

The speech of Most Reverend Kenneth Nowakowski, Bishop of New Westminster, on the occasion of his investiture as an Ecclesiastical Knight Commander of Grace in the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George, Sunday 13 September, 2015 at the Holy Family in Exile Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral in the God Blessed City of Westminster, UK.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

My Lord Bishop Hlib, I wish to warmly welcome the Delegate for Great Britain and Ireland, and the Magisterial Delegate for interfaith relations of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George, His Excellency Sir Anthony Bailey, and his wife, Her Serene Highness, Princess Marie-Therese von Hohenberg, Lady Baily. I would also like to welcome the Members of the Order's Council, and friends of the Order, and in particular the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania, who is certainly today is one of the dearest and closest friends of the Ukraine. It also gives me great pleasure to welcome to the United Kingdom, my older brother James Nowakowski of Saskatoon, Canada, and also other members of my family and friends from Canada, and as well as friends of mine from the United Kingdom. Through your Excellency Sir Anthony, I would be grateful if you would extend my greetings to our Grand Master, His Royal Highness Prince Charles of Bourbon Two Sicilies, Duke of Castro, and to our Grand Prior, His Eminence Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino. I am very humbled by this honour that I have received today by the hands of Your Excellency.

Our Church, the Kyivan Church, through its thousand year history, has never severed its ties with the Holy See, however under the Byzantine influence we became estranged. Feeling that wound of separation the bishops in Ukraine sought to form and re-establish ecclesiastical union with the Holy See, and they did so in 1596. Our Church has remained faithful to its Christian commitment, and especially fidelity to the Holy See for which in the past century thousands of people have been martyred for their faith including many bishops, priests, religious and faithful.

In the beginning of the 1900s, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had only 3 bishops and 3 diocese, or eparchies as we refer to them. Our Church was forced into the so called underground in 1946 and many of its faithful, hundreds of its priests, all of its bishops, were arrested and forced into labour camps and our Church into clandestine existence until 1989. In the West, our Church struggled to keep alive our faith, and our commitment to our Christian values. Today Your Excellency, our Church has 51 bishops, more than 3,500 priests, and this year I am proud to say that our Church can boast over 700 men who are studying for priesthood. Things are going well in some ways, thanks be to God. However these last years of Ukrainian independence, its people have also seen a great deal suffering in trying to become a part of the European family.

It is no secret of the corruption that plagues the Ukrainian people. Last year we saw the Revolution of Dignity and we also saw the annexation of Ukrainian territory, the Crimean Peninsula and now the occupation of parts of Eastern Ukraine. Caritas Ukraine, the organization founded and I was its first president, has a great task in front of it. The aid that they are providing may seem as drops of water in a bucket. Caritas cannot help all of the 1,600,000 internally displaced refugees however, they continue to provide care to as many as possible, regardless of their ethnic background or religious affiliation. Caritas Ukraine is helping Crimean Tartars, they assist people of no religious affiliation, they have helped those who are Orthodox Christians as well as displaced Ukrainian-Greek Catholics, and our Church throughout the world has joined in the effort of providing humanitarian aid in this time of crisis. Perhaps we can say this is the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The Eparchy New Westminster, of which I am the bishop, has taken its name from the City of New Westminster. It was in fact the first capital city of British Columbia. Shortly after the demarcation of the Canadian and the US boundary, Queen Victoria and her government realized that indeed a large portion of Vancouver Island fell below the 49th parallel – the demarcation line. Wanting to ensure that Canada would remain intact, Her Majesty's Government removed New Westminster as the capital of British Columbia and placed the capital on the very southern most tip of Vancouver Island. It was a small, tiny, little fishing village and it was given the name Victoria, and it continues to be the capital of British Columbia. In 1974, at the request of His Beatitude Patriarch Josyf Slipiy of blessed memory and the Synod of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishops, His Holiness Pope Paul VI erected the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster for Ukrainian Catholics in British Columbia and the Yukon.

I would like to thank my family and friends for making this journey to be with me today. I would also like to extend an invitation to visit New Westminster to all of my new family, the members of our Order. You will be most welcome. My Lord Bishop thank you for this reception, thank you to the wonderful choir members, and thank you to all the faithful here today for being a part of this special ceremony. Thank you again Your Excellency Sir Anthony. I wish to assure Your Excellency and the members of our Order of my prayers and commitment to the goals that our Order has committed itself to.
