



Peculiarities of conducting general visitations in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis: A review based on acts of church visitations of the 18th century

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Abstract. The relevance of the study is stipulated by the need for an in-depth study of the mechanisms of church governance in the eighteenth-century Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, in particular through the prism of the practice of general visits, which had a significant impact on religious and social life. The purpose of the study was to identify the peculiarities of conducting general visits, their impact on the organisation of religious life and the development of church structures in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis. The methodological basis of the work was historical, comparative, and sociocultural analysis, which allowed for a systematic study of the phenomenon. The source base consisted of acts of church visitations, protocols, and reports of the eighteenth century. The study found that general visits were aimed at checking the state of churches, parishes, and the activities of the clergy. Visitors carried out a detailed inspection of the material condition of churches, assessed the level of liturgical duties, the state of church documentation, as well as the level of catechesis and morality of parishioners. Considerable attention was paid to discipline among priests and to ensuring proper maintenance of churches and schools. The study also found that the visits contributed to strengthening church discipline and integrating the metropolis into the Catholic world. At the same time, the practice of visits reflected local peculiarities, such as social and cultural differences between regions, which was particularly evident in the Lviv, Lutsk and Polotsk deaneries. The findings underlined the importance of general visits as an instrument of church governance that allowed for the strengthening of religious identity and the adaptation of church-wide norms to the needs of union communities. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using its findings for further study of the history of the Uniate churches, in particular their role in preserving cultural heritage and spiritual life

Keywords: Kyiv Uniate Metropolis; spiritual life; deaneries; diocese; parish; pastoral care

Introduction

The peculiarity of conducting general visits in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis in the historical context deserves special attention, as this practice played a key role in ensuring unity, organisational efficiency, and compliance with canonical norms in the dispersed communities of the metropolis. General visits were a mechanism that allowed the Church to respond to

internal and external challenges caused by social, political, and religious changes in the Rzeczpospolita. The study of this topic is particularly relevant in light of the current interest in the history of the Uniate Church, the successor to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and its contribution to the formation of the region's religious identity.

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The institution of general visitations in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis was formed under the influence of the Tridentine reforms and was later regulated at the Zamóść Council (1720), adapted to the conditions of the Orthodox-Catholic synthesis characteristic of this church tradition. The organisational structure of the metropolis, with its division into dioceses and deaneries, ensured systematic hierarchical supervision. Bishops and deans were responsible for organizing and conducting inspections that covered the spiritual, administrative and financial aspects of parish life. These visits helped to strengthen discipline among the clergy, improve pastoral care, and maintain communication between central and local church authorities.

Several important trends were observed in the process of conducting general visits. Firstly, the emphasis on catechesis and education of both clergy and laity has become a key aspect that emphasises the need to establish doctrinal orthodoxy. Secondly, increasing attention was paid to the material condition of churches, the interior decoration and equipment of churches and schools, ensuring that the infrastructure met the requirements of liturgical and educational activities. Thirdly, financial and administrative inspections revealed a desire for transparency and efficiency in the management of church property, and also revealed shortcomings and needs that needed to be addressed. For example, when it was discovered that the floor in a church was rotten, or church paintings were worn out, or there was a shortage of priestly vestments.

I. Skochylas (2012) analysed, in particular, the church acts of the general visitations in the Ukrainian-Belarusian dioceses of the Kyiv Union Metropolis. The author noted that the prerequisites for their creation were the regulation and renewal of church institutions, which regulated church life in the Kyiv Union Metropolis during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and modernised the entire Union Church, and the existence of diocesan councils of clergy (general congregations) and general visitations.

Y.P. Avvakumov (2016) studied the historical development of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and its impact on contemporary Ukrainian identity. The author emphasised the role of the church in the context of socio-political crises as an intermediary between different religious and national communities. The importance of the church in supporting cultural revival and ensuring stability in difficult historical periods was also highlighted. P. Babie (2023) analysed the canonical origins and status of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches of Ukraine in the context of their historical and contemporary development. The author focused on the relations of these churches with Constantinople and Rome, emphasizing their place in the wider Christian world. Particular attention was paid to the influence of canonical traditions on the contemporary religious and legal

challenges faced by these churches. The study highlighted the complex interaction of historical, political and cultural factors in shaping their identity.

H. Filipova (2021) studied the connection between eulogistic works and Kyivan monasteries in the context of relations between the Hetmanate and the Moscow Kingdom in the early eighteenth century. The author analysed literary sources that reflected the political and cultural interaction of these regions, as well as the role of monasteries in shaping ideological narratives. The study emphasises the use of eulogy literature as a tool for strengthening the positions of the church and state in the context of the growing influence of Muscovy. K. Kostiuchenko (2024) analysed church goldsmithing as a unique phenomenon of Ukrainian culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The author examined its artistic features, techniques, and role in religious life, focusing on the relationship between craftsmanship and the spiritual needs of society. The study pointed out the significance of goldsmithing as an important element of cultural heritage that reflected the aesthetic and spiritual ideals of the time.

E. Grin-Piszczek (2023) studied parish chronicles kept in the archives of the State Archives in Przemyśl and analysed their importance as sources for studying local history. The author drew attention to the content diversity of the chronicles, their structure, and documentary value. The study revealed that these materials contribute to a deeper understanding of the religious, social and cultural life of the region in different historical periods. M. Ivaniv (2021) analysed the participation of Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops in the Second Vatican Council and their contribution to the discussions on the development of the consilium documents. The author examined the influence of this clergy on ecumenical dialogue and identifies their role in shaping the Catholic Church after the Council. The paper also highlighted the interaction between the Eastern rite and the Western tradition, which contributed to the development of interreligious cooperation. A. Pavlyshyn (2021) conducted a study of the inspection of monastery abbots of the Lviv Uniate Diocese in 1724. The author analysed documents related to administrative inspections and evaluation of monasteries, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the state of spiritual life and the organisational structure of the diocese at that time. The paper also highlights the importance of this inspection for improving the management of church institutions and their development in the context of Ukrainian Orthodoxy under the influence of the Union.

