

FULLY ALIVE

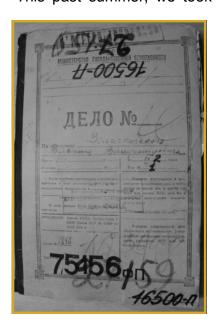
A Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr's Shrine Publication

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

KGB DOCUMENTS UNCOVERED

Since the beatification of Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R. in 2001, our modest Shrine (in his honor) in Winnipeg began to collect information about his life. There was little information about his life, since he spent only one year in Canada before his martyr's death. Most of that time he was ill: suffering from the tortures he endured during his Soviet imprisonment. We had a short biography of his life written by Fr. Stephan Bachtalowsky, C.Ss.R. and an autobiography written by Blessed Vasyl. However, this autobiography ended with the year 1955. Thus we began to do research. During the summer months these past several years, we have traveled to Ukraine to interview people who knew Blessed Vasyl personally. To date we have met, interviewed and recorded over 60 people.

This past summer, we took the challenge to try



The title page of Volume 1 on Blessed Vasyl's 1st arrest.

and access the former KGB archives. We had only a few scattered documents that were collected at the time of Blessed Vasyl's beatification process. These were limited and left many questions unanswered. We began making inquiries. Through the help of Professor Oleh Turij from Ukrainian the Catholic University in Lviv, and through the persistence of Kseniya Kavats, our

student worker, and Mary Jane Kalenchuk, our Shrine Administrator, we were able to make con-

tact with the former KGB (now called SBU) archives Kyiv. The SBU began to do the research for us. When we arrived in Kyiv, after much documentation and security issues, we were taken to a room where we were given material pertaining to Blessed Vasyl. To our surprise and wonder, the archives had two volumes of docu-



Blessed Vasyl's identification photograph taken in 1944

mentation about Blessed Vasyl's first arrest in the summer of 1945. In these volumes were recorded his interrogations, his trail and documents written during his imprisonment. We were given full access and were able to make copies of all these precious pages. The KGB kept very good records. The archives however had nothing about Blessed Vasyl's second arrest in January of 1969.

Our next task was to search the various government archives in Lviv. We were sent from one archives to the next. We received mixed messages about where the files were regarding his second arrest. We

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searched for the even documents where he was imprisoned in Kommunarsk, in Eastern Ukraine. In the end, we were told that they were destroyed because their time had already elapsed. Although this information came from several sources, others were telling us that these documents would never be destroyed and should exist somewhere. We too believed that they could not have been destroyed and were somewhere in Lviv. We were discouraged by this information. However, God had his own wonderful plans.

During the time of the Papal visitation of Ukraine by Pope John Paul II in 2001, a certain priest was put is

charge of organizing the whole trip, including all of the security. He had to work very closely with the police and with the SBU (former KGB). The papal visit was very successful. Having befriended the

ЗОЛОТА НАУКА.

"Я Мати Неустанної Помочі і — спазала так колись Марія Божа Мати, коли об'явлася майй дятині в Рямі, що модилася перед чудотворним образом Богоматері грецького походження.

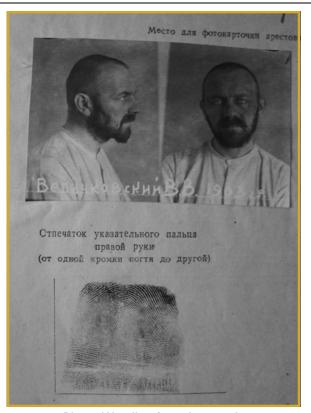
"Я Мати Неустанної Помочі — говорить Вона съогодні до веіх Христів по всопу світу, що ход з явимсь маленьким довірям гладять на її чудотворну Ікопу, по модатір.

"Я Мати Неустанної Помочі — говорить Вона съогодні до веіх Христів по всопу світу, що ход завимсь маленьким довірям гладять на її чудотворну Ікопу, по модатір.

"Я Мати Неустанної Помочі — говорить Вона вле довго її до тебе датино Української Нації, промоваля страйним довірям паденної Загивди дихала на тебе, на табо дової об'явлає, сльови витирає, смутим материцським слювом до твойого серта,. Промоваляє, тебе скриває хрест святий в проміннах падії, тобі об'явлає, сльови витирає, смутом розганяє равн году, тоб розганяє равн году, тоб розганяє равн году, тоб пораганяє равн году, тоб пораганяє равн году, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли до обіду сідаещ, коли до світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли вотелен по світу, коли вотелен по світу.

