

THE EPARCHY OF MUKACHEVO

Early written documents are not available to document the development of the church in the Carpathians as a result of the instability of the region due to the Mongol incursions and then later the capture of Constantinople and campaign north to invade Europe by the Ottoman Turks.

The earliest church document is from 1391 from the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople granting stauropegial right (independence from the local bishop, indicating a bishop in the area) to Saint Michael Monastery in Hruševó.

The earliest document that refers directly to the Eparchy of Mukachevo, the mother church, is a document of the Hungarian crown from 1493 referring to “John, the Ruthenian bishop following the Greek rite, dwelling in the monastery of Saint Nicholas founded over our town of Munkach”. Later, in 1606 “Sergius was bishop of all Ruthenians in this our kingdom of Hungary...” This Bishop Sergius, wishing to explain who composed the Ruthenian flock, wrote in Hungarian that they were “*Oroszok, Oláh, Tott, és Raczok*” (that is, Rusins, Valachians or Romanians, Slovaks, and Rascians or Serbs).

THE UNION OF UŽHOROD

While the Eparchy of Mukachevo never formally separated from the Church of Rome, the Church of its origin, Constantinople, had done so in 1054 but this separation really solidified only in 1204 after the sack of Constantinople by the Crusader army. After the Union of Brest-Litovsk that reunited the Church of Kiev to the Church of Rome in 1596, the ideals of union to obey the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper, “that all may be one that the world may believe”, that guided Ss. Cyril and Methodius, inspired some in the Eparchy of Mukachevo.



Instructed by Bishop Basil Tarasovich, who endured imprisonment for his desire for union, and his chosen successor Bishop Peter Parthenius Petrovich, the union of 63 priests of the Eparchy of Mukachevo and the Church of Rome was proclaimed by the Union of Užhorod on April 24, 1646 and was ratified in the eastern territory of the eparchy in 1664. In 1713 the union was ratified for the portions of the eparchy in present day Romania and Hungary. By the beginning of the 18th century the declaration of union of the Church was total and complete and was the most successful act of union of the Catholic Church.

Bishop Basil Tarasovich

Due to the lack of written documents to detail the official establishment of the Eparchy, the hierarchy of the Latin Catholic Church in Hungary questioned whether the Eparchy was canonically established. After a century of dispute, Empress Maria Theresa, seeing that the issue was at an impasse, created a situation where Pope Clement XIV canonically established the Eparchy of Mukachevo in 1771. The Empress named these members of Christ’s faithful in her empire Greek Catholics. Her



Empress Maria Theresa

government accepted the responsibility for the maintenance of the churches of the eparchy. Through the years many of the parishes' wooden churches were replaced with masonry churches.

THE DIVISION OF THE EPARCHY

The vast territory of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was divided several times to address the pastoral care of Christ's faithful. The first large-scale emigration of the faithful was to what is present-day Croatia, and the Holy See of Rome established the Eparchy of Krizevci in 1777 for their care. Then, the western vicariate of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was divided from the eparchy in 1818 by the Holy See to form the Eparchy of Prešov. In 1823 and 1853 72 and 94 parishes respectively were given to Romanian eparchies.

With these ecclesial conditions in place, the second great emigration, the emigration to the United States began.