



# **FULLY ALIVE**

***A Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Publication***

## **A TIME FOR PRAYER**

### **Slava Ukraini! Heroiam Slava!**

Over the past few months my eyes have been glued to the newscasts on the internet and television, following the events happening in Ukraine. We have seen a people become intensely aware of its identity and the values of freedom, religion and justice. We have seen a people defend these values in the face of fierce opposition unto the point of death. These same values were also held dearly by Blessed Vasyl.

As this article is being written, the events in Ukraine are changing so quickly that by the time it is published and by the time you read it, the situation could again be very different. Presently, the Russian forces are occupying the Crimean peninsula and the world leaders and diplomats are seeking some solution before there is an armed conflict and more lives are lost.

The conflict that has been present in Ukraine has shown quite vividly - the face of evil. We saw the blatant lies of the former government officials; the outright disrespect of the human person and the disregard for human



life. Medics who were members of the Red Cross were being attacked for helping the injured. Journalists were muzzled and fired at so that the story would not be told. People were being arrested without cause. Others were kidnapped and had disappeared or were tortured and killed. People armed with nothing but their bodies, some sticks and stones, stood ground before those with bullets and grenades. In the end, close to a hundred people became "martyrs" for the cause of justice and for a Ukraine

free from foreign tyranny.

As these event unfolded, it was difficult not to think of



the circumstances of Blessed Vasyl. Although there was awareness in North America of oppressive reality of the Soviet Union, there was also a certain distance from those events. But today with the presence of modern media, the events of recent days echo to some degree the circumstances of Blessed Vasyl's life. The last 30 years of Blessed Vasyl's life was lived under the tyranny and oppression of the Soviet Union. The shocking events of recent days of torture and abuse of human dignity and freedom were the standard fare for Blessed Vasyl. On any day he could be called out for interrogation. Any one of his pastoral activities - his retreats, Divine Liturgies, catecheses, seminary training, celebration of sacraments, funerals, religious writings - could become a cause for his arrest, torture or even death. He lived this persecuted life every day. Yet, like the people on the bar-racks of the Maidan Square, he did not hide or withdraw from proclaiming the Gospel, rather courageously and without fear he continued to work tirelessly for the growth of the church and the salvation of souls.

Like the leaders of the opposition in Kiyyv, Blessed Vasyl did not shrink from confronting the leaders of his day. On several occasions he confronted the government in Moscow about the injustice of his personal sentence and about the injustice of proclaiming the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church an illegal entity. He brought

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petitions to the Supreme Soviet to have at least some churches open for the Ukrainian Catholics. He did this courageously knowing that this could intensify persecution against him.



The people of the Maidan resisted the confrontation of the Berkut and other subversive forces and stood in the way of the bullet. Their courage for the sake of justice and freedom inspired the people of the whole country as well as the whole western world. People rose up and also gained courage to confront the injustice of the system. They continue in this struggle. A martyr's sacrifice gives new life to others. Blessed Vasyl's martyrdom inspires us to a greater commitment to our Christian faith and Christian values. Blessed Vasyl was willing to die so that the Christian faith not be compromised nor diluted. He lived the life of God's compassion, mercy and forgiveness even towards his enemies.



He lived a life of prayer, knowing that the power of God was more wonderful than anything humans can achieve. On the Maidan, clergy from all faiths (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, Judaic) gathered hourly to pray for God's protection, for victory over evil, for conversion of hearts and for peace. Many of the unexplainable events of the Maidan have been attributed to the direct intervention of divine power by

church leaders and by the people. Blessed Vasyl believed that it was only through prayer that the power of evil can be overcome. In his life also there were many instances where this victory was evident.

These recent events of the Maidan, no matter what outcome results in the near future, must not be forgotten for they reflect the best of the human spirit, that which needs to be emulated by others. So too, the life of Blessed Vasyl needs to be proclaimed to the world, for it crystallizes the response of faith in God that all of humanity needs to find and cultivate.

