

extract

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The Past Seven Years of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate – from its Foundation to the First Metropolitan Assembly

with Special Emphasis on Metropolitan Institutions as Well as on Cooperation Between the Eparchies¹

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What is a metropolitanate? What does the term ‘Metropolitan Church’ signify in a canonical sense? Though I am no canonist, a cursory survey of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Catholic Church reveals that a church organisation of this ‘type’ is described in Canons 155–173.² The first canon of the corresponding chapter, i.e. Canon 155, contains references to a number of issues:

A metropolitan Church *sui iuris* is presided over by a metropolitan of a determined see who is appointed by the Roman Pontiff and assisted by a council of hierarchs according to the norm of law.

The fundamental matters of a metropolitan Church are thus regulated by canon law. However, the question what the concept of the metropolitanate could in fact mean to an ordinary person may most simply be answered in the following way: The Greek Catholic Church of Hungary – with its three Eparchies in it – collectively called Metropolitan Church in accordance with the provision of the

¹ A talk delivered at the First Metropolitan Assembly of the Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* of Hungary in Máriapócs on 21 October 2022.

² Cf. *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (Oriental Code), Washington D.C., 1992 (hereafter: CCEO).

Holy See, functions and exists as an organisation of ecclesiastical governance. At the same time, it must be emphasised and understood that our Metropolitanate is actually the Greek Catholic Church of Hungary – as a matter of course, in full communion with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, i.e. as part of the Catholic Church. (Therefore, besides the Council of Hierarchs as the principal decision-making organ of the Metropolitanate, our Greek Catholic Bishops are also ordinary members of the Hungarian Catholic Episcopacy, as well as of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference.)

The aforementioned regulation provides that an assembly be convoked every five years in a Church of the ‘type’ as well.³ This is the reason why we are here today! Please allow me to deviate a little from the lawyers’ way of thinking and – of course, highlighting the difficulties of the past few years in the way of justification – perceive a sense of providential intervention in the circumstance that this convocation is held now, at the end of the seventh year of our existence. In fact, we are well aware that seven is a symbolic number: the sign of fullness. I also trust that the Metropolitanate, our Church, as well as our lives in her, are in a sense headed for fullness, and that this Assembly may provide answers to many of the questions we may face on this road, will help us find our bearings and will determine clear directions.

As, in a previous publication of mine,⁴ as well as in a number of places, I considered the foundation of the Metropolitanate (partly) as a miracle of the Theotokos – as probably did many of you, too – since the event happened during the nationwide tour of the miraculous icon of Máriapócs in conjunction with the 300th anniversary of its 1715 weeping, I am also inclined to regard this meeting today, the

³ Cf. CCEO Can. 172.

⁴ Cf. István Seszták, *The Birth of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate – A Miracle of the Theotokos?*, in Szilveszter Terdik (ed.), *The Light of Thy Countenance. Greek Catholics in Hungary*, Debrecen 2020, 454-459.

first Metropolitan Assembly, as a gift of Providence: a grace that strengthens and consolidates our Church.

Looking back on the past seven years – as part of the present talk – I would like to accentuate the two aspects featured in the subheading as well: ‘metropolitan institutions’ and ‘cooperation between the Eparchies’. The rationale will be disclosed in this presentation.

Searching for a biblical motto befitting the past seven years of the Metropolitanate, I have been frequently reminded of verse 20 of Chapter 18 in the Gospel according to Matthew: ‘For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them’.⁵ I believe that Jesus’ words continue to sound like a real objective for our Metropolitanate as well, organised into three Eparchies. How may this community be made live in Jesus’ presence, and how may the divine presence be rendered tangible? I will propose a simple answer: This may be achieved when two or three (or even four or five) individuals, communities or eparchies act together in the name of Jesus and make their decisions jointly, paying attention to one another. Naturally, this is only possible if Jesus’ presence is understood as life in Him, existence through Him and spiritual and bodily enrichment and growth in Him.