Despite considerable scholarly interest in the history of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, the topic of the specifics of the general visits remains under-researched, especially in terms of their impact on church unity and identity inherent in the Eastern Catholic Church. The aim of this paper was to highlight the organisational, spiritual and

social aspects of this practice through an analysis of the acts of church visitations. The paper addresses three key tasks: defining the organisational mechanisms for conducting general visits in the context of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis; analysing the role of these visits in strengthening discipline and unity in church communities; assessment of the impact of the Tridentine reforms on the tradition of visits in the metropolis.

Materials and Methods

The main source material was official reports on visits, inventory documents, clergy correspondence, and other archival materials. A wide range of documents was collected for the study. The following documents were used: *Wizyty dekanatów Berdyczowskiego* (1751), *Wizyta generalna dekanatów Niemierowskiego-Kalnickiego-Zywotowskiego* (1790), *Wizyty generalne dekanatów Fastowskiego, Pawłowskiego* (1746). Reports on general visits are the main source of information about the state of churches (*Acta Visitationis Gnrlis...*, 1784), the moral state of parishioners, the activity of the clergy, and the general development of parishes. The financial aspects of church life were often recorded in various documents, including metric books, which sometimes contained information about the economic situation of parishes, expenses for the maintenance of churches, clergy salaries, and charitable initiatives (*Metric book of...*, 1799). They also made it possible to assess the economic impact of the reforms on local communities. Instructions for the inspectors – provide an idea of the organisational principles that were followed during the inspections (*Dekanat Bialocerkowski*, 1750). In addition, statistical and geographical descriptions of parishes became an important source of information, which allowed for a general description of the territorial organisation of church life. For example, the *Geographical and Statistical Description of Parishes in the Kingdom of Poland* (1796) describes in detail the geographical distribution of parishes, their socio-economic status, and the specifics of the organisation of local spiritual life. The research also took into account the importance of the Union of Brest (1596), which became an important historical context for the further development of the Kyiv Union Metropolis.

The content analysis of archival materials made it possible to systematise information about the state of parishes, the main problems that needed to be solved, and the results of reforms. The visitation reports were analysed to identify recurring themes and problems, such as the condition of churches, clergy support and religious discipline. A comparative analysis revealed regional differences in the conduct of visits between Lviv, Podillia and Volyn.

The critical assessment of the reliability of the sources was carried out using the historical-critical method, which made it possible to identify possible contradictions between official documents and the real-life conditions of parishes. Quantitative analysis was used to

summarise the data on the number of visits conducted and the frequency of discipline violations. An analysis of the frequency of mentions of certain problems in the regions showed that the most common issues were those related to the financial support of parishes. The synchronic and diachronic analysis made it possible to trace the dynamics of changes in the parishes during the study period. The sociological approach was used to analyse the socio-economic factors that influenced the activities of parishes. The interdisciplinary approach, which combined historical, sociological and cultural aspects, allowed for a deeper understanding of the impact of reforms on the development of parishes. This made it possible to analyse not only the religious but also the cultural aspects of the changes in the parishes. All the data obtained were interpreted from the perspective of the historical and organisational approach, which made it possible to summarise the results and form a systematic view of the development of parishes within the metropolis.

Results

Historical and organisational context of general visitations

The tradition of general visits in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis has its roots in the wider church practice of visitation, a mechanism used by the church to ensure compliance with canonical norms, address pastoral issues, and maintain organisational unity. The concept of church visitation originated in the early Christian Church, becoming more formalised in the Middle Ages. Bishops were instructed to periodically visit parishes within their jurisdiction to assess their spiritual, administrative and financial condition. These visits were seen as an opportunity to enforce discipline, combat heresies, and provide guidance to both clergy and laity.

This practice gained new strength in the post-Reformation period, especially under the influence of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Council emphasised the importance of visitations as part of a wider programme of clergy reform. Regular inspections were intended to improve the quality of pastoral care, ensure the proper administration of the sacraments, and eliminate abuses in the Church. These reforms had a profound impact on the traditions of the Uniate Church, including the Kyiv Metropolis, which sought to come closer to the dominant Catholic Church while maintaining its Eastern liturgical and cultural identity.

The Zamość Council, in the spirit of the holy Council of Trent, pays special attention to the questionnaire and the procedure for conducting visits to parish and monastery churches. The external condition of churches and the internal provision of necessary church equipment and vestments: “whether the holy churches are covered or properly provided with vestments and [church] furnishings; whether [the pastors] adhere to what was decided at the provincial council regarding both the internal and external state of the church”. Disciplinary order

in the church: “[the clergy] should supervise whether the people observe the feast days and how often they attend services, whether they observe fasts at the appropriate time: whether there are any blasphemers, blasphemers, ex-communicants, schismatics, and those suspected of divination and superstition, and all this should be reported in writing to the ruling bishop on the eve of the diocesan council in order to prevent such evil” (Cathedrals of the..., 2022).

In the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, the tradition of general visitations was formed both under the influence of external Catholic influences and internal Orthodox traditions. This dual heritage allowed the Uniate Church to adopt a unique model of visitation that met the specific needs of its communities while adhering to broader church norms. Visitation became a vital tool for maintaining cohesion in the diverse and often geographically dispersed parishes of the metropolis.

