



Ukraine - emerging from the catacombs

Forests and cellars were their catacombs. That was where they met to celebrate the Redemption of mankind, always fearful that the Soviet henchmen would discover them.

In many cases that was just what happened. From the diocese of Lviv alone some 250,000 Eastern-rite Catholics were transported to Siberia, while from west Ukraine as a whole the figure was half a million. In

1946, their religious communion, the Byzantine-rite Catholic Church, in union with Rome, was smashed and forcibly merged with the Orthodox Church. Monasteries, orphanages, schools and Catholic associations were dissolved and the only remaining refuge was underground. Here they held fast to Christ and to his Vicar on earth. They paid a high price for it - tens of thousands of lay faithful and hundreds of religious sisters, priests and bishops suffered martyrdom. But from the blood-soaked soil of the Ukrainian Catholic Church many new vocations sprang forth.

And they are so grateful because, along with Father Werenfried, you have always stood by them, above all in the darkest times. In 1963, when Metropolitan Josyf Slipyi was sent into exile in Rome after 18 years in the prisons and labour camps, he was already thinking of the new beginning, with a Catholic academy and a major seminary. He never lived to see this day, but in March 1991 his successor in exile, Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky, finally stood triumphant on the balcony of the opera house in Lviv, after returning nine months before

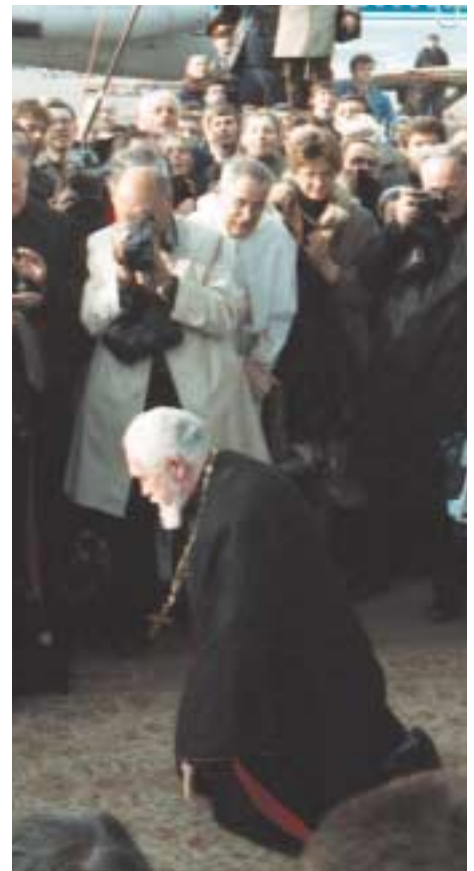
the collapse of the Soviet Union. Father Werenfried stood beside him and promised help. He visited the makeshift quarters of the old seminary and knew that a new one was needed. Soundly trained priests are the spiritual future of a country. The people of Ukraine were in need of the Sacraments, of shepherds to lead their souls to the light after the time of persecution. Father Werenfried turned to you to fulfil his promise. The new dawn was breaking. ●



Unbroken in the fight for unity with Rome - Metropolitan Cardinal Josyf Slipyi (1892 - 1984).



Lviv, March 1991. Father Werenfried and Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky (right) address the vast throng.



Return of the Patriarch - Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky kisses his native soil as Fr Werenfried looks on.



Processing through the old seminary garden, the students sing God's praises.



Little bread, no milk, but great joy - the seminarians sit down to a frugal meal.



On the balcony of the old seminary - a song for truth.



A spiritual centre for the future



Summer 2001. Encounter in Lviv for the blessing of the seminary site.



Spring 2003. The walls rise up, the seminary takes shape.



Summer 2005. The facade of the Holy Spirit Seminary.

27 August 2005. The farewell Mass in the old seminary in Rudno. Close on 200 voices are raised in praise to Heaven. Theirs are earnest, youthful faces with deeply thoughtful eyes. Their sonorous voices fill the air and lift up the soul as well. All clad in the soutane, they stand dignified and upright. In almost mystical fervour, they draw close to our God in choral song.

Theirs are the gentle voices of steadfast souls. Later they ring out again as these future priests advance in a long procession through the streets of Lviv, bearing aloft the standard of Christ, the Risen One. Now Rudno, the site of the old seminary, belongs to the past. The Holy Spirit Seminary is the future for the six million Ukrainian Catholic faithful. Young people join the procession, wistful glances from passers-by follow the march of these men of God. It is like the return from the catacombs - silent, prayerful, singing, hopeful. The bells of the new seminary church ring out to welcome the procession. They carry the message through the streets and tower blocks of this populous suburb of Lviv: Look, your priests are here again!

The next day, during the solemn blessing of the seminary, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar underlines the decisive role played by Father Werenfried and ACN. His gratitude to you springs from the depths of his heart. He tells the congregation: "This seminary is a gift from God." It is a gift you have brought to Ukraine.

In 2001 Pope John Paul II was here, when not a single stone had yet been laid. Now, all around the church, there is accommodation for 203 seminarians. It is



Out of the underground - the men of God march towards the new seminary.



Christ in their midst - the bishops and priests praying to the Holy Spirit.



The solemn "Baptism" of the altar. Cardinal Lubomyr Husar pours wine over it.

by far the largest seminary in the country, a spiritual beacon for the entire region. But there is still one shadow amid the light. For on the same site there also stands the uncompleted building of the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University of Lviv. It is intended to become the academic home of these seminarians, but owing to the energy crisis and rising costs there are no funds left for its completion. Should we step in and plug the gap?



Not yet completed - the Theological Faculty.