



FULLY ALIVE

A Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Publication

YEAR OF MERCY - A TIME FOR REPENTANCE

Blessed Vasyl—A Father of Mercy

On December 20, 2015 a Holy Door in honour of the Jubilee Year of Mercy was blessed by Metropolitan Lawrence Huculak in St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church at the Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine. The experience of the Father's mercy, is very much connected to our willingness to undergo a conversion of heart. This is concretely expressed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or commonly known as Confession. Since then, we have had various groups and pilgrims to our Shrine and Church to obtain this special grace. From a recording of sermons given by Blessed Vasyl to priests in the underground church in Ukraine, we have a short excerpt from him of the Sacrament of Confession.



"When we approach confession, let us remember: we must prepare ourselves. For the confession to be holy, it must never be done carelessly or in haste and never without preparation. Never. Otherwise, we will lose much grace. When we begin to prepare for holy confession, firstly, let us place ourselves in the presence of God. Let us ask our heavenly Father for the gift of courage and strength to do penance. Let us ask the Son of God for enlightenment so that we would recognize our sins. Let us ask the Holy Spirit that he consume our sins and offenses with the fire of His love. Then calmly examine our conscience. Let us ask the Mother of God for the grace of true sorrow and a contrite heart. True sorrow. Remember, that without true sorrow, one cannot make a good confession. Sorrow for one's sins is the heart of confession. As the body without a soul is dead, so confession without sorrow is dead. Let us pray: 'O Mother of God, grant me sorrow for my sins. Grant me to recognize my faults. Grant me to see the gravity of sins. Grant that I may have before me the wounds of Christ, the blood of Christ, the sufferings of Christ, the tortures and the death of Christ. So that looking upon this, my heart may pain and despise sin. That I may suffer all things rather than offend my God through the smallest thing.' Ask our Mother of God for the great grace of true repentance for our sins...."

"After a good confession where we have confessed all our sins, let us again awaken sorrow in our hearts. With

the eyes of our soul let us gaze upon the Blood of Christ, on the wounds of Christ. Let us say: 'O God, forgive me and have mercy on me, for my heart is in pain. I would rather undergo all this pain than offend You in any way.' And then imagine! When the priest says the absolution, the Blood of Christ flows over my soul, covers my soul, my heart, and cleanses me. What a great grace! What great mercy!"

From the many interviews that were conducted in Ukraine with people who knew Blessed Vasyl, one of his characteristics that became evident was his fatherly demeanour. Many experienced him as a personal father, one who cared for their spiritual well-being. They experience God's mercy through the words and actions of Blessed Vasyl. Here are a few excerpts of these interviews.

Boris Mirus, an actor who was in prison with Blessed Vasyl, shared his impressions how Father Velychkovsky was able to speak to one's soul so that they make a good confession. Boris related: "He spoke quietly at half volume. Whenever he conversed, I was always amazed at how prudent and considerate he was. I always loved to listen to him. He knew how to counsel and bring peace to someone. If someone was apathetic or depressed, he had such strength that he was able with his soft voice through his logic and philosophy and at the same time his clear common language to rehabilitate them. He was not limited. He could speak with the ordinary as well as with the intellectuals. He found a way to approach everyone and how to give advice in a very enlightened, cultured and sophisticated way. I think that all the good human qualities were in this man."



**Boris Mirus,
a fellow-prisoner**

"Velychkovsky was unbreakable. Even in the harsh circumstance of the labour camps, he continued his pastoral work, filling the hearts of the prisoners with faith and the Spirit. The prisoners called him 'our chaplain'. Every year during the Great Fast (Lent) and during the Great Feast Days, Father Velychkovsky celebrated the Divine Liturgy, confessed and gave us Holy Communion. His confessions were profound. We

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experienced his great faith and that made our lives easier.”

In an interview with Anna Kakaliuk she said: “During my first confession, Father Velychkovsky was very strict with me. This was very similar to what I heard in a conversation with Sister Katherine, a nun in the underground church. One time I came to her and found her crying. I asked: ‘Katherine, what happened?’ She began to relate a dream she had. She said: ‘Jesus appeared to me in a dream and with a stern voice he said to me, ‘Your prayers are not sincere.’ I fell on my knees before Jesus and said: ‘Jesus, teach me to pray as you desire.’ Then the sternness disappeared and a gentle smile radiated from his face. He raised me up from my knees....I experienced that same change of temperament, from sternness to gentleness, in my first encounter with Father Velychkovsky. At first, he asked me very austere, why I had not gone to confession sooner. I was taken back by such a question and I said to him: ‘Excuse me Father, I did not know any catholic priests. Now that I have met you, I can now come to you for confession.’ Then when he confessed me, he immediately, with a smile, became gentle and light hearted.”

From childhood, Sister Chrysantia Hnativ was



Holy Card which Blessed Vasyl gave to Sr. Chrysantia on the day of her religious profession

raised in the Studite Sisters' Monastery in Yavorir, Ukraine. She related the following: “One day I came to the monastery and one sister said ‘How good that you came today. An extraordinary confessor has come to us today. He just takes one look at you and he knows everything.’ I

was very intrigued so I went to the chapel to have a look at him. In one corner of the chapel, he was confessing one sister. I quickly crossed myself, bowed down and with my hand over my eyes I tried to look through my fingers to see his face. Before I accomplished this, Father Velychkovsky was standing next to me and put his hand on my shoulder. I froze and became frightened, but he gently cupped my elbow and said: “Perhaps, you want to go to confession?” I was tongue-tied and could not say anything. I could only look upon him with trepidation. He said: ‘Come, come to me. Come I will talk with you.’ I went with him to the confessional, but I was dumbfounded and couldn’t talk. I did not even know how to start my confession. He slowly began to ask me questions, speaking gently and softly. He asked about many things. I received courage and confidence, fear left me, and I told him everything.... During confession Father said: ‘Marika, you have to become a nun. I only see you as a nun. I will now finish confessing you. Then you will go with me to the parlor and write a letter to Mother Superior that she accept you into the monastery. Tomorrow, I will see Mother Superior and personally give her this letter.’ At first I resisted and said that she would not

accept me for she knows me from childhood. Surely she sees me as that unruly child who only had nonsense in her head. Father reassured me that Mother Superior would be happy. As if hypnotized I went with Father to the parlour and together we wrote the letter... I left the church elated, as if walking on air. Coming home, with anticipation I waited for the response, for I so wanted to enter the monastery....