Thus, for me, it is the unity of the three Eparchies in the Holy Spirit that serves as a guarantee that our Church, the Greek Catholic Church of Hungary, will be a truly living one.

We have been and continue to be witnesses to this – in some ways – laborious process: finding the path to unity in eparchical autonomy, as well as enabling the development and growth of individual eparchies in the power of unity. In my view, the only clue in a contemporary understanding of our identity is unity in diversity. This is the

5 Matt 18,20 The biblical foundations of concord in Christ.

motto not only of the European Union⁶ but of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate as well.

In what follows, I intend to present the events or – to put it somewhat timidly – the accomplishments of the past seven years.

As I have noted, I have – somewhat mystically – described the circumstances of the foundation as the miracle of the Theotokos. This miracle accompanies us to this day, and I hope that it also bears fruit agreeable to God. A miracle, by nature, always requires faith and, at the same time, inspires faith.⁷ We must also view the first seven years of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate with this openness of faith.

The decision of Pope Francis made on 19 March 2015 was legally specified in five Apostolic Constitutions or Bulls. 1. With the Apostolic Constitution *In hac suprema*, the Holy Father created new ecclesiastical frameworks previously unknown in Hungary by founding the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* of Hungary or, for short, the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate. 2. The Apostolic Constitution *De spirituali itinere* granted the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, founded in 1912, the status of archeparchy. Its official name came to be the Metropolitan Church of Hajdúdorog (Archeeparchy of Hajdúdorog). 3. With the Apostolic Constitution *Qui successimus*, the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc, established in 1924 and now nearly approaching its one hundredth anniversary, was raised to the rank of eparchy, as a confirmation of the old desire of the faithful of the ‘old’ Eparchy of Prešov (*Eperjes*). 4. The Apostolic Constitution *Ad aptius consulendum* founded the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza, which, – albeit new in name – possessed ancient traditions that had evolved in the Eparchy of Mukacheve (*Munkács*). 5. On the same day, Pope Francis appointed Fülöp Kocsis, Bishop of Hajdúdorog, as Archbishop-Metropolitan.

6 The motto of the European Union as of 2000 is: ‘United in diversity’, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/eu-motto_en

7 For a more nuanced understanding of the theology of miracle, see, e.g., Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, New Revised Edition, T & T Clark International 2011.

The organisation of the newly founded Eparchy of Nyíregyháza was commenced by Dr Atanáz Orosz, Diocesan Bishop of Miskolc, as Apostolic Exarch. In October 2015, he was followed by Ábel Szocska, a basilian monk, in the same position, who, since his appointment on 7 April 2018, has governed the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza as Diocesan Bishop. The three church leaders, along with Szilárd Keresztes, Emeritus Bishop of Hajdúdorog, constitute the Council of Hierarchs, the supreme organ of leadership of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate.⁸

The new unit of ecclesiastical governance, the Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* of Hungary, was registered by the Ministry of Human Resources of Hungary under number 00001/2012-175 (short name: Greek Catholic Metropolitanate).⁹ With this act, the Metropolitanate was created in terms of civil law as well, though not as an ‘established Church’ but as an ecclesiastical organisation with an independent juridical person derived from the ‘Hungarian’ Catholic Church as an established Church. (Therefore, in terms of civil law, the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate is equal with the Dioceses and other church organisations registered in Hungary.) It is thus obvious that whereas, in a canonical sense, a Church *sui iuris* of metropolitan rank (the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate or, alternatively, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church) has been created in accordance with the decision of the Holy Father, such an establishment would only be feasible under civil law if we were also an established Church.¹⁰

The three Eparchies of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate began to operate with 264 priests (39 of them retired), 9 deacons and 62 seminarians in committed service, at all times seeking the glory of God and dedicated to serve the community as builders of the Kingdom of God among us and in us. In the spring of 2020, 272

⁸ CCEO Can. 165.

⁹ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 3/2015.

