



FULLY ALIVE

A Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Publication

“He has sent me...to set the prisoners free”

Patron of Prison Chaplains

In August 2013, the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church announced the decision to name Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky as the **Patron of Prison Chaplains in Ukraine**. They limited his patronage



Blessed Vasyl in prison on death row, soon to be proclaimed Patron of Prison Chaplains

to Ukraine because that is where their authority lies, but I would extend it to mean to all Ukrainian prison chaplains. Why was Blessed Vasyl given this honor? The Ukrainian Catholic Bishops together with the

Patriarch visited the Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine in Winnipeg in September of 2012 and they became more familiar with his story and his important role in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

Blessed Vasyl had a zeal for spreading the Gospel. When he was young, he was compelled by an interior fervor to preach the Good News, especially in missions and retreats. During the time of the underground church under the Soviet Union, he continued this preaching ministry in homes and “convents”. This fervor followed him when he

went to prison. Blessed Vasyl was imprisoned two times: in 1945 to 1955 and 1969 to 1972. While in prison he continued his ministry with the prisoners. Blessed Vasyl describes some of this ministry in his autobiography, found in the book entitled “Be Not Afraid”.

While he was on death row in July 1946, he came into the cell which was already occupied by many others who were also on death row. When they realized that he was a priest, the prisoners asked him to speak to them. Seeing their hunger for the Word of God and for salvation, Blessed Vasyl began teaching them the basic prayers. Then, he catechized them and prepared them for confession and to receive the Eucharist. When the guards walked in the next day, they were amazed at the peace and order they found in this death row cell. Sister Innocentia, OSBM, who worked closely with Blessed Vasyl in the underground church, shared a conversation she had with Blessed Vasyl on this event. She was often at Blessed Vasyl's apart-

ment in Lviv, bringing messages for him or from him to others. She was present at his second trial in 1969. She related to us that while on death row, Blessed Vasyl had a ten day mission for the prisoners and that during that time, not one prisoner was called out (to be executed). All were able to complete this time of renewal, make a confession and receive the Eucharist which was offered secretly by Blessed Vasyl. She said that this by itself was a miracle, that no one lost their life during those days, but that God spared them all until their souls had become free of sin. Blessed Vasyl continued this same ministry with every new prisoner that came into the cell.

We receive an image of Blessed Vasyl's “chaplaincy” while in prison in Vorkuta from a fellow prisoner Borys Mirus. Boris was a young actor (22 years old) when he was arrested and sent to Vorkuta, which is located north of the Arctic Circle in Russia. Here prisoners were sent to work in the coal mines. For several months he shared the same work detail as Blessed Vasyl, working as a “ventilator” - opening and closing the doors as the coal mine carts came by. Borys Mirus described how they would gather around 4:00 am in an unused mine shaft. Blessed Vasyl dressed in his working clothes would pull a large table spoon from his pocket, together with some dark prison



Sr. Innocentia, OSBM, a co-worker with Blessed Vasyl during the underground church in the role of his “secretary”

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bread and some wine made from raisins. There silently, all huddled together guarded by two sentinels on either end of the mine shaft, Blessed Vasyl would offer the Divine Liturgy. With great devotion all would share the Eucharist. He described with tears the profound experience of this Eucharist.

In the mine shaft and even in the barracks prisoners would come to Blessed Vasyl for confession or counsel. He saw Blessed Vasyl constantly praying on his hand-made rosary, made of dried prison-bread beads on a string, for the prisoners and for the guards. When questioned by Borys why he prayed for the guards, Blessed Vasyl's response was that we should pray for

those persecuting us, as Jesus forgave all people from the cross. One time, Borys was very depressed and despondent, giving up all hope. He saw that all the intelligentsia (the educated) was in prison and he feared what would happen to Ukraine. Who would be left to lead the country? When he shared this painful concern with Blessed Vasyl, he received a "prophecy" from him. Blessed Vasyl told him that God will not tolerate this sinful evil situation for too long. "A time will come, I probably will not see it, but you will, when everything will fall apart and there will be a rebirth, churches built everywhere. And you shall travel around the world." Borys Mirus shared that already this all has come true. He

had been to Australia and other places, and the Church has been reborn in Ukraine.

