

УКРАЇНСЬКА  
КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ  
ПРЕСВЯТОЇ РОДИНИ  
В ЛОНДОНІ



UKRAINIAN  
CATHOLIC EPARCHY  
OF THE HOLY FAMILY  
OF LONDON

Prot. N. 106/2023

**PASTORAL LETTER**  
**Regarding the liturgical calendar reform**

To the Reverend Clergy and Faithful  
of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Earlier this year (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023), the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC in Ukraine reached a historical decision regarding the Liturgical Calendar reforms. Since 6th February 2023, when the Father and Head of the UGCC, His Beatitude Patriarch Sviatoslav, announced the move to the New Style Calendar for fixed Holy Days whilst adhering to the current Paschalia. I have been fortunate enough to receive feedback from our clergy, faithful, and community leaders, without a doubt the vast majority of those who have contacted me have asked that we move to the Gregorian Calendar. At the same time, I have also listened to those who are opposed to such liturgical calendar reforms, and I am very grateful to everyone for providing me with their thoughts. I realise that we need to decide either to remain on the Julian Calendar or to move to the Gregorian Calendar.

The decision to introduce such a liturgical calendar reform in our Eparchies outside of Ukraine is in the competency of the local bishop (CAN. 191 §1, 199 §1 CCEC) With this letter, I would like to share with you in more detail the reasons for the Decree (Prot. N. D020/2023) which I have issued today regarding our Eparchial Calendar reforms.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the UGCC Department of Information published an interview (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juYSepHWgZw&t=225s>) with His Beatitude Sviatoslav, regarding the announced liturgical calendar reforms. In the interview His Beatitude stated: *“I am convinced that everyone will be happy with this transition, and perhaps it will be possible to untie old knots imposed by different visions and sensitivities regarding the calendar issue.”*

In the same interview, His Beatitude, recounting the challenges that early Ukrainian immigrants experienced, refers to our Eparchy with the following words: *“We have two eparchies in the world [outside of Ukraine] that have not adopted the Gregorian calendar in principle. They were founded by our post-World War II immigrants [displaced people] in England and Australia. Our post-war emigration, which left, in particular from Halychyna, brought with them to the Diaspora a clear stance*

Page 1 of 3





*regarding the calendar reform. We must remember that back then, between the First and Second World Wars, our conscious patriotic intelligentsia, in order to preserve the Ukrainian identity, its separateness from other peoples with which it communicated closely, formulated a completely different perspective than the one we hear today...*”

It is important to acknowledge that here, in the United Kingdom, we have carefully and responsibly maintained and closely guarded our language, traditions, and religious practices. Indeed, we have much to be proud of. Once again, His Beatitude speaks to us directly in this interview by observing: *“Most of our old-calendar parishes today comprise of Ukrainians who recently left the Motherland... so, when Ukraine begins to move forward, I think all these sentiments and fears will gradually recede into the past. Although, obviously, in every eparchy, every bishop and priest must make sure that the community, which switches to the new style, preserves its identity. After all, the intensity of assimilation — the dissolution of Ukrainians into that great sea of foreign life — is very aggressive and powerful.”*

Ukraine has never been more global and connected than it is today. This means that it is not only our Ukrainian Greek Catholic faithful in Ukraine and throughout the world who are moving towards a liturgical calendar reform, but also our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Ukraine as well. His Beatitude provides us with information and some observations regarding the liturgical calendar reform question by the Orthodox Church and its impact on its faithful in the diaspora: *“Our Orthodox brothers also believed that the good old Julian calendar was part of their Orthodox identity. But we see that even this is not absolute... Very interesting processes are taking place today, and we must be balanced, skillful, wise, and courageous. Here, the episcopate has a very big responsibility — to properly lead these movements. People expect and need this.”*