In the eighteenth century, the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis covered a large and complex territory, reflecting the political and ecclesiastical dynamics of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The metropolis was divided into several eparchies, each headed by a bishop responsible for overseeing the spiritual and administrative affairs of his jurisdiction. The most prominent dioceses were Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Zhytomyr, which represented key centres of church activity and cultural influence. Each diocese was divided into deaneries, smaller administrative units that facilitated local administration and provided direct communication between the bishop and individual parishes. The deans, who were often senior clergymen with extensive experience, played a crucial role in this structure. They were responsible for coordinating pastoral activities, ensuring the implementation of episcopal directives, and organizing general visits to their deaneries (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the Kyiv Union Metropolis

Administration level	Description	Main divisions	Leader	Functions
Metropolis	The main administrative centre of the Ukrainian Union Church	Kyiv Metropolis	Metropolitan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General leadership of the church. 2. Coordination of dioceses. 3. Representation of the church in relations with the state and other churches.
Dioceses	Territorial divisions of the metropolis, which united several deaneries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lviv. 2. Lutsk. 3. Przemysl. 4. Kholmshkaya. 5. Pinsk. 	Bishop	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision of the clergy and parishes. 2. Organisation of visitations. 3. Resolving conflicts in parishes. 4. Maintaining diocesan documents.
Deaneries	Subdivisions of dioceses that encompassed several parishes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kyiv Dean’s Office. 2. Vinnytsia Deanery. 	Dean (protopope)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Control over parishes. 2. Preparing reports for the bishop. 3. Organisation of local clergy gatherings.
Parishes	The smallest administrative units that united separate communities of believers	Local churches and parishes	Parish priest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting religious services. 2. Spiritual care of the community. 3. Teaching catechism. 4. Registration of marriages, baptisms, and burials.
Monasteries	Centres of spiritual and cultural life	Basilian monasteries	Abbot (abbot, archimandrite)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organisation of monastic life. 2. Performing educational, printing, and missionary functions 3. Maintaining discipline among monks.
Educational institutions	Clergy training and teaching centres for laypeople	Lviv Theological Seminary, Basilian Schools	Rector	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training of the clergy. 2. Dissemination of theological knowledge. 3. Education of the laity within the framework of spiritual education.

Source: compiled by the author based on A.N. Andreev & Y.S. Andreeva (2019)

The organisational complexity of the metropolis required a structured approach to general visits. The bishops relied on detailed reports from deans to identify parishes in need of attention and to prioritise specific issues for inspection. This hierarchical structure ensured that the practice of visitation could be carried out systematically, despite the challenges posed by the metropolis’ vast size and diverse population. The emergence of general visitation as a distinct church practice can be traced back to the broader history of episcopal governance in the Christian tradition. Early church councils, such as those in the fourth and fifth centuries,

emphasised the importance of bishops exercising careful oversight of their dioceses. This principle was formalised in the medieval period, with the establishment of canonical requirements for visitations (Almes, 2024).

In the context of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, the tradition of visitations was deeply influenced by the complex religious and political history of the region. The Union of Brest (1596), which established the Uniate Church, aimed to bridge the theological and liturgical gap between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church. This union brought new administrative and spiritual responsibilities, including the need to integrate the practice of

general visitation into the administration of the metropolis. The Uniate Church's adoption of the practice of visitation reflected its desire to maintain both internal discipline and external legitimacy. The general visits served as a means of demonstrating the Church's commitment to Catholic reforms while addressing the specific pastoral concerns of its Eastern Rite communities. This practice was especially important in regions where religious tensions and political instability threatened to undermine the Church's authority. The reforms of the Council of Trent had an impact on the organisation of visitations in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis. As part of a broader programme to standardise and strengthen church governance, the Council issued detailed instructions for episcopal visits. These guidelines emphasised the importance of regular and thorough inspections of parishes, with a focus on promoting doctrinal orthodoxy, improving clergy education, and combating abuses such as absenteeism and financial mismanagement (Veremeienko, 2023).

In the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, these Tridentine principles were adapted to the context of the Uniate Church. Bishops were required to visit every parish within their eparchy at least once every few years, with special attention to remote or underserved communities. The visits were carefully planned and documented, often involving a combination of liturgical ceremonies, pastoral counselling and administrative inspections. The influence of the Council of Trent was also evident in the special attention paid to education and catechesis during the general visits. Bishops and deans used these occasions to assess the theological knowledge of the clergy, to give guidance on proper liturgical practice, and to distribute catechetical materials to parishioners. This focus on education reflected the Council's broader goal of raising a well-informed and spiritually engaged laity.

The division of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis into eparchies and deaneries was a key organisational feature that facilitated the practice of general visitations. Each eparchy functioned as an autonomous administrative unit with its own bishop and cathedral administration. The dioceses of Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Zhytomyr were particularly important, serving as centres of church activity and cultural exchange. In each eparchy, deaneries provided an intermediate level of management that allowed for more localised oversight. Deans were responsible for coordinating the activities of individual parishes, ensuring compliance with episcopal directives, and organizing visits on behalf of the bishop. This division of responsibilities allowed the metropolis to maintain a high level of organisational efficiency, despite the challenges posed by its large and often inaccessible territory (Sysyn, 2023).

