



FULLY ALIVE

A Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Publication

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Welcome to our first edition of the Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Newsletter "**FULLY ALIVE**". Through this newsletter we will have the opportunity to keep you abreast with the activities at the Shrine. The name "Fully Alive" was chosen to describe the spirit of Martyr Vasyl. Despite all his sufferings, he was fully alive in the Holy Spirit during his lifetime and now in the fullness of the Kingdom of God he is Fully Alive before the Lord.

SHRINE CO-ORDINATOR HIRED

As the Relics of Blessed Vasyl were being enshrined at St. Joseph's Church, it became very evident to the Redemptorists that the work was just beginning. It would take much work to have the Shrine functional, that is, available to the faithful, organizing and guiding pilgrims who come to the Shrine, setting up tour/pilgrimage programs, looking after the gift shop, etc. With no hesitation the Redemptorist Provincial Council, chose to implement a paid position for a Shrine Co-ordinator whose responsibility would be to organize volunteers for the Shrine and Gift shop, manage the Shrine office, and promote devotion to Blessed Vasyl.



With this first newsletter we introduce our Shrine Co-ordinator, Mary Jane Kalenchuk, a mother of three, who has spent the last several years conducting an aboriginal enrichment program at Ralph Brown School. Mary Jane brings to this work much talent, her enthusiasm for the Shrine and her love of Blessed Vasyl. In her short time she has already organised and co-ordinated over 40 volunteers who spend time at the Shrine and make it possible for the Shrine to have regular hours of operation.

We welcome Mary Jane on board in our Redemptorist ministry and wish her strength and God's Blessings in this new venture and apostolate.



Blessed Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine

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A WEEK TO REMEMBER

The week of September 16-22, 2002 will always be a highlight of my life. That was the week of the exhumation and the transfer of the holy Relics of Blessed Martyr Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R. from All-Saints Cemetery to St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Winnipeg.

Much preparation was needed. Civil permission was required from the government of Manitoba to exhume (disinternment) and to transfer his mortal remains. Permission had to be obtained also from the Vatican, the Congregation for Saints. With the Vatican's permission and mandate to proceed with the transfer, came a detailed protocol that had to be followed. The Postulator General for the Redemptorists (the one who is in charge of the causes for Redemptorist saints and blessed) was contacted and he too gave a number of detailed instructions for the process.

All things had to be prepared before hand. When someone's cause to sainthood is first begun in the Church, a process that can take decades, often the mortal remains are exhumed, examined, recorded and reburied. This is done to see whether or not the mortal remains are incorrupt and to simply see their state. In our case, Bishop Vasyl was already proclaimed a Blessed. All the church laws must now be applied. He could not simply be examined, but rather his mortal remains would have to be transferred into a church. We faced a dilemma. What would we find? Would it be just some bone fragments? Would we find a skeleton? Would it be a mummified (dried) corpse? Would the process of corruption be complete? No one could give us a definite answer. In the end we decided to prepare a full length stainless steel container (according to Vatican prescriptions). All had to be ready before we began our exhumation.

A team to accomplish this process had to be found: funeral director; grave diggers; a welder of stainless steel; a medical team (medical examiners, anthropologists, etc.); a photographer; a church tribunal consisting of the Metropolitan, his Delegate, a Promoter of Justice and a Notary; the Postulator; the Redemptorists; Witnesses; family members and select faithful observers and helpers. Every member of this team had to be personally authorised by the Metropolitan with official document.

On Monday September 16, 2002 the team gathered at All Saints Cemetery at 8:00 am. It was a crisp, clear morning with a hint of a morning mist. We began with

prayer led by the Metropolitan. Then everyone, individually, took an oath to fulfil



their office to the best of their ability. Before any exhumation could take place, two witnesses – an original pallbearer and a relative – confirmed that this was the spot where Blessed Vasyl was buried. Once established and confirmed, at the command of the Metropolitan, the exhumation began.

Throughout the exhumation which took several hours, the faithful that were present sang a Moleben in Blessed Vasyl's honour and also the Acafist Hymn composed to Blessed Vasyl. This prayerful atmosphere which began at the cemetery prevailed throughout the whole week. Finally when the coffin was extracted from the grave, it was placed in a hearse from Cropro's Funeral Home and in a solemn motor procession all proceeded to St. Boniface General Hospital, where a room was already prepared for the next stage of the process.