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



## A Prayer for Ukraine

**O Lord of Heaven and Earth!**

You sent your Only Begotten son, Jesus Christ, to bring peace and harmony to your people on earth. Hear our prayer, we beseech You, for the gift of peace for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine who struggle to make their voices heard for a better political, economic and social future. Help them stop the violence and blood shed as they struggle for their democratic rights in peace and Christian charity.

**God of our Ancestors!**

Protect your Holy Church in our ancestral land. After many years of underground existence and secular control, grant that the Church leaders may continue to profess their faith publically, standing with the people in prayer on the streets and squares of the nation. Help your Church proclaim to all that indeed: "God is with us!"

**Heavenly King!**

Pour forth your gift of holy wisdom upon the people of Ukraine so that after many years of subjugation by outside powers, they can continue their journey down the road to self-determination, guided by honest political leaders. Together may they build the just society that our people long for. By your grace, and through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God and all the saints of Ukraine, may the people of Ukraine find pride and joy in their nation so that they may give You unending praise: **Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. AMEN!**



## GRACES AND BLESSINGS

*Dear Fr John: Sometime after Christmas (2012) I brought my mother to visit Blessed Vasyl's shrine, a gem in our city, and you treated us to a wonderful tour complete with the most engaging anecdotes. At the time I was about four months pregnant and my Mom requested a special blessing on my behalf. Since I inherited a non-rare genetic disorder called Richardsonian translocation – the cause for multiple miscarriages – an extra blessing with holy oil was certainly appreciated. On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013, we gave birth to a beautiful boy we named Cedric. With Blessed Vasyl's intercession, we hope our little boy will grow up strong in his faith like the martyr who graces our city.*

*Jacinta Palud*



## PROMOTION OF BLESSED VASYL IN UKRAINE

As we continue our yearly trips to Ukraine, the work has evolved from gathering testimonies, artifacts and documents with regard to Blessed Vasyl to promoting him to the Ukrainian faithful. This we have done through the establishment of a museum - his apartment from the time of the underground church -, through the printing of brochures, prayer services and booklets, and most recently through presentations of his life and witness of the Christian faith. It was very difficult to achieve all these goals from Canada. To help us in the promotional work in Ukraine, last summer we hired a young man, Taras Hull. Taras has become very eager in promoting Blessed Vasyl and is visiting schools and parishes giving power point presentations to the people. We are grateful that God has blessed our work in Ukraine with Taras' enthusiasm and faith.



**Taras Hull giving a tour of the museum to seminarians from Lviv.**



**Students from the school in the village of Ternavska, Lvivski Oblast**



**Taras Hull with grade 9 students in Yevshan School in Lviv**



**Grade 6 student from School # 15 in Lviv**



**Grade 5 students from Yevshan School in Lviv**



**Grade 9 students from Yevshan school in Lviv**

# 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 December 1, 2013 until February 28, 2014.*

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Deacon Stepan Bilynsky

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Mike &amp; Lillian Balak

**Gemma, Dalayoan, Zennie & Gloria Balassu**

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Please consider Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine when planning your estate. This will help to secure the future of this ministry. Thank you.



# SHRINE VISITORS



Knights of Columbus Canon Luhovy Assembly #374 open their meeting with a prayer at the Shrine



Participants in Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity visit the museum



Candle burning in the Shrine as a prayer for the people of Ukraine at this time of crisis.



Youth from St. Anne, Manitoba and district



Pastoral Team studying in Winnipeg

## SHRINE SCHEDULE

**Monday:** Closed  
**Tuesday to Friday:** 10 am to 5 pm  
**Saturday:** 10:00 am to 1:00 pm  
**Sunday:** opened until 1:00 pm

The 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: [info@bvmartyrshrine.com](mailto:info@bvmartyrshrine.com)

**EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING 7:00 pm**  
 Liturgical Service to Blessed Vasyl  
 (Acatnist 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 intercession I ask for the following favour \_\_\_\_\_ for your Name is glorified forever. Amen.*



Please inform the Shrine of any favors received.

**Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine**  
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