

**“CREATE IN ME
A CLEAN HEART, O GOD,
AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT
WITHIN ME.”**
PSALM 50:12



**“СЕРЦЕ ЧИСТЕ
СТВОРИ В МЕНІ БОЖЕ,
І ДУХА ПРАВДИ
ВІДНОВИ У МЕНІ.”**
ПСАЛМІ 50:12

Dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Clergy and Laity of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA:

CHRIST IS AMONGST US! IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!

According to the Constitution of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA,
I hereby call and bless the convocation of the REGULAR SOBOR - XXIII of our Church.
The Sobor will take place at our Metropolia Center of St. Andrew the First-Called Apostle
in South Bound Brook/Somerset, NJ, 13-15 October 2022.

It will be preceded by a Metropolitan Council Meeting on 11 October and a Clergy Conference on 12 October.

The Theme for this Regular Sobor is Psalm 50:10:
“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

The next verse of Psalm 50 reads:
“Cast me not away from Your Presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

The author of the Psalm, King David, was beseeching forgiveness from God for his most grievous sin. The work “create” here is the same Hebrew word that is used in Genesis 1:1 for the creation of the world thus acknowledging that the creation of a clean heart – the forgiveness of his sin and the radical cleansing he needed – could come from God alone. He needed an intervention from God to restore his heart to cleanliness and steadfastness in his faithfulness to and relationship with God. This was possible only if his desires, his thoughts, his morality were all governed by a “right spirit” within, leading him to live for God, rather than primarily for himself. He asks the Lord to permit him to remain in His Presence – fulfilling the responsibilities of his anointed position – which was meant to be guided always by the Holy Spirit.

These are very powerful words that the priest prays during the Eucharistic Prayer of Divine Liturgy as he beseeches the Lord to send His Holy Spirit down upon the “gifts” (bread and wine) “spread forth upon the Holy Table”, making them the Body and Blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He acknowledges his own sinfulness praying that it will not prohibit the Holy Spirit from acting. At the same time he seeks the blessing of the Lord to help him remain steadfast in his own faithfulness always abiding in the Presence of God.

We along with King David and all our ordained clergy must be constantly aware of the ways we separate ourselves from God through our sinfulness against Him alone and the effect of that separation on the lives of all around us. As we all prepare to participate in our Regular Sobor XXIII, let us all seek to know ourselves as honestly as did King David, realizing that we simply must approach our Lord asking: “Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me”, in the realization that only He can make things right after receiving our sincere supplication. Only then can we hope not to be “cast away from His Presence” or experience the “taking away of the Holy Spirit” from us.

With this honest self-knowledge and comprehension about our relationship with God, we are able to trust that the Holy Spirit will truly be with us in our Sobor discussions and deliberations as we beseech His Presence in the opening prayer: “O Heavenly King, the Comforter, Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and dwell in us, cleanse from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One”.

Sobor XXIII is even more important than Sobor XXII, in that the issues we faced three years ago have become even more intense, resulting in the necessity to repeat much of what I shared with you then. We have much to consider during this Sobor. We stand at a crucial crossroads in the life and history of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA. You have heard such words from all my predecessors over the first one hundred years of our ecclesiastical life, but rarely have they been spoken with such dire urgency as now, because of the circumstances of life in our Church as we enter our second century of service to God. We have weathered many storms through the decades, always counting on the provision of our Lord and we still do count on His magnificent and complete love for us. As always, however, we realize that we must make our own contribution to our welfare and stewardship of the gifts He has presented to us. We must be willing to climb up the mountain in all humility, hoping to come face to Face with God to offer our gratitude to Him and to beseech His continued mercy and generosity.

Your participation in all aspects of the Sobor is an absolute necessity. Your contribution to the strengthening of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church here in the United States of America is essential. Our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents came to build a new life in this great nation, and they centered that life on the Truth of God’s Word – in far more difficult circumstances than we know today. Throughout all, they never wavered in their devotion to God and commitment to building His Church and extending His Kingdom. Let us follow their example now, living in the blessings of God – to ensure the legacy we must pass on to our own children and grandchildren!

During our Sobor we will face VERY, VERY IMPORTANT DECISIONS about our Metropolia properties, and our staffing, which may affect our future operations significantly.

The election of parish delegates, which must be accomplished, according to our Church Constitution, at a parish meeting, should be completed by the end of June so that those delegates might well prepare for the work of this Sobor. Our future depends upon representation from all our parishes. The Pre-Sobor commission has begun the task of preparing for our triennial convocation and you will receive all necessary and detailed information from them. I ask that you adhere to all deadlines set for the Sobor.

May the Holy Spirit guide all our deliberations and efforts during this Sobor, uniting us in “one mind and one heart” so that all we attempt to accomplish will be for the Glory of God and the salvation of souls.

In our Lord’s All-Encompassing Love,

+ ANTONY
By the Grace of God, Metropolitan