Almost 10 years have passed since the enshrinement of the holy relics of Blessed Bishop and Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R. in St. Joseph’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, Winnipeg, MB. As we prepare to celebrate the event on September 20th - 23rd of this year, I wish to reflect upon the event and the past ten years.

Preparation for the enshrinement began in the late spring of 2001, when it became clear that Blessed Vasyl would be numbered among the group of martyrs to be beatified by Blessed Pope John Paul II on June 27, 2001 in Lviv, Ukraine. Once we obtained permission from the late Metropolitan Michael Bzdel to have the relics transferred to St. Joseph’s Church, plans were made for constructing two rooms attached to the Church, one for a museum to tell the story of his life, and the other as a shrine/chapel to house his holy relics. A committee was established to deal with the construction. Books and pamphlets were written. Videos were created. Gift shop items were designed and produced. Another committee was established to oversee all the events of the Enshrinement itself: the promotion; inviting of guests from across the world; arranging facilities (tents, audio-visual, etc.) to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for some 1,400 people; organizing a memorial concert and the scheduling for the all-night vigil at the Cathedral; the blessing of the newly-built rooms and the 50th anniversary celebration of St. Joseph’s parish which corresponded with the weekend of the transfer of relics; and the gala banquet which followed the event.

Of particular importance were the details of the transfer itself. The transfer of the relics had to follow strict Vatican protocol. All those involved in the actual exhumation and recognition were to be appointed by the Metropolitan. The containers for the relics had to be prepared with precise specifications. The relics were to be placed in a zinc (stainless steel) container (one that would not corrode). An unbroken silk ribbon was to be tied around the container. This ribbon was to bear the ecclesiastical seal of the bishop, and the stainless steel container had to be placed in a wooden container. After conversing with the chief medical examiner, it was determined that we should prepare a container the size of Blessed Vasyl, since we would find at least an intact skeleton.

The day of the exhumation arrived (September 16, 2002). After gathering at All-Saints cemetery and confirming from eye-witnesses that Blessed Vasyl was indeed buried there, the casket was exhumed. It was then transferred to St. Boniface Catholic Hospital, where a team of medical experts were to examine his holy body and record whatever they found. Since the Redemptorist Postulator from Rome (Fr. Antonio Marrazzo, C.Ss.R.) could not be present, he assigned me to be the postulator for this event. My duty was to see that all was fulfilled according to the protocol and to collect relics for distribution to the churches and the faithful. After singing the Acatist Hymn in honor of Blessed Vasyl, we opened the casket only to find that his holy body was fully intact with all its muscle mass. We were all filled with awe and incredible peace and joy. We venerated his holy relics, bowing before them and kissing them. Within hours the casket started to disintegrate, his vestments fell apart, but his holy body remained as it was, in full body mass. In doing a full examination of the holy body, we discovered that the extremities of his toes had fallen off. He had frozen them severely while in prison and they were black during his lifetime. I was pleased because now I had 1st Class relic toe bones (ex ossibus) for the churches and the faithful. We also discovered particles of his skin on his pant legs. These too became 1st class relics (ex linteis).

After a thorough examination and recording of the data, Blessed Vasyl’s holy body was re-vested in new episcopal vestments and placed in the stainless steel sarcophagus which was welded shut and tied with a silk maroon ribbon. Hot wax was poured on three intersections of the...
ribbon and the Metropolitan’s ecclesiastical seal embedded in the red wax.

The holy relics were brought to the convent of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, where the faithful, especially those from Holy Family Nursing Home, could venerate them. On Friday (September 20), they were solemnly brought to the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of Ss. Volodymyr and Olha. That evening a memorial concert was held in Blessed Vasyl’s honour, featuring choirs from Lviv, Edmonton and Winnipeg. Various parishes and groups from Winnipeg took turns in keeping vigil from Friday evening until Sunday morning. On Sunday (September 22), the relics were processed from the Cathedral to St. Joseph’s Church. More than 2,000 people took part in the procession of 3.5 kilometers. Ukrainian Catholic Bishops and Redemptorists from across North America and the world participated in the celebrations. During the Divine Liturgy at St. Joseph’s the holy relics of Blessed Vasyl were enshrined in the shrine/chapel purpose. The day was a glorious day, filled with emotions of joy and exhilaration.