With great reverence the coffin was brought into the examination room. The long awaited and anticipated moment came – the uncovering of the coffin. In preparation for that moment the Acafist Hymn was prayed. As the lid was removed, all those present in the room revered themselves in awe and wonder. Although the coffin itself was badly damaged by water and corruption, the body of



Blessed Vasyl was fully in tact. His face was covered by the chalice veil that was placed on it during the funeral. When it was removed his face with his beard radiated its holiness. His hands were of flesh

colour, holding the hand cross, with the episcopal ring on his finger. Everyone, including the doctors were overwhelmed at the state of the body, which had already been in the grave for almost thirty years. It was fully in tact, with all its muscle mass. Although the body was stiff through rigor mortis, the arms were pliable and movable. We were all filled with awe.

With great reverence and care the vestments were then removed from the body, so that it could be completely examined. The episcopal vestments, like the coffin, were in poor shape and fell apart shortly after they were removed. His whole body was then washed, cleaned and examined. Since the very ends of the toes had already fallen off, they were carefully cleaned and preserved to be used as 1st Class relics which will eventually be distributed to various churches for the veneration of the faithful.

The next day the process continued as



his holy body was wrapped with cloth and a preservative compound (according to Vatican prescriptions). Then it was vested again in new episcopal robes, a panagia and cross, a hand cross and episcopal ring and a veil was again placed over his face. The holy body was then placed into the newly made stainless steel container, along with official documents sealed in a tube. The container was then welded shut. Finally the container was tied with a silk ribbon and sealed using melted red wax and the episcopal seal of our Metropolitan.

Although the whole process was emotionally draining, it was very fulfilling and life-giving. It can best be described as having experienced Easter. After one spends hours in prayer mediating on the suffering and passion of Christ and then on Easter morning to joyfully sing Easter Matins and Liturgy proclaiming the great News that He is Risen, one experiences a fullness of life, which is only a small foretaste of eternity in the presence of the All-Mighty. A similar experience followed those days. There was a profound peace and joy. There was a great desire for silence – to be simply in the presence



of the Holy. This sacred presence was experienced throughout the week as people came to venerate the relics, first at the residence of the Sister Servants, then at Sts. Vladimir and Olga Cathedral and finally at St. Joseph's Church. This same presence now envelopes the shrine/chapel where his Holy Relics are permanently displayed for the veneration of all pilgrims.

Submitted by Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R.



GOD IS WONDERFUL IN HIS SAINTS

There are some events in life which have historical significance the moment they occur. Most events need the test of time to gain this status, but we witnessed an event in Winnipeg that reached this status the moment it happened – the transfer of the Holy Relics of Blessed Bishop and Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R.

News came in early January 2001 that Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky, who was already known as a Confessor of the Faith for the sufferings he had endured during his imprisonments in the Soviet Union, would soon be raised to the status of a Martyr. He was to be beatified by Pope John Paul II later that summer. Immediately a small group began to plan for the future. Once beatified, it would not be proper to have the holy remains of Blessed Vasyl left in the cemetery. It would be necessary to bring them into a church, where the faithful would have ready access to come and pray before them. The Redemptorists quickly took on the responsibility to promote and look after the Holy Relics of one of their confreres and fellow Redemptorist, Bishop Velychkovsky.

After receiving the necessary permission from the Vatican, a building committee was established to develop and oversee the construction of two extra rooms to St. Joseph's Church: one to be the shrine where the Holy Relics would be kept and the other to be a museum where Blessed Vasyl's life story could be told and shown. Fund-raising began to support this project. The Committee worked hard and by May 2002 construction began on these two rooms, which were finished by the time of the celebrations in September.

At the same time a Shrine Event Committee was organised to look after the events of the weekend of the transfer. This committee met weekly and bi-weekly with all its sub-committees to insure that every aspect of the weekend was examined and organized. There were many small details to attend to from public relations, to publishing of brochures, booklets, posters, sending invitations, booking hotels, organizing shuttle service, looking after all the audio issues, getting tents, chairs, outside floor, procession banners, a carrier for the Relics, preparing gift shop items, organizing a concert, doing the logistics for the seating in church, basement and tents, logistics for the procession and liturgies, and so on. Many many people volunteered their time and creative energies to make the weekend worthy of

the gift that we were all receiving – the Presence of the Relics of Blessed Vasyl.

