

Leader of Ukrainian church sees healing

Contacts have begun with Russian Orthodox

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

ROME — The Ukrainian Catholic Church's wounds caused by five decades of illegal existence under communist rule are healing with time, said Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky, head of the Eastern-rite church.

High-level informal contacts have begun with the Russian Orthodox to ease tensions, and the more than 4 million former underground Catholics are becoming integrated into normal church structures, he said.

Church-state relations are generally good, but problems exist with some ex-communist government officials, he added.

During an August visit to Rome, Cardinal Lubachivsky of Lviv, Ukraine, assessed church life two years after his return to Ukraine from exile. The 79-year-old cardinal provided written answers to questions submitted by Catholic News Service.

A main difficulty is raising enough funds to rebuild the Eastern-rite church because of "an economic crisis

in the Ukraine," he said.

"We must train new priests as well as those already ordained," he said.

"Our people lived in a closed society for quite some time. It will take time for them to adjust to the changes of the church and the world," the cardinal said.

This adjustment includes learning to work within "the administrative procedures of the church," he added.

Underground Catholics "were not accustomed to working within a structure," he said.

The cardinal said this sometimes causes difficulties for him and the handful of Ukrainian Catholics from the West who have returned to help run the church.

"It is unrealistic to say that persons who were born and raised in the West do not have a different perspective than those born in a communist and repressive society," he said.

With time, integration is taking root, he said.

Of "great importance" for the prestige and rebuilding of the church is recognition of the Lviv archdiocese as a patriarchate, the highest Eastern-rite church jurisdiction, said the cardinal.

The only obstacle cited previously by the Vatican was that "the head of

the church was not on the territory," said Cardinal Lubachivsky.

"I have been on the territory of the Ukraine for well over two years," he added.

"We pray each day that the Holy Father gives our church this title," he said.

After a period of strong tensions and confrontations with the Orthodox, relations are getting better, he said.

Relations are "good and steadily improving" with Orthodox churches in Ukraine, while some difficulties remain "on an official level" with the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow, said Cardinal Lubachivsky.

"Unofficially, I and members of my staff meet regularly with bishops" of the Russian Orthodox Church "to discuss problems and solutions," he added. "I believe that in time, the situation will be resolved positively."

The former Soviet Union declared the Ukrainian Catholic Church illegal in 1946, when its members were told to join the Russian Orthodox Church. However, it continued to exist as an underground church and had more than 4 million members when the church became legal in 1990. Cardinal Lubachivsky, a naturalized U.S. citizen who had been living outside Ukraine since 1938, returned in March 1991.

Previously, he had been headquartered in Rome.

Legalization, however, produced tensions with the Orthodox, especially over possession of church buildings that once were Catholic but given to the Orthodox after 1946. Another cause of strain was a large number of Orthodox priests and their parishioners who wanted to become Ukrainian Catholics.

Diversity



AP/Wide World Photos

Camp stresses cooperation as leaders gather

Participants in the Future Leaders Summer Camp in Doylestown, Pa., take part in a cooperation and teamwork drill during last month's 10-day retreat for budding community activists. Organizers said diversity was the key to the camp, which drew participants from all over the country.

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