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Resignations and Appointments

Appointment of vicar apostolic of Reyes, Bolivia

Erection of the apostolic administration for Catholic faithful of Byzantine rite in Kazakhstan and in Central Asia, with see in Karaganda, and appointment of apostolic administrator

Appointment of vicar apostolic of Reyes, Bolivia

The Holy Father Francis has appointed as vicar apostolic of Reyes, Bolivia, H.E. Msgr. Waldo Rubén Barrionuevo Ramírez, C.S.S.R., currently apostolic administrator of the same apostolic vicariate, transferring him from the titular see of Vulturara.

Erection of the apostolic administration for Catholic faithful of Byzantine rite in Kazakhstan and in Central Asia, with see in Karaganda, and appointment of apostolic administrator

The Pope has erected the apostolic administration for Catholic faithful of Byzantine rite in Kazakhstan and in Central Asia, with see in Karaganda, at the same time appointing the Rev. Mitered Archpriest **Vasyl Hovera**, currently delegate of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches for the aforementioned faithful, as apostolic administrator of the same ecclesiastical circumscription.

The Rev. Mitered Archpriest **Vasyl Hovera** was born in 1972 in Ivano Frankivsk, Ukraine, and was ordained a priest in 1997. In the same year he began his pastoral ministry for the Greek-Catholic faithful in Kazakhstan. In 2005 he received the title of mitered archpriest.

Historical notes on Catholic communities of Byzantine rite in Kazakhstan and Central Asia

There is sporadic information about the presence of Catholics of Byzantine rite in Central Asia since the seventeenth century. However it was above all in the twentieth century that a substantial increase in their numbers was noted, especially following the mass deportations conducted by the Soviet regime in the 1930s and 1940s. According to some estimates, from 1939 to 1953, around 150 thousand Ukrainian Greek Catholics were exiled in Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan, including approximately 150 priests, including Blessed Oleksa Zaryckyj and Blessed Mykyta Budka, as well as the Servant of God Oleksandr Chira.

After the amnesty, proclaimed with the wave of political changes that occurred with the death of Stalin in 1953, the Byzantine Catholic presence in those lands was significantly reduced, though it remained constant. Pastoral initiatives were carried out in hiding, but from 1991, with the dissolution of the USSR, they acquired the character of normality. Greek-Catholic parishes were formed in Karaganda, Pavlodar, Astana, Satpayev, Shiderty and Almaty, and over a dozen communities in other locations. According to current estimates, a total of around 10,000 Catholics of the Byzantine rite are present in the Central Asia region. They are pastorally assisted by eight priests, with the collaboration of five religious sisters.

In 1991 the pastoral care of the Catholic faithful of the Byzantine rite was entrusted to H.E. Msgr. Jan Paweł Lenga, apostolic administrator in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. From 1996 to 2002 these roles were performed by H.E. Msgr. Wasyl Ihor Medvit, O.S.B.M., as apostolic visitor for the Greek Catholic faithful in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. In 2002, a delegate of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches was appointed for the faithful of the Byzantine rite in Kazakhstan and in Central Asia, the Rev.do Sac. Vasyl Hovera.

With today's provisions regarding the Catholic Church in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the pastoral needs of those Byzantine rite communities are met.