I would like to echo the words of His Beatitude as he encourages us all as we move forward in this liturgical calendar reform: *“I especially want to appeal to our faithful, in particular to those who are a little anxious, and don't feel very confident: let's not be afraid of change! We want our Ukraine to be different. We say that it should become better than it was before the war. And this means that we must change first. Therefore, let's change! Let's take this step and trust in your Mother Church, in particular when it comes to certain changes in our liturgical church life. Let us not be afraid to become different, better, so that we, as Christians, can live better and embody our faith in the present: so that it does not happen that Christians live in an quixotic world, where their holidays or calendars lag behind life. So that we are living with a modern church that knows how to bring the grace of the Holy Spirit into family, public, and social life.”*

In accepting the new liturgical calendar reform we will all have to make adjustments not only in the celebration of Christmas for example, but in our own personal celebrations too. His Beatitude Sviatoslav explains what this will mean to him personally: *“I understand that many of us are attached to certain Feast days and dates that were celebrated according to the Julian calendar. For example, I was ordained a bishop on the Annunciation on the 7<sup>th</sup> April. Now, we will celebrate the Annunciation on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, but this date - the 7<sup>th</sup> April - will always be very dear to me. However, my personal emotions and attachments should not stop the healthy development of our Church. If your name is Stepan, now you will celebrate your name day on 27 December, instead of 9<sup>th</sup> January. Do not worry, do not be afraid, dare to take this step! Let us be ready even for a certain sacrifice of personal religious stereotypes in the name of renewing our church life. Because, war is a time of sacrifice. Every day, our defenders sacrifice the most precious - life and health - in the name of a renewed, free, independent Ukraine. Therefore, we, as Christians, will do something for the victory of the Motherland, victory over the consciousness that we should not look back at old imperial stereotypes, but should move forward courageously. We should do what we feel is right and good, which gives a new perspective for life and development.”*





His Beatitude Sviatoslav, and all our bishops in Ukraine along with the eparchies and exarchates will move to the New Style Calendar on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchies in Central and Western Europe, as well as Australia, have now moved to Gregorian Calendar usage. South America and many of our Eparchies in North America have long been using the Gregorian Calendar. Having carefully listened to the clergy and faithful of our Eparchy, I have come to the decision that from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 (according to the Great Indiction, i.e. the New Liturgical Year), the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London will adopt the Gregorian calendar.

We will soon be providing calendars to our clergy and faithful that will reflect the liturgical changes regarding the feast days, and epistle and gospel readings for our liturgies. Our clergy will play a crucial role in informing and properly preparing the faithful for this important event in the life of our Eparchy. His Beatitude also instructs the clergy: *"Reverend fathers, you shoulder a great responsibility to realise the decision of your bishops. It is you who must teach our people to celebrate our feasts according to the New Style. It is you who must do everything so that no major Holy day, in particular one of the twelve days of obligation, disappears whilst transitioning to the New Calendar. It is you who must now tirelessly remind people when to celebrate the Nativity of the Mother of God, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, when the Philip's Fast (Advent) begins, when it's Christmas, the Theophany, or other great feast days of the liturgical year. I sincerely hope that this reform will serve to revitalise liturgical life. So that it would be possible to once again convey to people the truth of the Church's teaching about this or that event from the life of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints that we celebrate as liturgical holy days. Let this liturgical calendar reform be an opportunity for enlightenment, learning, and catechesis."*

Concluding this pastoral letter on the liturgical calendar reform, I end with an appeal from His Beatitude Sviatoslav: *"I ask all of you: listen to the voice of your Mother Church! Let this reform bear generous fruits, let it be the light of a good future. The first feeling when I so delicately announced this decision among the students at the Ternopil Medical University was joy. Everyone was very happy! I would like us to do all this joyfully, too. Don't be afraid! Let's put all these worries aside and move forward together. Because this decision of the Synod is a unanimous step forward. Sometimes, in order to do something together, we say: "One! Two! Three! ..." — and synchronously leap forward. Let's do the same now: "One! Two! Three!" — to the new calendar reform!"*

I continue to place each of you under the protection of the Holy Family, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, and the holy and righteous St. Joseph the Betrothed.

BLESSING OF THE LORD BE UPON YOU!

+ Kenneth

✠ Kenneth

Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London



*Given in London at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral Sobor of the Holy Family in Exile  
on the Day of the Holy Hieromartyr Therapontus, 9 June 2023*

page 3 of 3