Deanships also played a crucial role in establishing communication between the central and local levels of church administration. Deans acted as intermediaries, passing information from bishops to parish priests and vice versa. This hierarchical structure ensured that the practice of general visits could be carried out

effectively and that each level of the church contributed to the overall success of the initiative. The Metropolitan, as the head of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, played a key role in overseeing the practice of general visits. While the day-to-day responsibility for conducting visits rested with individual bishops and deans, the Metropolitan provided overall strategic direction and ensured that the practice was consistent with the broader goals of the Uniate Church. The metropolitan also served as a source of guidance and support for the bishops, offering advice on complex pastoral and administrative issues. The deans, on the other hand, were the main organisers of the general visits at the local level. They were responsible for planning the logistics of each visit, coordinating the participation of clergy and laity, and compiling detailed reports on the state of the parishes in their deaneries. These reports helped the bishops to identify problematic issues and set priorities during the visits.

The tradition of general visits in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis developed as a response to historical and ecclesiastical events. Rooted in early Christian practice, shaped by the reforms of the Council of Trent and regulated by the Council of Zamość, visits served as a vital tool for maintaining discipline, promoting education, and strengthening unity within the Church. The hierarchical structure of the metropolis, with its division into eparchies and deaneries, provided an effective framework for organizing these visits, and the leadership of the metropolitan and deans ensured their successful implementation. Together, these elements underscore the importance of general visits as a cornerstone of church governance in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis.

The implementation of general visitations in the eighteenth century faced numerous challenges that made it difficult to achieve their goals. For example, the large geographical size of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis and poor roads created difficulties for bishops and deans when travelling to remote parishes. An additional problem was limited financial resources, which made it difficult to provide transport, maintain escorts, and organise events on the ground. Another challenge was the heterogeneity of the religious environment. Some parishioners, especially in regions with strong Orthodox or Protestant influence, were suspicious of the visits or even openly opposed to the bishops. There were also priests who disregarded canonical norms or resisted disciplinary measures, making it difficult to establish unity. To overcome these challenges, deans, and bishops developed detailed itineraries, held preparatory meetings with local clergy, and involved the laity in organizing the visits. This approach helped to mitigate resistance and helped to establish the Church's authority.

The dynamics between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Uniate Church had a significant impact on the conduct of the visits. Political instability, including military conflicts and the growing influence of the Orthodox gentry, created obstacles to the

implementation of church reforms. For example, some secular magnates, being patrons of Orthodox communities, blocked attempts by bishops to conduct visits to their territories. On the other hand, the support of the church by the royal authorities allowed the bishops to use the visits to promote reform initiatives that strengthened both the spiritual and administrative order. Political stability in certain regions contributed to the active implementation of educational programmes, which during the visits emphasised the catechesis of the laity and the training of priests. The laity played an important but not always predictable role during the visits. On the one hand, they supported the activities by helping to organise meetings, provide facilities for ceremonies, and financially support projects. On the other hand, there have been cases where parishioners have reacted negatively to inspections, perceiving them as an attempt to restrict local traditions or abuse of power.

Procedure for conducting general visitations

Preparations for the General Visitation in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis were a thorough process, reflecting the central role of these inspections in church governance. The preparatory phase began with the formation of a commission of visitors, which usually included high-ranking clergy and sometimes laymen with expertise in administrative or financial matters. The bishop's mandate authorised this commission, ensuring that its activities were in line with canonical norms and local church priorities (Levytsky, 2020).

To facilitate effective visits, detailed documentation was prepared. This included preliminary announcements made to the clergy and parishioners of the target deaneries, indicating the dates and expected procedures of the visit. These announcements were intended to promote transparency and cooperation. In addition, visitation teams received instructions outlining key areas of focus, such as spiritual, administrative and financial aspects of parish life. Preparatory requirements included ensuring that appropriate documentation was available. Parish priests were tasked with organizing documentation, including baptismal, marriage and death registers, financial reports, land records and an inventory of church property. These records formed the basis for the thorough assessments during the visit. In addition, special attention was paid to the preparation of reports on the condition of church buildings, schools, and other religious institutions in each parish (Urakina, 2022).

The process of conducting the general visits was structured into several stages, each of which focused on certain aspects of church life. These stages ensured comprehensive oversight and accountability. The first stage was the initial meeting and liturgical opening: visits began with a formal meeting of parish representatives, including clergy and laity, often preceded by a liturgical service. This opening ceremony emphasised the spiritual basis of the visitation process – the inspection

of church infrastructure: the visiting committee conducted an in-depth survey of the physical condition of the church property. Churches were assessed for structural integrity, aesthetic appearance, and compliance with liturgical standards. Particular attention was paid to altars, sacred vessels and relics to ensure that they met the established standards. Schools and monasteries within the parish were also inspected, with a focus on the adequacy of facilities and adherence to Uniate educational and spiritual principles (Cherkes *et al.*, 2019).

The moral and spiritual vitality of the parish community was the focus of attention. The morals and behaviour of priests were scrutinised, with particular attention to their adherence to priestly duties, pastoral care and personal discipline (Wizyty dekanatów Berdyczowskiego, 1751). The education of the parishioners was also assessed, with a focus on catechesis, participation in the sacraments, and moral behaviour in the community. Financial and administrative records, financial reports and land documents were scrutinised to ensure good governance and transparency. Visitors verified that parish funds were distributed in accordance with church and community needs, drawing attention to discrepancies or irregularities as necessary. Land records were reviewed to confirm legal ownership and proper use, preventing encroachment or mismanagement of land. Interaction with local authorities and reporting. Finally, the commission spoke to local parishioners to gather first-hand information about parish life. At this stage, the main problems or areas requiring intervention were often identified. The visit concluded with a comprehensive report that summarised the findings and recommended corrective actions where necessary (Bila, 2021).

