

Boston commemorates anniversary of the Holodomor with four events



Vsevolod Petriv

Parishioners of Christ the King Church gathered to mark the 77th anniversary of the Holodomor.

by Peter T. Woloschuk

The 77th anniversary of the Holodomor was commemorated in Boston over a three-week period with events from Sunday, November 21, through Sunday, December 5, 2010. All of the ceremonies were sponsored by Ukrainian Congress Committee of America – Boston Branch (UCCA) and were supported by the branch president, Vsevolod Petriv, the English-language secretary, Maria Fedynshyn Saxe, and the board of directors of the branch.

The solemn observances began with a showing of the documentary film "Okradena Zemyia" at the parish house of Christ the King Ukrainian Catholic Church. UCCA-Boston Vice-President Paul Rabchenuk facilitated and coordinated this event, which was also a fundraiser to help the producer-director, Yuriy Luhovy, raise enough money to master an English-language version of the work. The film was shown after the solemn sung liturgies at both Ukrainian parishes and drew some 70 people.

Following the film screening, Mr. Luhovy shared insights on the reasons for the film, the documentary evidence that he found, and the people that he interviewed.

On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, the Rev. Yaroslav Nalysnyk of Christ the King Parish offered the Ukrainian liturgy for the victims of the Holodomor, preached a powerful sermon about the senselessness of the tragedy, and concluded with a "panakhyda" (memorial service) and the lighting of candles by all in attendance, and, finally, a procession (obkhyd) of the church.

In his sermon, the Rev. Nalysnyk recalled that "the Holodomor – the Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 was hidden from sight for more than 70 years."

"The 1932-1933 Ukrainian Famine is

certainly one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century," the Rev. Nalysnyk said. "More than 10 million people, or one quarter of the population, starved on the fertile lands of Ukraine. At the height of the Famine, 17 people died every minute, 1,000 an hour, 25,000 a day. The genocide against the Ukrainian people was a crime against humanity. Even though justice cannot be served to those who were responsible for this crime, at least the truth about this unspeakable tragedy will not be forgotten."

"It is important for all of us to speak up and spread awareness globally of what happened in Ukraine in the 1930s so that mankind might never witness a similar tragedy again," Father Nalysnyk said. "It is my deepest wish that this dark moment in human history not be denied or forgotten. Only by facing the truth can we build a better world."

After the liturgy, UCCA-Boston Vice-President Zenoviy Prots led members of the branch and spent the afternoon at one of the main public transportation terminals of the city where the UCCA undertook informational leafleting to raise consciousness and visibility of the Holodomor among the general public. The material distributed included a three-fold flyer that highlighted material from the UCCA headquarters in New York.

On Sunday, December 5, the Rev. Roman Tarnavsky, pastor of St. Andrew the First Called Ukrainian Orthodox Church, brought the commemorations to a close with a commemorative liturgy and a final panakhyda with the lighting of candles by the entire congregation. The service was attended by at least three seniors who witnessed and survived the Holodomor as children.

Speaking in English, the Rev. Tarnavsky stressed the contrast between

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The procession at Christ the King Church.



The leafleting effort at Forest Hills MBTA Station.



The audience at the presentation of "Okradena Zemlya," which kicked off the Holodomor commemorations.



The Holodomor "panakhyda" at St Andrew's.

Boston commemorates...

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the recent Thanksgiving Day holiday celebrated in a bountiful country where religious freedom is permitted and the horror of the Holodomor, the condemnation of millions to starvation was used as a tool of political repression.

"We need to remember that just 79 short years ago many of our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, did not have the things we take for granted today," Father Tarnavsky said, "They were not able to worship in their faith, they were not able to sit down with their family members because many of them were in jail, and they were not even able to eat together because their food, their very substance, their bread was taken

away from them by the Communist regime."

In his Ukrainian remarks, the pastor recalled the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "death from hunger is a terrible and painful death, but the death of those who perpetrate this evil is even worse because they die a little each time they witness the results of their deeds."

Finally, Maria Walzer, who over many years has been instrumental in getting educators in eastern New England to include the Holodomor in their discussions of genocide, has spearheaded a drive to have the Massachusetts legislature officially incorporate the Ukrainian genocide in the curriculum of the state's public schools. The issue will be taken up during the body's new session in early 2011.