¹⁰ A detailed discussion of this subject is outside the scope of the present talk, though it would no doubt raise highly relevant questions.

priests, including 31 retired priests, 14 deacons and 45 seminarians, served in the Eparchies of the Metropolitanate.

At the moment, the number of priests is 288 (28 of them retired), with 19 deacons and 35 seminarians.¹¹

Another result of the year 2015 was the establishment of the Metropolitan Tribunal, functioning as a tribunal of first instance for the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog, while, for the Eparchies of Miskolc and Nyíregyháza, as an appellate tribunal, i.e. a tribunal of second instance.¹²

The second half of the same year saw the beginning of the sessions of the Council of Hierarchs (to be held at least twice a year). Members of the Council of Hierarchs are all the consecrated bishops of the Metropolitanate. (While the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza was presided over by an Apostolic Administrator, naturally, he was also a member.) At the first session, two important documents were drafted: the Statute of the Council of Hierarchs and the (unitary) Metropolitan Pension Fund. The latter is applicable to clerics incardinated into and serving in the three Eparchies, as well as to other clerics performing their ministry at other church institutions with episcopal approval and – as a matter of course – ‘manages’ issues pertinent to retired priests, widowed priests’ wives and the orphaned children of priests, in harmony with the former eparchial pension funds but, at the same time, expressing a genuine sense of Christian solidarity and charity, as well as the obligation of care.¹³

Perhaps one of the most important functions and tasks of the first period – the early years – was to create the foundations and, in doing so, to find a firm basis on which the life, work and future of the Metropolitanate could be built. In addition to the institutions

¹¹ Data have been obtained from the Schematisms of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate, as well as of the Eparchies.

¹² *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 4/2015.

¹³ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 27/2015.

mentioned previously, a system of committees was developed and introduced, supporting the efficient functioning of the Council of Hierarchs in the preparation of decisions to a great extent. (Each committee is headed by a Hierarch.)

The committees are the following:

- Committee of Ecclesiastical Art and Church Construction,
- College and Priest Training Committee,
- Economic Committee,
- Committee of Legal Advisers,
- Pastoral Committee,
- Liturgical Committee,
- Máriapócs National Shrine Committee,
- Ecumenical Committee,

subsequently,

- Committee of Education and Catechesis,
- Committee of Liturgical Music,
- followed by the Preparatory Committee of the International Eucharistic Congress
- and the Preparatory Committee of Metropolitan Assemblies,
- as well as the Final Tribute Committee – only recently.¹⁴

The work of these committees is a living testimony to the true endeavour of our Church, our Metropolitanate, as well as of our Eparchies to enable the highest possible degree of cooperation within the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church in a variety of fields, show unity and assist the Bishops in their mission.

At the same time, an effort was made to ensure that the Metropolitanate would be moderate in its organisation and office (in terms of personnel, resources and infrastructure alike), as well as to make its operation economical, with its activities in many instances supported by ‘existing staff’ – the employees of the Eparchies. (However, this at times produces difficulties as well since it is hard to

¹⁴ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 47/2016.

distinguish between the Metropolitanate and the Archeparchy – even though this situation may be explained by ecclesiological causes, too, as the Episcopal See elevated to the rank of Archeparchy becomes the seat of the Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* as well.)¹⁵

At the beginning of the creation of the Metropolitanate, the question of where the retired priests, widowed priests' wives and seminarians of the three Eparchies were to belong would be quickly resolved: The Council of Hierarchs specified territorial affiliation as a general principle.¹⁶

On 30 January 2016, Pope Francis designated new boundaries for the Eparchies of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate within the territory of Hungary, thus causing the Eparchy of Miskolc to extend over all of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and Heves County in the north and the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza to encompass the whole of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County in the east of the country. As for the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog, its territory comprises the remaining 16 counties and the capital, Budapest.¹⁷

On 7 April 2018, we were all delighted to receive the decision of Pope Francis to appoint Apostolic Administrator A. Ábel Szocska OSBM as Bishop of the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza.¹⁸ His consecration was celebrated in Nyíregyháza on 10 May.¹⁹

In my opinion, the main pillars for the evolution, operation and development of the Metropolitanate may be identified in the following three areas:

(i) provisions – chiefly of a liturgical nature – that must/should determine the life of the Greek Catholic faithful in a uniform way. I believe that liturgical identity is the most important identity

¹⁵ See: CCEO Can. 158.