The methodology and focus of the overall visits in the Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Zhytomyr deans' offices differed due to differences in geographical, cultural and socio-economic contexts. These differences emphasised the adaptability of the visit process to local conditions. Lviv Deanery: In the Lviv Deanery, visits often highlighted theological education and liturgical relevance. This region, which was a cultural and intellectual centre, had a significant number of seminaries, monasteries, and schools. The inspections included a detailed analysis of the curricula in the seminaries, the quality of theological literature, and the level of training of the clergy. Particular emphasis was placed on observance of canonical norms during services. The financial inspections in Lviv were systematic in nature, including the distribution of resources between rich and less wealthy parishes. For example, parishes with high incomes were required to support neighbouring communities that had limited opportunities for self-sufficiency (Zielecka-Mikołajczyk, 2022).

The Vinnytsia deanery, unlike Lviv, was rural and agrarian in nature, which influenced the priorities of the general visits. Here, considerable attention was paid to the condition of church buildings and land records, given the dependence on agricultural income. The visiting

commission paid particular attention to land disputes and the fair use of parish resources to support community projects. Particular attention was paid to catechesis. Due to the low level of formal education among the population, new approaches to teaching the basics of the faith were developed, including individual conversations with parishioners and the creation of educational materials in accessible language. In addition, the visits here included a review of community involvement in the maintenance of church buildings. The Zhytomyr Deanery presented unique challenges due to its socio-economic diversity and mixed religious demographics. The priority of the visits to this region was to promote unity among the union parishes and to overcome tensions with other religious groups. Inspections of schools and monasteries were aimed at strengthening the distinctive identity of the Uniate Church, ensuring that these institutions serve as bastions of faith in the face of potential external influences.

The geographical location and socio-economic status of parishes greatly influenced the conduct of general visits. Rural parishes, which often faced limited resources, needed more support and intervention during the visits (Geographical and Statistical..., 1796). These visits often resulted in recommendations for infrastructure repairs, financial assistance, and strengthening catechetical programmes. Urban parishes, on the other hand, tended to have stronger administrative and financial structures. Visits in these settings focused on maintaining high standards of liturgical practice and overcoming the challenges of managing large and diverse communities. The socio-economic status of parishes also influenced the nature of the financial audits, with wealthier parishes being subject to stricter scrutiny to ensure that resources were distributed equitably (Siluk & Vob, 2019).

General visits in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis were the cornerstone of church oversight, encompassing a thorough examination of the spiritual, administrative and financial aspects of parish life. Preparations included detailed planning, the formation of a commission to conduct the visits and the organisation of the necessary documentation. The process of the visitation was methodical and included liturgical celebrations, an overview of the infrastructure, an assessment of religious life, and financial analysis. Regional differences influenced the visits: deaneries such as Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Zhytomyr had different priorities and challenges. These differences emphasised the adaptability of the visitation process to different local contexts. Ultimately, the general visits served as an important mechanism for maintaining the integrity, unity, and vitality of the Uniate Church in the Kyiv Metropolis, promoting accountability and spiritual renewal of its diverse parishes.

Acts of general visitations as a historical source

The acts of general visits of the eighteenth-century Kyiv Union Metropolis are an important source for

understanding the ecclesiastical, social, and cultural history of the region. These documents, which were the result of systematic inspections conducted by church authorities, provide a structured and detailed account of the state of parishes, clergy, and lay communities in the dioceses of the Uniate Church. The reports of the general visits were methodically structured, allowing the church authorities to document a wide range of information. The standard act was divided into sections dealing with key areas, property status in this section, the material resources of the parish, including land holdings, sources of income, movable and immovable property, are described in detail (Fig. 1). Particular attention was paid to the condition of church buildings, the presence, and condition of sacred objects, and the care of cemeteries. As for the spiritual state, the documents recorded the quality of liturgical life and the observance of religious practices by clergy and parishioners. This included the frequency of worship, the availability of the sacraments, and adherence to the liturgical calendar. On the issue of education, the acts often assessed the educational level of both clergy and laity. The clergy were assessed for their theological knowledge and ability to instruct parishioners, while the literacy level of parishioners was recorded as an indicator of the broader education of the community.

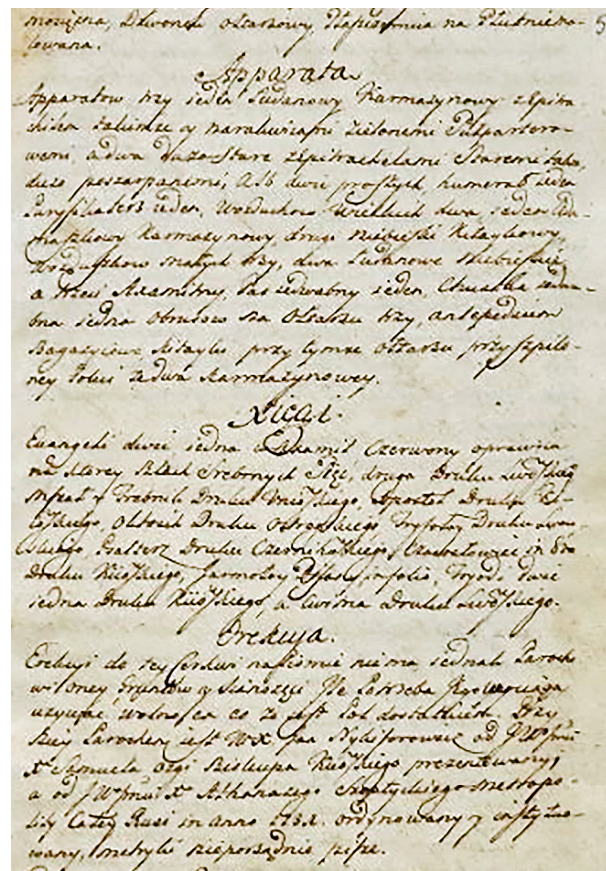


Figure 1. Act of visitation of the Fastiv Deanery
Source: Wizyty generalne dekanatów Fastowskiego, Pawłowskiego (1746)



