5

- The main mark and agent of unity in the Church is the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments). Specifically, the Holy Eucharist is the primary source of

Church unity. Participation in the Eucharist unites us with God. Jesus Himself teaches us this in the Gospel of St. John.

John 6:56,57

Echoing this teaching, St. Paul thus instructs the Christians in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

- Thus, the Church as a whole is called “the Body of Christ” and each individual is called a member of that Body (1 Corinthians 12:27). This means that Christians exist as the Church, or experience the Church, in the fullest sense precisely when they are celebrating the Divine Liturgy and

receiving Holy Communion together. Since the earliest days of the Church, this has been the primary way that Christians encounter and proclaim the reality of the Church in the world – everything revolved around the Eucharist.

As important a sign and expression of unity as the Eucharist is, though, it is not the only one. A second unifying factor is the proclamation of a

common code of beliefs and practices – in other words, a common faith. (see, for example, 2 Thessalonians 1:3 and Ephesians 4:4,5).

- The third major expression of unity in the Church is common allegiance to the local bishop. This loyalty was considered a great virtue in the Early Church; let us again consider this instruction from St. Ignatius of Antioch: *“Let no one, apart from the bishop, do*

any of the things that pertain to the Church.”

In a similar spirit, St. Paul wrote to Timothy, the young first-century bishop, about honouring Church leadership:

1 Timothy 5:17

In his letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul makes this point even clearer:

Hebrews 13:17

- The Church, however, does not expect blind obedience to just any kind of leadership. Those entrusted with the ministry of overseeing the faithful must conduct their ministry

responsibly, knowing that in the end they will have to give an account for their actions. This is made clear in the Gospel of Matthew and in St. Peter’s first epistle:

Matthew 20:25-28

1 Peter 5:2-4

- In the Church, authority is not based on power, but on love. Loyalty to those in authority is our loving response to the loving execution of their leadership roles. Allegiance to our Church hierarchy, together with

our common participation in the Holy Eucharist and our harmonious profession of one faith, forge the bond that unites Christian believers into one Body – the Church.

3.4 There is a mutually supportive relationship existing between the local community, with its specific leadership, focus and work, and the diocese and the local Church, with their leadership and their wider spheres of ministry and administration.

- Love is the tie that binds us together as Christians. We love Christ and are loved by Him. We love each other – brothers and sisters, spiritual fathers and mothers and their spiritual children. Love must be expressed in a concrete fashion, if it is to be sincere. We cannot simply pay “lip service” to love.

Our love for each other is concretely expressed by actually being there for one other, supporting one another in our respective roles and responsibilities. If we truly believe that we are one in Christ, and have a true desire to express that unity, we will do so by realising that we are inter-dependent with each other. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, St. Paul puts it this way:

Our love for God and His love for us is expressed regularly in the concrete action of offering, sanctifying and partaking of the sanctified Bread and Wine of the Holy Eucharist.

1 Corinthians 12:20-21

An early example of this awareness is found in the New Testament. In Asia Minor, St. Paul initiated a collection to aid the poor in Jerusalem. While Christians in other cities do their part willingly, some in the city of Corinth are reluctant to take up a collection to help the Church in Jerusalem. St. Paul

encourages them, reminding them that “he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully” and that “God loves a cheerful giver”. (2 Cor.9: 6,7). He also explains that such giving is done out of a desire for the mutual good of all the Church and that this attitude will benefit all mutually.

2 Corinthians 8:14

- Therefore, in Church life, we are not to see ourselves or our specific communities as islands, independent of any other community or any other

Church body. We each have a mutual responsibility to look out for the other’s interests when and how we can.

3.5 As the Church is viewed as an organic body – the Body of Christ – it must be kept in mind that the well-being of one member affects all the other members as well. This applies to parishes (both clergy and laity), to congregations, to dioceses and to the Church as a whole.

- Offering mutual and unconditional support to one another is important in Church. The Church truly is a body – a system of “cells” and “subsystems”

that effect one another’s health and well-being. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, St. Paul makes this very clear:

1 Corinthians 12:26

In his epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul explains that the various spiritual gifts and ministries given by God to

the Church are for the building up of the Body of the Church, so that all its parts may benefit mutually:

Ephesians 4:14:16

• Every individual believer, every parish community, does not stand alone. They are part of an entity far bigger than themselves. Their spiritual well-being has an effect on people and situations far removed from their own. In light of this, it is encouraging to know that we do not have to bear this responsibility alone. The system of dioceses and diocesan bishops, the National Church and it's ruling

hierarchy, and the other administrative entities of the Church are there for the well-being of the faithful in the parishes. However, these bodies will only be able to effectively benefit the parishes if the parishes themselves give them support in their work and allegiance to their governing authority. When parishes thus support their diocese and the national Church, it is to the benefit of the parish as well.

Discuss examples of how a parish's support of their diocese and national Church Body can come back to benefit the parish.

3.6 The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, which is rooted in the ecclesiastical tradition of the Kyivan Ukrainian Metropolia and its thousand-year history, has its own unique character, distinguishing it from other Orthodox Churches. In addition, another dimension of the ethos of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been added during the more than eighty years of its existence and development in Canada.

• In Part Two of this study, we learned of the ancient Christian roots of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. This was

revealed through a reference made by St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians:

[Continued on page 13.]

Colossians 3:11

- The Scythians are the ancient ancestors of the Ukrainian people. Later, this land would be known as Kyivan Rus' (or "Rus'-Ukraine"). When Rus'-Ukraine embraced the Orthodox Faith, this land was given the title of a "Metropolia" and the Metropolitan of Kyiv was established as it's ruling hierarch. The Kyivan Metropolia was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. When the founders and builders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada established our Church in this country, they drew from the deep well that is the spiritual tradition of the Kyivan Metropolia in their work. As generations have passed, we here in Canada have continued to build on this heritage forming our own unique identity from our experiences and growth here.

It is this Church reality -- based in the Kyivan Church, and forged in the Ukrainian émigré experience -- that we must now embrace, and ourselves build upon. As we build, however, we must remember that we can only be successful if we work in unity with one another. Parishes will not bear fruit if they see themselves as independent entities from their dioceses and the Consistory. Likewise, the leadership of our Church will not be fruitful in their governance if they see themselves as aloof and removed from the common experience of the whole Body of the faithful. When we work together as one, each in his or her own task, the whole body grows strong and all are blessed by the fruit of this labour.

Psalm 33:12