

---

## Interview: Msgr. Sofron Dmyterko

---

### Priest in Ukraine is synonymous with martyr

*Legal recognition of the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Byzantine rite (suppressed by Stalin in 1946), religious freedom, the right to open seminaries and to send seminarians abroad to church universities, all in a spirit of fraternal collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church—these were the key topics discussed at the Vatican during the meeting held on June 25-26 between the Pope, Catholic bishops from Ukraine, and several sector heads of the Roman Curia.*

*Msgr. Sofron Dmyterko, 73-year-old bishop of the vast Eparchy of Ivano-Frankivsk, was jailed 1944-64 and 1973-75. He was interviewed in Rome by Maria Cristina Fiocchi.*

**EIR:** For the first time after half a century, the Ukrainian bishops have been able to visit the Holy Father. How did you find this encounter?

**Dmyterko:** It was very moving. The Pope wanted to talk with each of us individually, to know the history of our ordinations, to confirm our consecrations, to hear about the bishops who died in concentration camps, and know where they were buried. He showed fatherly love toward us; I would say he was moved but also happy. The meeting with the Pontiff took about an hour and a half. Then we went into the Synod hall to discuss the problems of our church.

**EIR:** How many Ukrainian bishops were consecrated clandestinely?

**Dmyterko:** Beyond the ten who came here to Rome, there may be a few more, but I don't know. There's no reason not to come forward.

**EIR:** There is talk of constituting a Catholic Patriarchate.

**Dmyterko:** For the moment we are awaiting the recognition of our church. But there is no doubt that we have the right to a Patriarchate. The Pope is not opposed, but all the conditions have to exist. It may take a few years.

**EIR:** You have been persecuted, and suffered in silence without ever giving in. What does it mean to live your priesthood in prison? to be a clandestine bishop?

**Dmyterko:** In 1946 our bishops, priests, and nuns were all sent to Siberia, to prison, or into exile. I, too, was arrested and put in prison, condemned to hard labor.

Then in 1973 I was arrested again. The Communists had found two homilies written for the mass: They judged them as propaganda against the system and put me in jail. I was together with 1,200 prisoners, who were all common criminals, assassins. At first they did not know I was a priest, then they saw me praying. Some of them started to respect me. Others began to hate me and wanted to kill me.

The conditions in jail were terrible, inhuman. The food was wretched, water was lacking, hygiene was terrible. Most of the prisoners were young and hungry. One day one of them got so hungry he stole a piece of bread, and the others discovered it and treated him so harshly that later he was found hanged. His name was Peter Drost, and his only crime was that he was hungry.

Sometimes I could celebrate mass in secret. One believer, a devout Catholic, brought me consecrated bread; they discovered him and accused him of being a clandestine priest, which was not true, and wanted to arrest him. All I could do was pray. I had a rosary, which they allowed me to keep, though every once in a while they threatened to take it away. I prayed for my jailers, and also for those poor brutalized people.

**EIR:** Are you happy to be going home? What will you tell your people?

**Dmyterko:** To keep their hopes up. I will say that the Pope is with us, he loves us, and he has confidence in us.

---

the two countries emerged at the time Prince Bandar was enjoying Chinese hospitality with Prime Minister Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in Beijing.

In August 1989, Tawfig Khalid al-Madar, the first Saudi Arabian commercial representative, took up his post in Beijing. In December, a high-level Chinese delegation led by Zheng Hongye, president of the International Chamber of Commerce of China, visited Riyadh. Its 13 members were officials from the textiles, mineral, construction, chemical, hardware, light industries, and machinery sections of China's foreign trade department. Those aware of China's deceptive

categorization of its various ministries will have no difficulty in recognizing, in the last four sections, euphemisms for military hardware production.

These developments cannot make India feel comfortable. China has long been involved in instigating, training, and financing armed guerrillas within Indian territory for the purpose of creating chaos and destabilization. It has paid scant respect to India's concern about its own security. China's zealous courting of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, using both the Indian bogeyman and cheap Chinese armaments as bait, is a deliberate provocation of India.