



UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
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MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYCH

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**“Follow me!” (Mark 2:14): Vocations to priestly ministry
and consecrated life in the contemporary world**

**Pastoral Letter of the 2026 Synod of Bishops
of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church
To Parents, Youth, Clergy and Religious,
To Lay Faithful of the UGCC in Ukraine and Abroad,
and to all People of Good Will**

*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”
Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”
Isaiah 6:8*

Beloved in Christ!

Having gathered at this year’s Synod of Bishops of the UGCC at the Marian Pilgrimage Center in Zarvanytsia, with a sense of pastoral responsibility for the good of the flock entrusted to us, we devoted special attention to the topic “Vocations Ministry to the Priesthood and Monasticism.”

In Christian understanding, a vocation is not a profession, but an identity that arises in response to Christ’s call to discipleship. In the broader sense, every Christian has his or her own vocation – to bear witness to God’s love in the world according to one’s age and state of life, journeying on the path to salvation, growing in faith, holiness, and love. At the same time, some are called to a particular ministry: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Most often, such a vocation is fulfilled in the priestly ministry or consecrated life.

Throughout the history of our Church, the Lord has constantly sent fervent laborers into His harvest. The call of Christ once led Anthony and Theodosius, the founders of Ukrainian monasticism, to the caves of Kyiv. It was a guide for Count Roman Sheptytsky, who became metropolitan and oversaw the spiritual revival of our Church and people in the 20th century. During the times of the atheistic regime, at the Lord’s call young seekers of Divine truth went underground in order to preserve the spark of hope and the light of faith amidst darkness, evil, and falsehood. Subsequently, by Divine blessing, when our

Church emerged from the underground, a large number of young men and women responded to the Lord's special inner call, "Follow me," and entered the reestablished seminaries, monasteries, and communities of consecrated life.

The Holy Spirit always fills the Church with laborers in His vineyard, even in difficult, trying times. All that is needed is for us to be open to the gift of vocation, desire this gift, and constantly pray for it: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38). So, with gratitude to those who have already responded to the Lord's call, we encourage all of you, dear brothers and sisters, to a prayerful openness to this gift from God.

Dear young men and women! You might ask yourself: "How does God call one to ministry in the Church?" A vocation is most often engendered early in life, when a child experiences God's goodness and love, and begins to understand how important that is for his or her life. The Lord calls through participation in the church community, especially in the Christian family as a "domestic Church" and in the local parish community. The Lord calls with His word through listening to and reading the Holy Scriptures. The Lord speaks in the liturgical life of the Church through the Holy Mysteries-Sacraments, especially in Holy Confession, and in the silence of personal prayer. The Lord calls by using people who, with their holy, joyful and God-pleasing lives, grant others the opportunity to know Him and encourage others to follow Him.

A vocation in the Church is a great gift and also a great responsibility! It requires openness, a spirit of listening, inner sensitivity and an ability to discern God's call in the depths of the heart. In order to be able to properly receive this call, one must cultivate a love for Christ and for the Church, a readiness to be an instrument in God's hands, an openness to various kinds of ministries in the Church. We encourage you to pray and work on personal growth, practice the virtues, in word and deed help others to be close to Christ. Actively participate in Christian youth communities. When you experience various crises in your personal, family, or social life, especially amid the trials of the current war, cultivate a personal friendship with the Lord Jesus, seeking from Him support, comfort, and guidance for your life. May you be aided in this through a prayerful closeness to His Most Holy Mother, who is a model of openness to the gift of vocation: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Dear parents! Thanking you for your service, we encourage you to live the fullness of Christian life in your families. Treat your children with the understanding that they are God's children, entrusted to your care. Pray with them every day and together with them take an active part in the life of the Church. Support your children's desire to serve God and the Church. Be for them a living image of God's love. By your example, teach your children to be sacrificial and generous, and to rely on God's grace. Open up for your children the greatness of ministry in the Church and be assured that the parents of a priest, monk, or nun have a special honor in the Church, as those who blessed their children to offer their lives to God.

Dear parish priests! Together with your parish communities you fulfill a special task in vocations ministry – that of recognizing the action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of your

youngest parishioners. That is why it is so important for you to support the vocation of a young person by listening attentively, encouraging, and supporting. Your personal example of a pious life and a ministry fulfilled with joy and zeal in a spirit of self-sacrifice encourages a young person to follow in your footsteps.

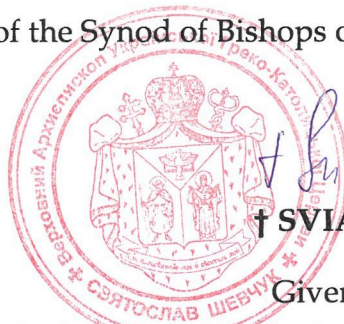
Quite often a young person's vocation dies out only because no one paid attention to it in due time and never supported it. Nurture vocations by inviting children and young people to actively participate in church services. Meet with young people regularly. Organize pilgrimages and summer camps for them. Invite seminarians, priests and consecrated persons to events organized for children and youth. Above all, pray for vocations together with the entire parish community. If vocations to priestly ministry or consecrated life have emerged from your parish, let young people know about it. Invite these individuals so that they can bear witness to their personal vocation journey in their mother parish.

Dear fathers, brothers and sisters in communities of consecrated life! Be present in the lives of our youth. May the joy of your vocation be visible to all in your words and deeds. Cultivate the evangelical virtues—poverty, chastity, and obedience, living together in a community that is a model of Christian brotherhood, sisterhood, and cooperation for the good of the Church of Christ and for the sanctification of the People of God. Practice spiritual accompaniment—fatherhood and motherhood—both in your own communities as well as towards those who come to your homes seeking support, healing, or assistance.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Know that vocations to priestly ministry and consecrated life are a sign of the vitality of the Church. Indeed, she unceasingly gives birth to new workers in Christ's vineyard. A Vibrant Parish is a place where a young person can encounter the living Christ and hear his call: "Follow me!" An authentic "domestic Church" is a family community that creates all the conditions for the seedling of a vocation to grow to maturity. Therefore, let us all foster this great gift together, and let us accompany those who are called with our prayers.

May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, descend upon every young person, upon his or her parents, upon priests, monks, nuns, upon each of our parish communities and our entire people, and be with all of us always!

On behalf of the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church




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Given in Kyiv,
at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,
on the day of the Holy Apostle Aquila,
the 14th of July in the 2026th year of our Lord