In the archives we found this little booklet written under the supervision of Blessed Vasyl. In it were red underlined markings made by the KGB indicating "anti-soviet propaganda. The incriminating words were: "Give us the grace of freedom from the ungodly, red enemy horde..."

For these words he was found guilty of this crime and sentenced on July 26, 1946 to be executed by firing squad.



Blessed Vasyl's prison photograph and fingerprint in the spring of 1946 after being starved and tortured.

director of the SBU, this priest, himself being a historian, asked permission for access to the SBU archives to do research on the Ukrainian Catholic priests who were arrested by the former KGB. He was allowed to do this research. By God's providence we found this priest. He had in his possession copies of many documents from the archives. Among these were four volumes about Bishop Vasyl's second arrest in 1969. A fifth volume is still missing. The priest gave us permission to make copies of these documents. We returned to Canada with close to 2000 pages of archival documents, letters and photos. This material obtained will give us a clearer picture of Blessed Vasyl's sufferings and holiness.

An exert of a letter (taken from a document found in the KGB archives) written on July 7, 1954 by Blessed Vasyl from Vladimir Prison to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, protesting his illegal arrest, states: "Only when I was thrown into the internal prison in Kyiv, was there any statements taken about my autobiography and my physical appearance. I had already been starved for six months and had been morally abused. After the interrogations in Kyiv, I was again asked whether I had changed my mind and was ready to join the Moscow Patriarchal Church. I responded in the negative, saying that I could not go against my conscience. The same was asked of me at my trial... on death row... and throughout my stay in the laagers in Vorkuta..." This quote witnesses to the tortures he received. During this whole ordeal, he kept choosing to follow his conscience rather than betray Christ.

There are many more precious treasures to be found in these uncovered KGB documents.

NOW OUR WORK BEGINS

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

Blessed Vasyl Play Performed at UNITY'09

Youth from St. Joseph's Parish in Winnipeg had the privilege of performing the play "Fragments on the Life of Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky" at UNITY'09. This weekend event was held at Mount Mary Retreat Center in Ancaster, Ontario (near Hamilton). Unity is a gathering of Ukrainian Catholic Youth across Can-



Blessed Vasyl is interrogated and beaten by the KGB after he led a procession in honor of the Mother of God through the streets of Ivano-Frankivsk during the Soviet occupation of Ukraine.

ada who come together every three years to celebrate their faith through prayer, education and fellowship.

On Thursday August 13th, the evening began with a prayer service honouring the Ukrainian Blesseds: Blessed Josaphata Hordashevska, the foundress of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate; Blessed



Youth actors from Saskatoon and Edmonton join the cast from Winnipeg to present this play.
This scene depicts the Christmas Eve supper during which God saved them from being arrested by the KGB.

Martyr Nykyta Budka, the first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop in Canada; and Blessed Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky, a Ukrainian Redemptorist Bishop who died in Canada.

This play on the Life of Blessed Vasyl was written by Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R. (director of the Shrine) on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Redemptorist Fathers of the Yorkton Province, which was celebrated in Winnipeg, September 2007. The play is a series of scenes from Blessed Vasyl's life: his first experience of interrogation by the KGB in 1940 after a procession on the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help; his first arrest in 1945 - the beginning of his road to martyrdom; a



Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj consecrates Blessed Vasyl to the episcopacy in a Moscow Hotel room.

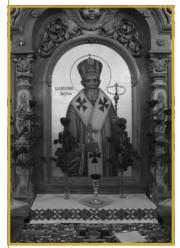
Metropolitan Josyf was being taken from Soviet imprisonment to participate in the Second Vatican Council in Rome.

Metropolitan Josyf put Blessed Vasyl in charge of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ukraine.

Christmas Eve supper interrupted by the KGB; and his consecration to the episcopacy in a Moscow hotel room. Between the scenes a narrator relates the story of his life. The play was first performed by our cast of youth on the occasion of this anniversary. Since then, the cast has performed in Saskatchewan (Yorkton and Saskatoon) and in several parishes in Winnipeg and rural areas in Manitoba.

