

The Spirit is alive in Canberra

Have a look at what is happening in the Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Canberra. It is very much alive and well and growing. The church is full and the people rejoice and praise God!

Bishop Peter Stasiuk visited on the July 28 weekend for the annual St. Volodymyr feast day. The parish was celebrating the 30th anniversary of the blessing of the cornerstone and the 20th anniversary of the blessing of the church by Bishop Confessor of the Faith Pavlo Vasylyk from Ukraine. One would expect a big crowd on such occasions but the Praznyk weekend was only a reflection of what has been going on for some time. Fr. Andriy Mykytyuk invited guests from other parishes. Fr. Felix Figurek and Deacon Edward Kostraby came from Melbourne while Fr. Simon Ckuj, Srs. Anisia and Constantine OSBM came from Sydney. There were lay guests including Mr and Mrs Hawryszko and George Fedyszyn from Melbourne, and Mr Stephan Duma from Sydney. They came in their official capacities. A local special guest was the Very Reverend Monsignor John Woods, the apostolic administrator of the Canberra & Goulbourn Archdiocese. There were a few others from out of town but the majority of the people present were local parishioners. There were about 125 in total.

A good number of people came to the Saturday morning Liturgy and Parastas for all the deceased parishioners.

Saturday evening Vespers with Lytia at St. Volodymyr, which was celebrated mostly in English, was even better attended. A lovely icon of St. Volodymyr written by Olesia Biliakovska (Fr Andriy's wife) was blessed at the vesper service.

Many of those present went out for a common meal in the evening. Here they had a chance to share their faith with the Bishop and the other clergy. One person expressed a joy at being able to understand the profound prayers of our liturgical tradition as they were celebrated in English.

The liturgy and our services have been at the heart of the recent renewal in our parish in Canberra. As Fr. Andriy said: "We pray! Our church has such a rich heritage which is now over a thousand years old."

The Sunday celebration was just another example of that. The church was packed; the choir loft was overflowing, mainly because many younger people have recently joined the church choir which is ably conducted by Mrs Irene Pellegrino. This choir is one amongst the best in Australia at the present time. Thank God our Eparchy is blessed with a good number of very good choirs, because as we know, it was the music which first impressed the delegates from Kyiv on the trip to Constantinople 1024 years ago.

Bishop Peter in his homily asked the question "what else beside the music must have impressed the Ukrainian visitors a thousand years ago?" He spoke of the day's epistle of St Paul who spent a year and a half in pagan Corinth converting the pagans of the city about 2000 years ago. When the delegates came a thousand years later, they noticed a Christian culture and civilization. This must have made some impression on the then sun worshipping pagan population of Kyivan Rus. Life in a pagan culture was never peaceful. The influence of the church on Greek society must have also been impressive.

As is now our yearly custom, those present at the liturgy renewed their baptismal vows as did our ancestors in Kyiv for the first time in 988.

The service was concluded with the traditional blessing of water and an impressive group picture.

The new atmosphere in the parish was again witnessed at the Ainslie Football Club. The parish hall was deemed too small for the occasion. Mr Peter Lutak, the current Parish Council President performed ably as the MC at the banquet. About six people from the Ukrainian Embassy in Canberra attended the church service and banquet.

There were not many speeches but those who did speak congratulated the parish on turning a new leaf and in attracting the young families to their church.

The highlight of the dinner was the impressive local musical talent. Fr. Andriy has a great voice as do many of the parishioners. They made the afternoon very pleasant.

You could tell that the weekend was great because people continued to stay, talk, and have good companionship long after the event was over.

There are still many of our people living and working in Canberra who do not come to our parish. Please tell them to go and see what is going on at 82 Archibald St, Lyneham ACT.