¹⁶ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 50/2016 & 51/2016.

¹⁷ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 56/2016.

¹⁸ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 72 & 85/2018.

¹⁹ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 84/2018.

component in a believer's life because he or she strives to experience the vertical character of his or her relationship with God horizontally, too, as it were – in the Church, in the community and in everyday life. This requires episcopal provisions that primarily help the faithful avoid breakdowns in their personal lives and even assist them in their spiritual growth.

(2) questions related to the maintenance, operation and the necessary improvement of – so to speak – unique (i.e. unparalleled) institutions defining the life of Hungary's Greek Catholic community; experiencing a shared sense of responsibility for such.

(3) to put it plainly, joint programmes and experiences, even shared instances of experiencing God, all reinforcing the sensation that we are the Greek Catholic Church together (not only) in Hungary – we should not forget about our Greek Catholic (especially Hungarian-speaking) brothers and sisters outside Hungary's current borders even if they belong to different Churches *sui iuris*.

(1) The so-called provisions range from numerous issues of apparently minor import to those of truly great significance. Aside from the adoption of the regulations referred to previously, one may find clear guidelines, for example, on the joint celebration of the Divine Liturgy,²⁰ specifically addressing the question of the bishop's presence in cases when he does not celebrate the Divine Liturgy himself; provisions on the proper veneration of the Eucharist; provisions on the question of child communion and its introduction. Furthermore, other provisions include instructions on the norm of absolution from abortion,²¹ as well as the presentation of the new papal legislation regarding nullity procedures in Eastern Canon Law and its executive order (*motu proprio Mitis et misericors Iesus*).²²

²⁰ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 174/2016.

²¹ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 173/2016.

²² *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 57/2016.

As of the year 2020, provisions include common regulations, primarily of a liturgical nature, imposed by the period of the Coronavirus, defining our lives to a considerable degree. Provisions of this type are found in at least four circulars of our Metropolitanate.²³

Defining our present in substantial ways, ‘census preparations’²⁴ have been part of our joint thinking since 2020. Apart from the related numerous – hopefully promising – initiatives, I consider episcopal exhortations particularly significant, along with the ‘common intention’ to put a premium on ensuring that the meaning of the census is appreciated in every corner of our Church.²⁵

Besides provisions with major implications, indications of minor consequence, such as writing the Hungarian expression for ‘Greek Catholic’ as a single word, as well as the introduction of uniform baptismal certificates, are also provided.²⁶

Since its foundation, the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate has paid special attention to the sad developments affecting the lives of our brethren in the Middle East, offering substantial support for the Greek Catholics of Syria by collecting donations, practically from ‘day one’. A joint effort to provide assistance is even more palpable these days as the war in our close proximity impacting our brothers and sisters of the same faith further strengthens the desire in every member of our Church to help. Collections aimed at aiding those who suffer and our prayers have become constant elements among our faithful, as well as in the cooperation between our Eparchies.

(2) With a view to consolidating the existence and functioning of the institutions concerned, the Metropolitanate undertook to

23 Cf. *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 486/2020, 125/2021, 313/2021, 21/2022.

24 *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 484/2020.

25 A census is underway in Hungary these days, with special significance for every Hungarian citizen, as well as for every member of any Hungarian Church.