The actors were very blessed to have the honour to promote Blessed Vasyl to the youth of Canada at UNITY'09.

THE MISSION CONTINUES IN UKRAINE



Side altar with his relics in the Redemptorist Church in Lviv dedicated to Blessed Vasyl

In Lviv, near the Halytskyj Bazar, Blessed Vasyl's apartment has been established as a place of pilgrimage. Several years ago we were able to restore Blessed Vasyl's former apartment to the state it was in his time, when he lived there from 1955 to 1969. His first class relics have been brought to this apartment and are on the altar that was used by him to celebrate the Divine Liturgy secretly during the time of the underground Ukrainian Catholic Church. Slowly this apartment is becoming a place of pilgrimage and prayer for the people of Lviv. Because he lived in Lviv during the time of the Soviet occupation, when membership in a Ukrainian Catholic Church was illegal, few people knew who he was. The inner circle of sisters, priests and faithful Catholics would frequent his apartment to receive sacraments, advice and direction. The general public did not know who he was. There-

fore today, it is a challenge to make him known in Ukraine.

We are thankful for what is being done. A church is being built in his honor in Ivano Frankivsk, where he was the

Superior from 1935 to 1941. This is the city of his birth and where he became famous as a great missionary. Some people still remember him from that time. An altar has also been dedicated to Blessed Vasyl in the Redemptorist church in Lviv, which is attached to the Provincial House. People are beginning to have a devotion to him, and he is blessing them with graces and miracles. This past summer a brochure was printed and distributed to promote this apartment/shrine. Pilrims come to pray in the apartment and receive a tour by Sr. Theophilia, OSBM, who herself was received into the community by Blessed Vasyl.



Fr. John Sianchuk, C.ss.R. giving a tour in Blessed Vasyl's apartment in Lviv to Redemptorists from across Europe

PILGRIMS



Missionary Sisters of Charity from Canada and the United States receive a tour by Mary Jane Kalenchuk of the museum and shrine



Grade 5 students from Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Winnipeg learn about Blessed Vasyl



TESTIMONY OF GRACE

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Three personal experiences this past year bear witness to the fact that Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R. most certainly must have loved young people - especially children. To give glory to God through His Blessed Mother, I will briefly recount our experiences of the intercession of Blessed Vasyl.

To begin with after a couple of years of being intermittently ill, our daughter was diagnosed with asthma in January 2007. The doctor prescribed treatment and prescriptions to the best of his ability and wanted to see the eleven year-old again in six weeks. Knowing the steroidal nature of the prescriptions we didn't even fill them. Deep in our hearts we knew we had another "doctor" to see as soon as possible. As God would have it, Brother John Kanski, C.Ss.R., another man who loved little children, had died and his funeral found us in Winnipeg at St. Joseph's. The little girl, who just turned 12 on March 4, knelt with her family in the Shrine of Blessed Vasyl on March 5 and with great love and confidence asked "to leave her asthma with Blessed Vasyl if it be God's holy will." We didn't even leave the city that afternoon and her coughing let up and was gone! Allergy seasons have come and gone without her even having a cold. Blessed be God in His saints. On June 27 - the Feast of Blessed Charnetsky and Companions, we returned to the Shrine to give personal thanks and it was this young girl that was privileged to carry the icon of our beloved Blessed Vasyl in procession through the streets of Winnipeg.

Blessed Vasyl once again manifested his love for children on August 17, 2007. This day found our family at a Bantam-aged Western Canada baseball tournament in Cold Lake, Alberta. Our 7-year old son was the full-equipped and protected batboy for the team of 15-year olds. Upon retrieving a bat in the very first at about 10:00 a.m., he was struck square in the forehead by the warm up swing of the next "overly focused" batter. To

make the story short, this found us in the hospital with him. Twenty-five stitches later (15 underneath to repair the mess and 10 on the surface) the doctor routinely sent the 7-year old for x-rays. Not surprisingly, the x-rays showed a fractured skull. Without delay the doctor sent this little innocent patient for a CT-scan because, as he indicated, the fracture will mean some extent of brain damage and sinus blow-out. Immediately intercessory prayers went up to Our Mother of Perpetual Help and out came the relic of Blessed Vasyl from my purse. Blessed Vasyl knew what we wanted if it be God's will and we also asked for courage to accept God's will in this accident.