The language of these acts was mostly Latin, with occasional entries in Polish or Ukrainian. The style was official and administrative, characterised by concise descriptions and an emphasis on the presentation of facts. The acts of visitation reflected the comprehensive functioning of the church as a spiritual and social institution. They highlighted the material and spiritual well-being of parishes and provided insight into the lives of clergy and parishioners. Among the key reflections were the condition of church buildings and material resources, with some acts showing the poor condition of church buildings due to insufficient funding or natural deterioration. These sections highlighted the economic problems faced by parishes and their dependence on local benefactors or external funding. The level of education of clergy and parishioners: The acts documented a significant difference in educational standards (Dekanat Bilocerkowski, 1750). Some clergy demonstrated strong theological training, while others lacked training, which affected their ability to serve effectively. Literacy levels varied widely among parishioners, with urban areas having better literacy rates than rural areas. The documents recorded the economic activities of the parishioners, such as agriculture, trade, and crafts. These details provided a broader picture of the socio-economic environment, including patterns of wealth distribution and relationships between parishes and surrounding communities (Avvakumov, 2022).

Although the structure and content of the visitation reports in the different eparchies had common features, there were also local differences. The commonality was that all acts were drawn up in a standardised format to ensure consistency in documentation. This uniformity allowed for effective comparison between parishes and dioceses. All acts emphasised the need to observe proper liturgical practices and to provide adequate resources for the church. Local differences often arose from regional socio-economic conditions and local traditions. For example, parishes in wealthier regions (mostly urban) had better maintained churches and higher levels of clergy education, while parishes in poorer regions struggled with insufficient resources and lower literacy rates. In addition, language preferences in documentation varied, reflecting the influence of the local vernacular (Malafiichuk, 2019).

The language and style of writing acts reflected their administrative purpose. Latin prevailed as the language of church documentation, although local languages such as Polish and Ukrainian appeared in annotations or additional comments. The writing style was precise, with an emphasis on clarity and brevity to facilitate administrative review. The vital records served as a mirror of the broader socio-political landscape of the 18th century. Key highlights included social change: the acts documented the changing demographic composition of parishes, including trends in urbanisation and migration. These changes affected the composition

of communities and the resources available to parishes. The Uniate Church operated in a complex political environment, influenced by the Rzeczpospolita authorities and later by Russian and Austrian authorities. Acts often reveal problems related to political interference, taxation policies, and shifting loyalties among parishioners (Stetsyk, 2019).

Thus, the acts of general visits of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis are a rich historical source that records the material, spiritual, and social aspects of parish life in the 18th century. Their structured format and detailed content reveal the condition of church buildings, the educational status of clergy and parishioners, and the socio-economic dynamics of communities. While the commonality of the structure facilitated a unified administrative approach, local differences highlighted the diverse realities faced by parishes throughout the metropolis. Written in a formal and concise style, these acts not only recorded the state of the church but also reflected the broader social and political changes of the era, offering invaluable information for modern historical research.

The acts of general visitations, drawn up by bishops and their appointed commissions, were formally intended to provide an impartial overview of the state of each parish. However, there were factors that could affect the objectivity of these documents. The visits took place in a difficult political situation in the Rzeczpospolita and were dominated by patronage relations. Some magnates who were of Orthodox origin or supported other denominations tried to weaken the Uniate Church and thus could have prevented thorough inspections. In contrast, the Catholic royal authorities encouraged the visitations as a means of implementing the Tridentine reforms, and bishops had an incentive to demonstrate the success of these reforms in their dioceses. The visitors themselves (deans or appointed clerics) often belonged to the local clergy, so they were not always interested in disclosing in detail problems related to financial or moral irregularities, especially if they concerned high-ranking officials (Wizyta generalna dekanatow..., 1790). The acts of visitation also reflected the interests of the church leadership, which sought to preserve the canonical order and confirm its authority. Reporting documents, written mostly in Latin with Polish or Ukrainian fragments, were intended to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Council of Trent, and thus sometimes portrayed the situation in a more positive light or avoided controversial topics. All of this indicated a possible selectivity in the coverage of the facts and emphasised the need for a critical approach to the analysis of the acts.

Many parishes lacked funding, which resulted in the poor condition of church buildings, limited ability to maintain support staff, and difficulties in carrying out repairs. There were reports of some priests disregarding canonical regulations, non-compliance with mandatory services, problems with financial transparency, and periodic conflicts with the laity

(Acta Visitationis Gnrlis..., 1784). In complex political regions with predominant Orthodox or Protestant influence, inspection commissions faced scepticism about their authority, which made inspections difficult. Trends in the different deans' offices showed significant differences, driven by both socio-economic and cultural factors. In the Lviv Deanery, the visitors mostly found an adequate level of theological education of the clergy and the systematic implementation of liturgical reforms. However, despite the large number of educational institutions and seminaries, not all parish communities had sufficient financial resources to distribute educational initiatives evenly. In the Vinnytsia deanery, which was predominantly agrarian in nature, land issues were particularly acute. Disputes often arose between parishes and secular owners over the boundaries of their property, and there was a lack of funds for the maintenance of churches and schools due to dependence on agricultural income (Metric book of..., 1799).

The Zhytomyr deanery was distinguished by a diversity of religious denominations, so the visitors had to establish contacts with communities that practised other rites. There were cases of conflicts related to the lack of clear jurisdictional boundaries, but there were also noticeable trends towards cooperation in solving common administrative problems. The emphasis on catechesis remained common to all deaneries, with visits systematically checking the level of theological knowledge of parishioners and methods of teaching the basics of faith.