26 Cf. *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 60/2016.

maintain institutions crucial to supporting the values of the whole Greek Catholic community. From the start, these include: the Máriapócs National Shrine, the Pilgrimage Church, the Retreat Centre and Pilgrims House, the Emmanuel Pilgrims Centre, the ‘Family Castle’, St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological Institute and its constituent institutions (the Seminary, the Books and Religious Items Shop and the Greek Catholic Media Centre). Naturally, the number of such institutions and their deeds of foundation have changed over time (e.g., St Luke’s Charity Service operated under the auspices of the Metropolitanate for a few years before the rights of foundation were reclaimed by the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog in January 2022). At the same time, it is important to highlight that the leaders of these institutions are always appointed by the Metropolitan in agreement with the Council of Hierarchs (and, as a matter of course, their respective rules and regulations, as well as their operation are continuously supervised by the Council of Hierarchs). In our institutional growth – accompanied by a heightened sense of responsibility – a major milestone has been the takeover and maintenance of St Damian’s Greek Catholic Hospital. These days, another important challenge – in a positive sense as well – is the launch of the Greek Catholic Museum, with a suitable building already in place to house it.

At this point, I must briefly address the economic side of the operation of the Metropolitanate as well. At the recommendation of the Economic Committee, the Council of Hierarchs developed an internal system of ratios in relation to the three Eparchies that determines a division of the necessary expenses and revenues for the three Eparchies.²⁷ For operation – thanks to an individual decision of

²⁷ Ratios: Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog – 35.5%; Eparchy of Miskolc – 25%; Eparchy of Nyíregyháza – 39.5% In determining ratios, besides the number of the faithful as the most heavily weighted component (50%), the number of churches and communities, as well as the size of the clergy were also considered.

the Hungarian Government – from 2017, the Metropolitanate receives an annual amount of 300 million forints to subsidise operation costs from the state budget, ensuring efficient functioning of the institutions and, in certain cases, contributing to the operational expenditures of the Eparchies as well.

To discuss the developments of the past seven years of the Metropolitanate at a metropolitan, eparchial and parochial level, I believe even a full-day presentation would be insufficient. Having taken account of these rather significant and occasionally milestone-like advances,²⁸ we seem to have good reason to feel that God, the Creator of all, has been kind to us over this past period as well. Our Church has experienced growth on a scale never imagined before – in infrastructure, as well as in our educational, social and child-welfare institutions alike. We owe much to a range of sponsors, the Government of Hungary, European Union grants, eparchial centres and, of course, our faithful.

As someone who has not only seen but has also experienced and participated in our development, please allow me to quote from one of my previous publications:

Many were surprised by the fact that, in accordance with the Holy Father's decision, the city of Debrecen became the seat of the Metropolitanate and hence of the Archbishop-Metropolitan. At the same time, it must be recalled that the first Bishop, István Miklósy, had also envisaged the centre of the new Eparchy in the *Cívis City* (a common nickname of Debrecen referring to its historical status as a royal free city and the influential role of its former middle class) over a hundred years earlier. Therefore, in 2015, in addition to the Calvinist and Roman Catholic Episcopates, Debrecen was made a

²⁸ To name but a few, churches have been built in Dunakeszi, Mezőkövesd, Nyíregyháza-Borbánya, Dunaújváros and Nyékládháza. Countless kindergartens, day nurseries and schools have been renovated or constructed, not to mention the rejuvenation of a multitude of community spaces and parishes.

triple episcopal see. Nevertheless, even as the largest congregation in the country, the Greek Catholic community of Debrecen was ‘programmed to function only as a sizeable parish’, and its buildings proved to be insufficient to accommodate an episcopal – let alone metropolitan – office. However, in His creative power and care, God has been all along mindful to provide the necessary conditions – right from the outset, with the assistance of the Hungarian Government, which could deliver on its unfulfilled promise from a century before – enabling the Metropolitan of Hajdúdorog to work and reside in Debrecen in decency and in an elegant and modern office. The day, 29 April 2017, when the impressive building housing the offices of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate and the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog was consecrated in the presence of high-ranking church- and state-leaders is vividly remembered even today.²⁹

Simultaneously or, more accurately, as a gift of the past seven years, the Cathedral of the Eparchy of Miskolc has undergone aesthetic improvement, and the office headed by an autonomous Diocesan Bishop has been fully developed and consolidated. Young and vigorous, the episcopal office of the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza – new in name yet boasting a long tradition – has become stronger by the day, necessarily along with its internal structure. As a visible sign of this growth, the building of the Episcopal Palace has been given a new image in these years.