Since the enshrinement, many thousands of pilgrims have come to pray at the shrine. Many graces, blessings and healings have been recorded. It has truly become a place of solace for many. It has become a place of encounter with God’s mercy and consolation. Many have traveled from far (Ukraine, Poland, Europe, South America, Australia, all of North America including Nunavut) to bring their petitions before Blessed Vasyl. Many have written to us sharing the blessings they received. How many unreported blessings have been experienced!

The Shrine has been blessed with many volunteers who dedicate time every month to welcome and guide pilgrims. Many of these volunteers have been with us since the beginning. Our staff has grown over the years. Much information and artifacts with regards to Blessed Vasyl have been collected from our yearly trips to Ukraine. We have been able to obtain KGB documents about his arrests and imprisonments (2000 pages). In Ukraine, the apartment where Blessed Vasyl lived has been converted into a museum in his honour. Slowly, Blessed Vasyl is becoming known across the world and his intercession is being sought.

Our 10th anniversary celebrations will take place from September 20th to the 23rd. Note the schedule on page 4. We invite all to come and join us to mark this milestone. Make it a time of pilgrimage. We pray that Blessed Vasyl continue to intercede for all of your needs. He is our great Champion!

submitted by Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R.
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. 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 March 1st 2012 until May 15th 2012.

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Archbishop Michael Bzdel, C.Ss.R.
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Grace Prokop
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Walter and Nellie Wowczuk
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In Honor Of...
Oksana and Bohdan Bobetskyj
Mariya Shymonovych
Children, grandchildren, & great grandchildren
Alexander and Olga Boychuk
Frances Chikowski
Michael Chikowski and Frances Chikowski

Linda Dudar
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Alain Durand
Cecile Durand
Fr. Isidore Dziadyk
Casper and Violet Stoski
Children & grandchildren
Mary Kokolski
Mechelle Monroe
Yvonne Mason
Urrutia Family
Marian Urrutia
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 to:
Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr’s Shrine
250 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2V 0M6
Canada
or E-mail: info@bvmartyrshrine.com

COME & CELEBRATE
the Feast Day of the Ukrainian Catholic Martyrs at Bishop Velychkovsky Martyr’s Shrine

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 27, 2012

DAY PROGRAM
9:00 Divine Liturgy
10:00 Rosary
10:30 Moleben to Blessed Vasyl with anointing
Lunch available
1:15 Video Presentation
2:00 Acafist Hymn in honor of Blessed Bishop and Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.SS.R.

EVENING PROGRAM
7:00 Divine Liturgy
Pilgrimage Procession
Veneration of Relics
Anointing for Healing

LOCATION:
ST JOSEPH’S UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
BISHOP VELYCHKOVSKY MARTYR’S SHRINE
250 Jefferson Avenue, Winnipeg, MB
for more information call: 338-7321

10th ANNIVERSARY

To mark the 10th Anniversary of the Enshrinement of Blessed Vasyl’s holy Relics the following program is planned:

Sept. 20 - Thursday 7:00pm
Moleben in honour of Blessed Vasyl with MISSION Sermon

Sept. 21 - Friday 7:00 pm
Acafas in honour of Blessed Vasyl with MISSION Sermon

Sept. 22 - Saturday 10:00 am
Divine Liturgy with MISSION Sermon and Anointing for Healing
4:15 pm Vespers
5:00 pm Divine Liturgy followed by anointing
Reception & program in Church auditorium

Sept. 23 - Sunday 10:00 am
Divine Liturgy with anointing.
Reception & program in Church auditorium

Mission conducted by Fr. John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R.
Weekend Sermons by Fr. Larry Kondra, C.Ss.R.

COME AND JOIN US

EWTN

Watch for the airing of “Steadfast and Faithful: a Martyr’s Journey” on the life of Blessed Vasyl which is usually aired on June 30.

SHRINE SCHEDULE

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

Shrine is open to the faithful during the times of Liturgical Services. The Museum is open 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
Website: www.bvmartyrshrine.com

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.