People arrived from across the country to be present at this event. There were Bishops from across the world. Priests and deacons from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, nearly all the Ukrainian Redemptorists from Canada, people came by "bus" from Saskatoon, Wynyard, Ituna and Yorkton, people from Toronto, people from the United States and of course from all over Manitoba. The presence of all these people really made the event. It was an experience of being Church. Young children, youth, young married families, older families, seniors, Knights of Columbus, altar servers, clergy, sisters, men and women of all ages took part in the weekend celebrations. This was especially evident in the 3.5 km procession that took place Sunday morning on September 22 from the Cathedral of Sts. Vladimir and Olga to St. Joseph's Church. The pilgrims (some 2000+) together sang church hymns, recited the rosary, prayed the Acafist Hymn to Blessed Vasyl as they walked on the cool but dry Sunday morning. The weather had been inclement all weekend, but just as the Moleben service finished that morning prior to the procession the rain stopped.



A Christian pilgrimage procession reminds the faithful that we are all on the road to the Kingdom of God. It reminds us of our Christian journey of life. We walk together. We walk together in prayer. This procession was especially precious because the pilgrims walked together with Blessed Vasyl. This walk of the 'saints' in fact, had a saint with them, Blessed Vasyl. His Holy Relics made that pilgrimage walk with us. Walking with the Holy made the journey a profound Christian experience.

THANK YOU!!!

Thank you to all the Founding Contributors to the Shrine for Blessed Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky. It was your contributions that made it possible for us to construct the Shrine which contain the Holy Relics and the Museum. Both the Shrine and Museum are beautiful additions to St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church. Thanks to your generous donations.

To date, there is still approximately \$80,000 needed to paid off all the construction and decorating costs, as well there will be on-going operational expenses. We thank you for your initial and continuous support.

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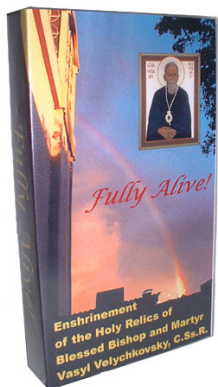
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*We apologize for any errors. Please contact the shrine office if you require clarification.

NEW VIDEO AVAILABLE



Fully Alive!

Enshrinement of the Holy Relics of Blessed Bishop and Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky C.Ss.R.

*This one hour video brings to life the weekend of
September 20-22, 2002 as the Holy Relics of
Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky were transferred from the
Cathedral of Sts. Vladimir and Olga to
St. Joseph's Church in Winnipeg.
This video captures the spirit of this historical event
in the Ukrainian Catholic Church.*

Copies are available for \$20.00 (plus Prov. Sales Tax)
**at the Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine
Museum/Gift shop
St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church
250 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2V 0M6**

or call (204)338-7321
or e-mail: bvshrine@mts.net

WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are needed to welcome pilgrims coming to the shrine or to serve in the gift shop. Consider a couple of hours a week or even once a month on a regular schedule. There is an orientation session for all those who volunteer.

Come and spend a few hours in prayerful presence and service before the Holy Relics of Blessed Vasyl.

ON-GOING SUPPORT

We welcome all donations.
Donations to the Velychkovsky Shrine
can be made in memory of a loved one.

Donations over \$1,000.00 will permanently
acknowledged in the museum.

Make cheques payable to:
Ukrainian Catholic Mission-Shrine

SHRINE SCHEDULE

Monday: Shrine is closed
Tuesday to Friday: 10 am to 5 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am to 1:00 pm
Sunday: opened until 2:00 pm

Shrine is open to the faithful during the times
of Liturgical Services. The Museum is opened on
weekends after each Divine Liturgy.

Group tours are available.
For pilgrimage group tours call for reservations
338-7321 or e-mail: bvshrine@mts.net

EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING - 7:00 pm
Liturgical Service to Blessed Vasyl
(Acafist or Moleben) followed by an anointing with
Holy Oil blessed by his relics.

Prayer to Blessed Martyr Bishop Vasyl

*O Lord God, You are praised by the whole
world for the marvelous works in your saints.
I thank you for the grace you gave to
**Blessed Martyr Vasyl
Velychkovsky** to be a faithful witness to You
unto the point of death. Through his interces-
sion I ask for the following favor _____
for your Name is glorified forever. Amen.*

Please inform the shrine of any favors received to:

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250 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2V 0M6
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