Blessed Vasyl continued to be a father, a confessor and a spiritual guide for his fellow prisoners. Borys Mirus said that the prisoners called Blessed Vasyl "our Chaplain". Our bishops have taken this attribute of Blessed Vasyl and have named him now as the Patron of prison chaplains. May Blessed Vasyl be the intercessors of these chaplains so that prisons may come to know the love and the mercy that our Lord has for them.

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

SHRINE VISITORS



**Life Skills Group from
Maples Collegiate, Winnipeg**



**Professor Dr. Pavlo Khobzey,
Vice-Rector for Academic
Affairs, Ukrainian Catholic
University, Lviv, Ukraine**



**Assembly of Major Superiors of
Religious in Manitoba**



**Grade 8 Class from Immaculate
Heart of Mary School in Winnipeg**



**Fr. Shyshkowych Council Knight of Columbus,
8925, Winnipeg**



**His Grace Bishop Leonardo Medraso from the
Philippines came to the Shrine to pray for the
victims of the earthquake and typhoon, along with
Fr. Ronald Amore, Rev. Jorge Manti, the Parochial
Vicar of St. Edward's Parish, and Josie Rana from
St. Patrick's Parish in Winnipeg**

THANK YOU!!!

Your generous donations make it possible for us to conduct our ministry at the Shrine and to promote the knowledge of Blessed Vasyl throughout the world. Thank you to all the contributors to the Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine. May Blessed Vasyl bless each one of you.

Contributions listed below are from September 1st until November 30th, 2013

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In memory of Maria Borowec

Fr. Bohdan Borowec

100+

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Orest Pidwerbeski

Deacon Leon Twerdyn

Emile and Sylvia Picklyk

In Celebration Of...

Sister Hilary & Sister Carmels

Stan and Luba Sirdar

Mel & Sylvia Rorabeck

Stan and Luba Sirdar

GRACES AND BLESSINGS

To the Staff of the
Shrine of Blessed Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky CSsR
To whom it may concern

About a month ago (October 2012) my oldest first cousin complained about her severe arthritic pain in her legs. I prayed with her and said: "I'll get you some holy oil for you to use." So that week I came to the Moleben Service especially for her and got a vial of Blessed Vasyl Oil and a few other articles from the shrine gift shop. I had Fr Frank bless them all and sent it all to her.

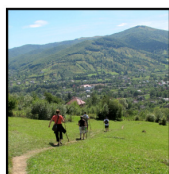
My cousin Mary(who lives in Prince Edward Island) told me that the day the package arrived the pain in her legs was unbearable, as if she was being pierced by a very hot knife. She felt desperate, she told me, and seeing the vial of oil, she put it on her legs—just a drop and rubbed it in.

She said within 5 minutes the pain was remitted and she has not had it since that time.

Most sincerely,
J. Frank MacDonald
Winnipeg, MB

BISHOP VELYCHKOVSKY PILGRIMAGE TO UKRAINE

**A spiritual journey—
following a martyr's life**
July 7– 28, 2014



We will walk in the
footsteps of Blessed
Vasyl—visiting the
sites where he lived,
worked and suffered.



Pilgrimage includes:

Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk,
Kamianetz Podilsk, Kyiv,
Zarvanytsia (participating in the
weekend vidpust)
and other points of interest such as the
Carpathian Mountains,
Kolomeya, villages & an orphanage



Cost: 4,000.00 (includes airfare from Winnipeg,
meals, accommodations and travel
throughout Ukraine)

Deadline for registration: December 31, 2013
(limited to 20 pilgrims)

For more information & registration contact:

Mary Jane Kalenchuk or Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R.
Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine 250 Jefferson Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2V 0M6
Tel: 204-338-7321 email: info@bvmartyrshrine.com

**There are only a few spaces left for
our upcoming 2014 Pilgrimage to
Ukraine. If interested, call our Shrine
Office for more details**

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 1:00 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
204-338-7321 or e-mail: bvshrine@mts.net

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

***Wishing all of our supporters and their families
a blessed Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year***

Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine
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