At the same time, one ought not to overlook the fact that our National Shrine, Máriapócs, all important to all Greek Catholics, has also been thoroughly refurbished, and the College and Seminary, functioning as an academic and spiritual centre, has become a building catering for the widest array of demands; in the meantime, the buildings of the Museums and of the Study House have been

²⁹ Cf. I. Seszták, *The Birth of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate – A Miracle of the Theotokos?*, 455.

completed, along with the new home for the preparatory year in Miskolc.

Meanwhile, in the past five years, the Eparchies of our Greek Catholic Metropolitanate have increased their active involvement in maintaining institutions, on the one hand, by operating educational institutions under the supervision of the Eparchy (with over 12 thousand children and young individuals) and, on the other hand, by shouldering an ever broadening scope of social and child-welfare responsibilities, with special emphasis on disadvantaged regions, where pastoral work among the Roma people is a cause shared by us all. Continuous cooperation and dialogue are indispensable in these areas, too, as we all serve and ‘build’ one Church for the glory of God.³⁰

At this point, I would like to give an overview of employment figures for the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate:

At the *Metropolitan Office*, duties are performed by three clerics – in part time employment – and two civil individuals as contract agents. In *eparchical centres*, nearly 100 full-time employees perform daily assignments. At the *Theological College*, 25 clerics, 25 full-time lay persons, 6 part-time lay individuals and 22 civil persons as contract agents are employed. The nascent *Museum* has three employees, while the *Press and Media Centre* has 4+4 workers (one of them a cleric). *Máriapócs* has 36 employees (four of them clerics); at the *Hospital* of Kisvárda, 860 individuals are employed to provide effective inpatient care for 600, as well as outpatient treatment.

Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog

Education:	4700 pupils, 670 employees
Child-welfare:	1270 care-recipients, 227 employees and 339 foster parents

³⁰ Data have been compiled based on eparchical notifications.

The Past Seven Years of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate

Support school: 55 children with 9 employees
Charity service: 900 people in residential care,
350 children weekly at the early intervention
centre,
nearly 500 employees

Eparchy of Miskolc

Education: 3660 pupils, 656 employees
Social area: 103 care-recipients, 56 employees
Day nursery: 104 children, 25 employees
Support school: 68 children, 23 employees
Child-welfare: 720 care-recipients, 297 employees

Eparchy of Nyíregyháza

Education: 3700 pupils, 620 employees
Social area: nearly 500 employees; rather complex and
diverse services: (homestead welfare service:
100 people,
social catering: 544 people, home assistance
service: 1016 people,
home assistance service with signalling
system: 253, day care service for people with
disabilities: 24 people
day care service for the elderly and individuals
with senile dementia: 122 people, support
service: 94 people,
residential care: 460, assisted-living housing:
150 people,
homeless shelter: 24 people)
Support school: 125 children, 50 employees
Day nursery: 152 children, 46 employees

Temporary home for families: 25 people, 7 employees
Child-welfare: 850 people, 130 employees and 240 foster parents

The three Eparchies combined:

Education: 12 600 pupils, approx. 1 950 employees
Social area: (residential care) over 1600 care-recipients and 850 employees
other: day care – approx. 200 employees
Support school: 250 children, 82 employees
Day nursery: 256 children, 71 employees
Child-welfare: 2 840 children receiving care,
1 130 employees (including foster parents)

