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THE FIRST UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC LITURGY CELEBRATED IN CANADA

2017 marks the 120th anniversary of the first Ukrainian Catholic Liturgy celebrated in Canada, which was a beginning of religious life of Galician Ukrainians on the Canadian soil. Taking into consideration the fact that religion was the foundation of spiritual life for Ukrainian immigrants in the late XIX century, who carried the burden of pioneering difficulties and adaptation in the international environment, as researches B. Yevtukh and O. Kovalchuk said: «church became a symbol and center of their national unity in the new environment as the only indicator of the cultural heritage, which connected them with their Motherland» [1, P.64].

The interest in Canada originated in Ukraine in 1891, when Ivan Pylypiv from the village of Nebyliv, Kalush povit, having visited this country and made sure that it is a good place for living, came back home and told everyone that there are vast expanses of fertile land which the government gives free of charge. This information created a lot of interest and as a result emigration movement started growing rapidly.

In July 1895 the «Prosvita» society published a brochure by professor of teachers' seminary in Lviv Osyp Oleskiv «About free lands», which provided an accurate description of Canada and the opportunities for new settlers. The appearance of the publication by professor Oleskiv was the last push for mass emigration to Canada. O. Oleskiv was a devotee of organized emigration movement to Canada.

April 30, 1896 a group of 107 people, accompanied by O. Oleskiv's brother Volodymyr, arrived to the port of Quebec and thus launched mass emigration of Ukrainian peasantry to Canada. Almost all of the newcomers settled around Edna in Alberta province. The next two bigger groups arrived to Canada in July and August 1896 respectively and established Ukrainian colonies at the virgin lands of the Canadian prairies in Manitoba. The first group of immigrants settled around Stuartbourne and established a colony «Rus», the second group established the first Ukrainian settlement around Dauphin and named it Trembowla (Terebowla).

New families started to come to the new settlement of Trembowla in winter 1896 and in spring 1897. In early April 1897, in Canadian Trembowla lived 15 families from Galicia, a total of 78 people, including two families from Terebowla povit, one family from Pidhaetskiy povit and others from Borshchiv povit. Each family received a homsted – plot of land of 160 acres (2.5 acre – 1 ha). It was hard for them to experience pioneer hardships and harsh prairie climate. In a hurry, they built huts for their families, prepared wood for the building of houses and bore a burden of development of virgin lands. Overcoming pioneer difficulties and creating material conditions for surviving, Ukrainian immigrants were aware of all importance of religious values for them. A citizen of Trembowla, one of the first settlers Anna Farion (maiden name – Perkhaliuk), native of the village of Zalavie notes in her memoirs: «People strove for spiritual food..., because our people were always devout. Here, in foreign parts, it is so sad that the spiritual bread is even more needed» [2, p. 512]. The first Ukrainian colonies in Canada represented by settlers, who were literate, appealed to the editors of the magazine «Svoboda» («Freedom») USA Fr. N. Dmytriv and Fr. I. Konstankevych asking «to have a native priest for Ester services in 1897 in Canada» [3, p. 3]. Professor Oleskiv also strove for religious custody of Ukrainian settlers in Canada, from 1896 he contacted with the above mentioned editor of «Svoboda», Greek Catholic priest Nestor Dmytriv and encouraged him to move to Canada. Considering the numerous appeals, Fr. Dmytriv agreed to come to Canada personally.

April 5, 1897 Fr. Dmytriv was already in Canada, confessed, and administered people in the immigration house. In the following days he together with Kyrylo Henyk, immigration officer and a kind of trustee of immigrants, developed a route for Fr. N. Dmytriv visits to Ukrainian communities. April 9 Fr. N. Dmytriv went by train to the neighborhoods of Lake Dauphin. After spending a night in the immigration house in Dauphin, as Fr. N. Dmytriv noted in his «Travel memories»: «afternoon [I] went on cart to our colony, which lays at the river Drifting and is titled as Terebowla» [4, p. 13]. The road appeared to be hard and exhausting, in many places he had to go on foot, wade rivers, wander through impenetrable forests and snow drifts, and, finally exhausted, late at night he reached a house of V. Ksiondzhyk, whom citizens of Terebowla consireded a chief of the new community.

April 12, 1897 in Canadian Terebowla took place an event, which launched a religious life of Ukrainian settlers in Canada. On this historic day for the first time a church service was conducted by Greek Catholic priest in native language of emigrants at Canadian land. The first church service Fr. Nestor Dmytriv conducted in the house of V. Ksiondzhyk. In his notes Fr. Dmytriv describes this event as following: «Small hut was completely full of people. With the first words «Blessed be the kingdom of the Lord» people cried like a child. During preaching I couldn't help crying, remembering those reasons and that hardship, which drove us through the sea, snows, woods and forests to pursue a better life for our children. After finishing a Divine Service I baptized a little Canadian Ukrainian and then started a ceremony of cross of freedom consecration» [4, p. 19]. So called «Crosses of Freedom» were erected in almost every Galician village after the abolition of serfdom in 1848. Symbolically, in memory of the settlement in 1896 at a free land and receiving economic, political freedom, immigrants erected the first Ukrainian cross in Canada – «Cross of Freedom», which was established on the bank of the river Drifting. The above mentioned events were extremely significant for emigrants; a daughter of V. Ksiondzhyk, Teklia Stanko, which was 15 year old at that time, already being in old age described these events very sentimentally: «At the place, where people embedded the cross, they cried even more than during the Divine Service... Everyone prayed and sang, Fr. Dmytriv encouraged us to preserve and honour this freedom in Canada forever» [3, p. 3]. Following the example of Terebowla, other Ukrainian settlements in Canada also erected «Crosses of Freedom».

Nowadays at the place of the pioneer settlement of Trembowla there is a museum «Trembowla Cross of Freedom», which belongs to the historical monuments of Manitoba. Every year during one of the largest ethnic festivals in Canada – Canadian national Ukrainian festival in the city of Dauphin, which was launched in 1965 and traditionally takes place in the last week of July, near «Trembowla Cross of Freedom» a prayer service in memory of Ukrainian pioneers in Canada is conducted.

Summing up, we can conclude that emigrants from a small town of Terebowla and its surrounding villages, who left for Canada in the late XIX century not only played an important part in the religious life organization, but left a rich historical and cultural heritage.

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