Initially we were grateful that Cold Lake had CT-scan capacity in their hospital because of the urgency here. In the meantime the rest of the family had gone to get something to eat and at about 1:30 p.m. the doctor stood in front of me, the mother. He had the x-rays in one hand that showed the fracture and he had the CT-scan results in the other. He looked at me with amazement and exclaimed; "Lady, there is no fracture...there is no sinus blow-out. The sinus cavities are fine.... The ear canals are perfect. Lady, there is no fracture - you are dealing only with the stitches. He's fine."



"Miracle Children" Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R. with Joseph Sliva from Yorkton, who was healed of a fractured skull, and Maria Andrianna Therese Lemke from Wisconsin, who came safely and healthily into this world (see article in Newsletter #22), through the intercession of Blessed Vasyl

As the doctor looked at me in disbelief, I put my hand on the relic in my pocket and I looked at him in total belief in miracles and said. "Blessed be God in His saints!"

On September 22, 2007, the seven-year old and his unworthy family returned to the Shrine in profound thanksgiving. Five years before on that date this body was in a baby-stroller at the Transfer of the relics of our Blessed Hieromartyr Vasyl!

Thank you, Blessed Vasyl!

Lydia Sliva Yorkton, Saskatchewan

THANK YOU!!!

Your generous donations make it possible to conduct the ministry of the Shrine and promote the knowledge of Blessed Vasyl throughout the world. Thank you. We are grateful to those who have named the Shrine as a beneficiary in memory of their loved ones. May Blessed Vasyl bless each one of you. Contributions listed below are from May 1st until August 31st 2009.

+1000

John & Mary Pidskalny St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church

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David Batters

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In Honor of ... Bernice Browne Lise Anglin Chilock & Sloboda parents Terry & Gladys Sloboda Anne Faseruk Orest & Margaret Fedorchuk

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VELYCHKOVSKY PILGRIMAGE TO UKRAINE 2010

July 5 to July 27, 2010

Anna Banera

Visit the cities and villages where Blessed Martyr Vasyl lived, worked and suffered . Some of the places we will be visiting are: Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kovel, Kamianetz Podilsk, Kyiv, the Carpathian Mountains, Shuparka, Zarvanytsia, Probiznia, Pochaiv, etc. On this pilgrimage we will have prayer services and hear stories of Blessed Vasyl's life as well as sight-seeing throughout Ukraine. Cost: \$3950. All inclusive (flight from Winnipeg to Kyiv and back, travel in Ukraine, accommodations and meals) Travel and medical insurance is extra. For more information contact by e-mail: bvshrine@mts.net or phone 204-338-7321. Book as soon as possible as space is limited to 16 pilgrims.

FEAST DAY CELEBRATIONS



Fr. Yurij Banga, C.Ss.R. from Ukraine anoints pilgrims with the relic oil of Blessed Vasyl

Our annual feast day celebrations on June 27th were again attended by many pilgrims from Winnipeg and other parts of Canada and the United States. Being on a Saturday this past year, a

shorter schedule was followed. Because of inclement weather, a living Rosary was celebrated instead of our usual outside procession with the relics. A prayerful and grace-filled day was had by all who attended.

Searching for photos and videos of Blessed Vasyl between June 1972 and June 1973. If anyone has any information about who may have filmed his arrival or banquets and Liturgies he attended, please inform the shrine. (204)338-7321

humed, a special cloth was touched to his body and thus this cloth became a third class relic. At that time 20,000 third class relics were made by placing a piece of

ing a piece of this cloth into a paper package. Because they were all distributed, volunteers now have prayerfully



made thousands more of these relics. May those who use them with faith and prayer be blessed through Blessed Vasyl's intercession.

RELIC WORKSHOP

When the holy relics of Blessed Vasyl was ex-

Call in Prayer Requests

For a special intention or prayer request you may phone or email us. Your prayer request will be placed in the Shrine and remembered in prayer every Wednesday evening after the service in honour of Blessed Vasyl.

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
(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 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
250 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2V 0M6
Canada

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Website:www.bvmartyrshrine.com