

History of the New Westminster Eparchy

The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster was created by the Apostolic See in Rome on June 24, 1974. Formerly part of the Edmonton Eparchy, the territory of our Eparchy is comprised of British Columbia, the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories west of the 120th longitude.

The first bishop appointed was Most Rev. Jerome Chimy, OSBM. His Episcopal ordination took place on September 5, 1974 at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, and his enthronement was on the following day at Holy Eucharist Parish, which he named as his cathedral.

During his episcopate the Eparchial Chancery and Residence were completed in 1976. One of Bishop Jerome's first important tasks was to see that each parish was well staffed with a good priest. His zeal for fostering priestly and religious vocations was very notable and some of those drawn by this zeal are still serving as priests in the Eparchy to this day. The Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate were also established in the Eparchy during this time to work with the youth, reach out with a Catechesis program throughout the Eparchy, and assist in general with Eparchial administration. Annunciation House for the sisters was established in 1982. Bishop Jerome was actively involved in the early organizational life in the Eparchy, including the establishment Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood, Ukrainian Catholic League of Canada and the Ukrainian Catholic Youth of Canada. Among many notable accomplishment, he provided highly effective leadership in commemorating celebrations of the Millennium of Ukrainian Christianity in 1988. Bishop Jerome was so well known for his missionary and pastoral zeal, his warm and friendly personality that almost all of the laity in the Eparchy knew him personally. He was deeply loved and respected by all. His Excellency Bishop Jerome passed into eternity on September 19, 1992.

Bishop Chimy was succeeded by the Most Rev. Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM. The second Bishop of the Eparchy had his Episcopal ordination on March 25, 1995, at St. Mary's Church in Vancouver. During the interim for two and a half years the Eparchy was served by Very Reverend Kenneth Olsen as its administrator.

To preserve the history of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy Bishop Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM commissioned the publication of the monumental book (432 pages) that was authorized by the late Bishop Jerome Chimy, OSBM and was compiled and edited by the late Professor Michael Tatarniuk. To continue the keeping of the story of the Eparchy more up to date Bishop Severian commissioned the preparation of an Official Eparchial Web Site.

To coordinate the administration of the parishes Bishop Severian published and made available to all the "Parish Constitution" so that all the parishes, their pastors, councils, committees and parishioners would abide by the same norms.

To safeguard the properties and liabilities of the parishes the Bishop authorized that all would be insured under the same umbrella insurance with better premium costs and coverage.

To secure the presence of resident pastors in the parishes, so that there could be Divine Liturgies on every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation, the bishop brought a number of priests from Ukraine. With the Finance Committee he coordinated for better equitable salaries, medical insurances, pension plans and life insurances for the pastors of the Eparchy. He organized and the Eparchy sponsored the annual spiritual retreats for the priests of the Eparchy. With much assistance from the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate – Ambrose and Ruth, he continued to support the Youth and Children's St. Volodymyr Camp programs in the Eparchy. And to help with the funding for the poorer parishes and the levees of the Eparchy (funding of the Synods and Sobors of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Canonization of Ukrainian Saints, Seminarians and Seminary, St. Peter's and St. Andrew's Pence, (etc.), a program "Project Hope" was brought into practice, which now has become the "Parish Assessment Program."

Thus, with the great cooperation of the faithful and their generous contributions, the Eparchy was able to continue its missionary ministry throughout the vast, beautiful province of British Columbia.

With Bishop Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM reaching the age for a bishop's retirement, the Holy Father – Pope Benedict XVI appointed a new bishop for this Eparchy in a younger man – Bishop Ken Nowakowski, who takes over the office on the day of his ordination and installation on July 24, 2007.

We are witnessing the start of a new chapter in the history of our Eparchy.