Discussion

The results obtained indicate the important role of general visits in ensuring effective governance, preserving unity and maintaining discipline in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis. The analysis demonstrated that this practice was not only an administrative tool, but also an important spiritual mechanism that helped to adapt Western reforms to Eastern traditions. The assessment of various aspects of parish life, from education to financial management, allowed not only to identify problems but also to develop recommendations for their solution. Regional differences in the focus of the visits, in particular between the Lviv, Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr deaneries, highlight the adaptability of this practice to socio-economic and cultural specificities. Thus, the general visits have become a key element in strengthening the institutional capacity of the Uniate Church, contributing to its legitimacy in the face of religious and political tensions.

M. Radwan (2004) published protocols of acts of general visits to parish churches of Zhytomyr, Bratslav, Pryluky deaneries of Vinnytsia district of the Kyiv Metropolitan Archeparchy of the Russian Catholic Church. The publication of M. Radwan's acts of visitation on pp. 440-666 contains the texts of the visitation protocols of the Russian Catholic parishes of the Bratslav deanery (March-June 1785). The same volume also contains the

visitation protocols of the Zhytomyr, Chudniv, and Pryluky deaneries. This is actually the first large-scale publication of the visitation protocols of the Uniate parishes of Right-Bank Ukraine from fonds 178 of the State Archives of Zhytomyr Oblast (Zinchenko & Petrenko, 2023).

I. Almes (2024) focused on the interaction between the Catholic clergy, Uniate hierarchs, and the Apostolic Nuncio in the process of preparing the agenda of the Zamość Council. The author emphasised the importance of compromises and cooperation between the parties, which contributed to the successful agreement of the Council's issues. The study suggests that this cooperation was often accompanied by pressure on the Uniate clergy and restrictions on their autonomy. While I. Almes positively assessed the role of the nuncio in creating a common agenda, this study highlights the imbalance of power between the denominations, which had a negative impact on local church administration. While both papers agree on the importance of the council as an instrument of reform, this paper emphasises that these reforms did not always take into account the interests of the union church, leading to conflicts at the local level. Thus, it is argued that cooperation within the framework of the council had not only positive aspects but also hidden problems.

S. Kagamlyk (2020) highlighted the intellectual interests of the Ukrainian church elite of the eighteenth century through the analysis of book collections that reflected the spiritual and educational trends of the time. The author focused on the importance of the educational component in the activities of the clergy and their interest in literature of a religious, historical, and philosophical nature. The study by S. Kagamlyk is consistent with the general provisions of this work regarding the importance of the clergy's education and their participation in cultural and educational processes. However, the interpretation of the role of reading is different: while S. Kagamlyk's work emphasised the development of intellectual potential through engagement in reading, the analysis of the acts of visitation in this work focused more on the practical aspects of organizing the activities of clergy and administrative control. This discrepancy is explained by different approaches to the study of sources: S. Kagamlyk's work focuses mainly on book registers, while the work on general visitations focuses on administrative and religious documents. Thus, both works complement each other, creating a holistic view of the educational and administrative aspects of church life.

C.G. Murphy (2021) and A. Miller (2024) highlighted the impact of the Rzeczpospolita's partitions on the development and functioning of the Uniate Church, emphasizing the complexity of its position between different state entities. The authors focus on the political aspects that influenced the governance and organisation of the church, as well as its ability to maintain autonomy in the face of political pressure. Compared to the present study, C.G. Murphy's work is consistent

with the statement about the importance of external circumstances for the church. However, the differences lie in the interpretation of administrative processes. While the researchers points out the external influence of politics on church administration, the work on general visits focuses on internal mechanisms of control and adaptation of the clergy to the conditions created by these political factors. This discrepancy is explained by the different emphases of the studies: C.G. Murphy and A. Miller analysed the political context, while the work on general visits is based on the practical aspects of church administration.

S. Nabywaniec (2022) highlighted the activities of the Zamość Provincial Council of the Russian Church, focusing on its impact on reforming church administration, strengthening canonical norms, and unifying rites. The author emphasises the key role of the Council in strengthening the identity of the Russian Uniate Church and its integration into the structures of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The study confirms the significance of councils as important tools for reforming church life, in particular, for strengthening discipline and administration. However, unlike S. Nabywaniec, the present work draws attention to the fact that the implementation of the decisions of the Council of Zamość in the Kyiv Metropolis was significantly complicated by local political and social circumstances, such as resistance from the Orthodox population and limited church resources. Thus, while both works agree on the significance of the decisions of the Council of Zamość for the Russian Church, this paper emphasises the limited effectiveness of these decisions in the context of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis due to the specific regional conditions.

D. Stern (2021) examined the cultural and religious context of the Greek Catholic Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in particular the formation of the geography of grace associated with the cult of the Virgin Mary. The study mutually agrees with the conclusions presented in this article that church visits were not only an instrument of control, but also a means of disseminating spiritual and cultural values. At the same time, D. Stern paid more attention to the role of Marian cults in the creation of religious identity, while the study of the visits of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis focused on administrative aspects and practical influence on church life. Differences in approaches are due to the specifics of the sources: D. Stern used materials that reflect spiritual practices, while the acts of visitation cover administrative activities to a greater extent. This difference in focus contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of the Church in shaping the sociocultural environment of the region.