Sister Chrysantia related how Father Velychkovsky remembered all his spiritual children. Even when he was in exile in Vorkuta, he wrote two letters to her about his life in Siberia. Sister told of how Father wrote: ‘The Mother of God is performing miracles. For those who are united with the Lord, nothing is frightening, neither Siberia, nor anything else. Here there are thousands of people whom he helps and lightens their heavy burdens.’

“Sister Modesta Seniuk, OSBM recalled: “The Bishop had a great devotion to the Lord, the Holy Eucharist and the Mother of God. He always strove to inspire this devotion in us. He taught us to have a deep trust in the Eucharist and to the Eucharistic Jesus. I went daily for the Divine Liturgy to the Bishop’s home. He also gave me the Holy Sacraments in a pyx to carry near to my heart. I took this pyx with me to my village and there I received Holy Communion daily from it. He told me to always carry the Holy Sacraments with me. In this way the bishop cared for me both spiritually and as a “father.” He desired that I would always be aware of the presence of God with me, so that I would never allow myself any laxity in my actions. Even today I still experience a spiritual joy to know that I had such paternal care – one which the best father would want for his child.”



Sr, Modesta Senyk, OSBM

Blessed Vasyl was truly a spiritual father to those to whom he ministered and he reflected God the Father’s mercy and goodness to them. May he help us journey through this Jubilee Year of Mercy and experience the Father’s Love.

“ Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.”

Pope Francis

Testimony

The following is an excerpt from a paper written by Jay Korban, a Shrine volunteer, who is studying at the Sheptytsky Institute in Ottawa, Ontario.

"...His continued impact is evident in present times and will last for years to come; especially now with the troubles Ukraine is experiencing. He can serve as an inspiration to many who are at war and being attacked by an enemy similar to the one he himself withstood. He serves as a shining example of how to stand up to oppression, to persecution, to being tested in one's faith. Blessed Vasyl endured great physical and emotional torture, yet never gave in to his tormentors. Rather he said "yes" to the Lord and remained faithful to the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church.

Blessed Vasyl is important today as a blessed martyr and, God-willing, one day he will be proclaimed a saint, of the Church. He is remembered as a holy person by many people still alive today who knew him personally and readily pass on his story to others. Not only is he a great martyr for the people in Ukraine, but for the entire Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church worldwide, especially in Canada. Having fallen asleep in the Lord on Canadian soil, he provides a tangible connection to all of the Ukrainian martyrs. The shrine built in his honour after his beatification now serves as a major pilgrimage site for many Catholics from across North America and not just Ukrainian Catholics. He has become a source of healing and a powerful intercessor. Blessed Vasyl has been credited with numerous miracles already, including oils and fragrances oozing from icons of himself as well as from the replica icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help that is housed within the shrine. Through his prayers, cancers have been healed along with other diseases.

On a personal level, Vasyl has become more than just a martyr or a holy person. Through volunteering at the shrine and museum of Blessed Vasyl, I have come to learn his life and story very well and have connected with him in a way that I feel like I personally knew him. He has become a spiritual father and a great influence to me. Others experience this connection as well, having devoted much of their time since his beatification nearly fourteen years ago to researching him, his life and his story. They have spent years making trips to Ukraine to retrieve second class relics of Blessed Vasyl, conducting interviews with those who have known or met him personally, and digging through church and KGB archives. Through their efforts new details are being added to his incredible story.

Blessed Bishop Vasyl Vsevolod Velychkovsky was a Pillar of Faith in the underground church and continues to inspire many faithful today. His courage and strength stands as an example to all who suffer or are persecuted. His love for his faith and devotion to the Mother of God remain an example to follow. As a priest and bishop, Blessed Vasyl preached and witnessed to millions, and now in death, he remains fully alive and continues to be a witness of Christ to millions more. The words he spoke to his underground church ring true here and now: "I am blessing the way for everyone who has strength and is not afraid to go and preach! Go ahead and show to everyone that we exist, that we are indestructible, that we are alive." O Blessed Hieromartyr, Bishop of Lutsk, Bishop of the Underground, Elder of Winnipeg, please intercede and pray for us!"

MINISTRY IN UKRAINE



Prison in Chortkiv and a cell (now a museum) where Bl. Vasyl was imprisoned in 1945



Presentation to children & parishioners in the Cathedral in Kolomeya



Presentation to Basilian Students in Lviv



Venerating the relics of Blessed Vasyl in village of Nahirianka in the church of our Mother of Perpetual Help



Praying with the grade 5 & 6 class in Chortkiv

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 November 16, 2015 until February 29, 2016.

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Shrine Ministry in Winnipeg



Students from St. Paul's College
University of Manitoba visiting
the Holy Door and Shrine



Bill Flak, who manufactured the brass
work in the Shrine, and Debbie Mackay,
Winnipeg



Family & friends from Ukraine
and the USA



Marichka & Stephen Duncan from
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ARISE in the UCC



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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

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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