(3) For our Greek Catholic Church and our faithful, experience is of primary importance: not only instances of experiencing God through the liturgy but also the experience derived from community events representing a sense of moving nearer to God, to the Incomprehensible. (This is, in a way, comparable to theology itself: moving closer to and being raised to God). Perhaps, it is also along these lines that we have made joint programmes a priority from the formation of the Metropolitanate with a view to ‘affording genuine experiences’. These are mainly centred around the yearly schedule of feasts and pilgrimages, where community experience celebrated in the liturgy is most obvious: in addition to the grand pilgrimage (in honour of the Dormition of the Theotokos) and the minor pilgrimage (in honour of the Nativity of the Theotokos), children’s pilgrimage, the nationwide pilgrimage of the sick and healers, pilgrimage in honour of the Protection of the Theotokos, as well as the pilgrimage of foreign Greek Catholics and of the Hungarian-speaking faithful from abroad; joint catechesis competitions – even for secondary-school pupils – constantly expanding knowledge olympiads, spiritual group events, such as Divine Office camps in various locations,

retreats for priests and priests' wives, major events (balls, the Greek Fire Camp, family camps, pilgrimage walks (+16 and +22), running races and swimming contests).

Furthermore, I would like to touch upon those joint 'initiatives' that, by offering opportunities of community experiences, have contributed to the growing strength of the Metropolitanate.

Such a step was the announcement of the International Eucharistic Congress, with its Greek Catholic aspects clearly highlighted.³¹ It may have been an act of Providence that our preparations were longer and also more complete than original envisaged. Countless rounds of negotiations were conducted about the focal points of the preparations, as well as about the exposition of Greek Catholic features during the Congress. At the same time, the exhibition 'The Light of Thy Countenance' organised at the Budapest Vigadó Concert Hall, the Meeting of European Eastern Catholic Bishops in Budapest and the Divine Liturgy celebrated jointly in St Stephen's Basilica all provided uplifting and unforgettable experiences of a lifetime to many. (Each of our priests was presented with a set of liturgical vestments and a sick call kit.)

Although it may have started as a relatively less important community experience, the series of events called pastoral-days did act as a real catalyst. Its more or less explicit aim was to prepare the Metropolitan Assembly, which – representing an attempt at participating in Pope Francis's synodal path initiative, designed to renew the institution of the Episcopal Synod – has given us an opportunity to be together here today so that we may enrich one another with our presence. In fact, every encounter is a chance to find something or, more precisely, 'Someone'.

In searching for unity in the diversity of the Metropolitancate, an important common ground is the discovery of the elements of

³¹ *Circular of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate*, 80 & 81/2017.

a shared outward image, as well as common publications. Of the latter, the Psalter issued early at the time of the formation of the Metropolitanate, as well as the finalisation and publication of a new translation of the Gospels for use in our liturgical practice may be highlighted. Besides a number of ‘seemingly minor’ attempts in this area, as well as despite the numerous anticipated difficulties, we may feel proud of an almost complete catechesis course-book series, the book entitled ‘The Light of Thy Countenance’ – a particularly high-quality publication – as well as of our new theological series launched these days. Aside from these, one should not forget about publications with a history spanning several decades, such as *Görögkatolikus Szemle* (Greek Catholic review), the Wall Calendar and *Kalendárium* (Calendar – an annual publication with spiritual readings), the magazine *Görögkatolikus Szemlélet* (Greek Catholic view), the Teachers’ Pocket Book and the Desk Calendar, either.

In fact, it would be hard to ignore these tools and publications as they are used as everyday aids by an inestimable number of Greek Catholics, and it is wholly appropriate that they support our Greek Catholic Church, faith and communities as signs of our cooperation.

In the way of a summary, it may be concluded that the past seven years have, in a sense, been devoted to an initial search for directions and the ministry of laying foundations. We have had the opportunity to experience the ‘miracle of the beginning’ and now we progress towards fullness, though we are aware that this road is hard and long (i.e. endless). However, once we have the good conscience for a peaceful night at the end of every day, we may be confident to say that we are builders of the Kingdom of God already on this earth. Of course, this process of building would be impossible without efficient and dialogue-based cooperation between the Eparchies, for which I thank God even at this very moment.

Let us continue our journey for many more centuries to come! Thank you for your attention!



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