J. Kulska (2022) considered in her study the Catholic Church as an active participant in political processes, focusing on its role in shaping national identity and integrating social groups. The author emphasised the impor-

tance of interaction between the Church and the state in the context of ensuring stability and spreading the influence of the Catholic Church at the local level. This paper agrees that the church played a key role in shaping social order and cultural integration. However, in contrast to J. Kulska's approach, the study of the Kyiv Metropolis focuses on the difficulties of adapting Catholic models of governance in a multi-confessional environment and political contradictions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Thus, both works agree on the importance of religious structure for maintaining stability, but this study highlights the specificity of regional obstacles that made it difficult to implement union norms, especially in the Kyiv Metropolis, due to cultural and confessional heterogeneity.

K. Radny (2023) explored the conflict between Roman administrative influences and Greek liturgical traditions in the Uniate Church at the end of the eighteenth century. The author noted that general visits were an important tool for overcoming internal differences in the church structure, in particular for maintaining unity between different church practices. K. Radny agreed that administrative control and regulation played a key role in resolving contradictions within the church, but emphasised that external pressure from Rome often made internal reforms difficult. In contrast, the visitation study pointed out that it was regional initiatives and the role of local clergy that contributed to more effective implementation of change. This difference in approach can be explained by different sources: K. Radny focused on the macro-level of historical processes and the influence of global religious institutions, while the acts of visitation reveal the micro-level of interaction between clergy and parishes. Both studies, however, confirm the importance of maintaining a balance between external influence and local traditions for the stable functioning of the Uniate Church.

Conclusions

The study confirmed that general visitations in the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis of the 18th century became a key instrument for adapting Catholic reforms to local conditions. These measures, conducted under the influence of the decisions of the Council of Trent and later regulated by the Zamość Synod, aimed to strengthen discipline among the clergy, reinforce church organisation, and deepen the religious consciousness of the laity. Archival materials indicate that the visitations encompassed both administrative and spiritual aspects of church life, allowing for an assessment of parish conditions and the identification of issues requiring resolution. Particular attention during the visitations was given to the educational level of priests. It was established that in many cases, clergy members had insufficient training, negatively affecting the quality of liturgy and pastoral activities. A significant element of the general visitations was ensuring the proper maintenance of church property. Analysis of

documents suggests that priests often faced difficulties in managing material resources, which could lead to the deterioration of church buildings and a lack of necessary inventory. Within the framework of the visitations, an inventory of property was conducted, parish needs were identified, and recommendations for more effective resource management were formulated. This contributed not only to the preservation of church structures, interior decorations, and liturgical equipment but also to improved conditions for conducting religious services. At the same time, conflicts frequently arose between the clergy and the laity, often driven by socio-economic differences or differing expectations of church life. The successful conduct of inspections depended on cooperation with the local administration, which could either facilitate or complicate the implementation of church initiatives. This interaction underscored the significance of the Church not only as a spiritual institution but also as a social one. Through such inspections, the unity of the Uniate community was strengthened, and ties with the Catholic world were reinforced, playing a crucial role in shaping regional identity. The role of the metropolitan and deans in the implementation of the visits is worth noting. Their activities included coordinating the work of church structures, resolving conflicts, and assessing the compliance of local practices with church-wide standards. The visits became an effective means of monitoring compliance with the norms established

by the Catholic reforms, and at the same time created conditions for the development of church governance.

The study had several objective limitations due to the availability and quality of sources. A significant part of the records of visits were written in Latin or Polish, which required additional time for their translation and interpretation. Some testimonies were subjective in nature, as they were described from the perspective of church hierarchy, which could distort the real picture of life in the parishes. In addition, the geographical fragmentation of the Kyiv Metropolis and the heterogeneity of its socio-economic development made it difficult to generalise the results. Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that a deeper analysis of the regional peculiarities of reforms within the Kyiv Metropolis is needed. Of additional interest is the study of the socio-economic context that influenced the success of the reforms, as well as the role of the laity in strengthening the position of the Uniate Church.

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Особливість проведення генеральних візитацій у Київській унійній митрополії: огляд на основі актів церковних візитацій XVIII століття

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Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю глибокого вивчення механізмів церковного управління в Київській унійній митрополії XVIII століття, зокрема через призму практики генеральних візитацій, що мала значний вплив на релігійне та суспільне життя. Мета дослідження полягала у виявленні особливостей проведення генеральних візитацій, їхнього впливу на організацію релігійного життя та розвиток церковних структур у Київській унійній митрополії. Методологічну основу роботи становили історичний, порівняльний та соціокультурний аналіз, що дозволило системно дослідити обраний феномен. Джерельну базу становили акти церковних візитацій, протоколи та звіти XVIII століття. У ході дослідження виявлено, що генеральні візитації мали на меті перевірку стану церков, парафій та діяльності духовенства. Візитатори здійснювали детальний огляд матеріального стану храмів, оцінювали рівень виконання літургійних обов'язків, стан церковної документації, а також рівень катехизації та моральності парафіян. Значну увагу приділяли дисципліні серед священників, забезпеченню належного утримання храмів і шкіл. Дослідження також виявило, що візитації сприяли зміцненню церковної дисципліни та інтеграції митрополії у католицький світ. Водночас, практика візитацій відображала місцеві особливості, такі як соціальні та культурні відмінності між регіонами, що особливо простежувалося у Львівському, Луцькому та Полоцькому деканатах. Отримані результати підкреслили важливість генеральних візитацій як інструменту церковного управління, що дозволяв зміцнювати релігійну ідентичність та адаптувати загальноцерковні норми до потреб унійних громад. Практичне значення роботи полягає у можливості використання її висновків для подальшого вивчення історії унійних церков, зокрема їхньої ролі у збереженні культурної спадщини та духовного життя

Ключові слова: Київська унійна митрополія; духовне життя; деканати; єпархія; парафія; душпастирська опіка