



FULLY ALIVE

Bishop Velychkovsky National Martyr's Shrine

A PRISONER'S RECOLLECTION

Honoured In The Barracks

In the fall of 2017, a presentation on Blessed Vasyl was given in the city of Kolomeya, Ukraine. An elderly gentleman Myroslav Romash, approached Oleh Cheharivsky, the presenter, and shared with him that he was a fellow-prisoner with Blessed Vasyl in Vorkuta. This news greatly excited Oleh. He asked Mr. Romash to write his memoirs on Blessed Vasyl. The following is a portion of what he wrote.

"In early spring of 1950, a small group of prisoners arrived at our penal camp near the mines # 9 & 10 from the camp called "Abez" which was near Vorkuta. In "Abez" were found those who were extremely fatigued, sick or invalids who needed medical attention. Among these prisoners from "Abez" was the superior (ihumen) of the Redemptorist monastery in Ternopil, Father Vasyl Velychkovsky.



"As was the customary, the prisoners from our camp wished to encounter these new prisoners. Perhaps they would meet someone they knew or someone from their region in Ukraine. They were especially interested in those who came from this famous prison "Abez". In this group of ordinary men were some "educated" people and priests. I saw a person whom I knew well – a fellow countryman, a doctor of philosophy Vasyl Petryshyn.

"Under the strict watchful eyes of the guards, these new prisoners were brought into our camp. Without stopping they went into a barrack where they were searched, registered and profiled. Our group escorted these prisoners with our eyes, but we saw no one we knew. Many of us did not disperse but remained waiting and talking.



Blessed Vasyl during his first arrest and imprisonment

"Then, these priests came to us and among them our philosopher, a walking encyclopedia, Vasyl Petryshyn. He told us that among those who just arrived was

the ihumen of the Redemptorist monastery in Ternopil, Fr. Vasyl Velychkovsky. He turned to us with a request that it was essential that we somehow assign Fr. Veychkovsky

to a job that would be suitable for a man like him, who was in such a poor state of health.

"The prisoners began to discuss among themselves what work would be good for this honoured ihumen. They finally agreed that the best job for him would be to work in the ventilator detail in the coal mines. This was even more possible, because many of our cellmates were already working in this detail, and among them was their supervisor, Volodymyr Kodzushko from Rava Ruskaya. Volodymyr had a good relationship with the head boss of the ventilator detail. They made the necessary preparations and contacts and waited for the registration to be completed.

"I remember, when to our barrack of mechanics (where also lived the workers of the ventilator detail)

came the philosopher Vasyl Petryshyn and with him came Fr. Vasyl Velychkovsky. Our attention was turned to our guests in our barrack. Next to Philosopher Vasyl Petryshyn, whom we already knew, stood a average man, whom we did not know but



whose stature and serious face inspired our respect. Our group came forward to meet our new guest. Vasyl Petryshyn introduced to us the ihumen of the Redemptorist monastery in Ternopil, Fr. Vasyl Velychkovsky – our new resident who was part of the ventilator detail in the mines.

"The conversation began. It was proposed that he should take the free bunk on the first level in the corner of the barrack next to mine. Father liked this bunk because it offered some silence and quiet. For the time being we were neighbors.

"Fr. Vasyl Velychkovsky was glad with our encounter and desired to engage in conversation. At first our conversation was on various topics. In order to avoid gathering in the middle of the barrack, the head of the ventilator detail, Volodymyr Kodzushko and Boris Mirus invited the guests to sit on their bunks which were across from each other. As result, the conversation became livelier. These kind of gatherings were forbidden by the administration, but we did-

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n't pay attention to this. Time quickly passed. Then Petryshyn, who lived in the builder's barrack "Horstrola", wishing not to get caught and end up in solitary confinement, rose to go to his barrack, bid adieu to Father and promised us that he would return again.

"The time approached for the review from the prison guard. They came around daily before the barracks were locked down for the night. Everyone scattered. After the review, Father and I went to our dark corner. On the bunk there was a mattress, a pillow stuffed with wood shavings, two sheets and a cover

stuffed with padding. I knelt down, said a short prayer and went to bed. Father prayed for a long time on his rosary. In the morning, I saw that his rosary was made from bread. The bread they gave us was so moist (damp) that one could even form crosses from it.



A rosary made from bread similar to the one Blessed Vasyl used

Father Vasyl, spent a few days of orientation and instruction about their work and the safety regulations. After this, the head of the ventilator detail, Kodzushko led Father to his place of work - "the door man" - where he had to open and close the door (ventilator) as the coal cars passed by.

"The work of the doorman was mostly on one's feet. When the doors were shut tight, Father had some possibility to do something else. From time to time someone would come and stop by him to have a short talk. It became known that a priest was the doorman. Some of the miners turned to Father with a request, that he write for them the daily prayers and the Ten Commandments. Father gladly obliged and gave them also short guidelines.

In one of our conversations, Father asked me if I knew a welder with access to the instruments, (he knew that I was working as a mechanic) who could make him a die (a stamp). Father thought that in order to make use of his spare time as a doorman, that he could form metal crosses. Soon a die was formed by an experienced Lithuanian welder. The material for making the crosses was taken from the inside of batteries. The inside of the battery was made from a special alloy that did not rust and was pliable.

"Soon Fr. Vasyl Velychkovsky opened a "factory" in the mine shaft for producing crosses. It must be said that Father took great care and precision in making these crosses, cleaning and polishing them. They were a beautiful silver color. To all those who wished to receive them, Father would give them a cross after he had blessed them. I had the privilege



Used as a chalice by Blessed Vasyl in Vorkuta

of receiving a cross from Father. For many years, I wore it and guarded it. Unfortunately, through various circumstances of life, I lost it. It gives me great sorrow.

"I recall again from those first days, the impression Fr. Velychkovsky made on us. We experienced that he was no ordinary man. They began to approach him to seek counsel and direction. Father was glad to do this. He gave them guidelines and instructions often connecting them with the history of Ukraine and the church.

"He also conducted short Divine Services, confessed and gave Holy Communion to us. This occurred often in our free time from work. One must say that although not many were present, but for those who wanted to be there, it was very fulfilling. The strict regime always had a watchful eye upon us. We and the priests would come to him individually, so that it would be less obvious. In this way, we met with Father personally.

"Fr. Velychkovsky celebrated the Liturgy in our barracks. The Liturgy itself was simple, without a cantor. The liturgical vessels were also simple, a small humble cross, a prayer book, a jar cover, and a spoon made from pieces of aluminum. Father kept his liturgical "inventory" safe. There was no need to announce when the liturgy would be. It spread quickly by word of mouth and the news spread to other barracks. Normally about twenty men participated in the Liturgy. Father was unable to plan the time of the Liturgies because of the work schedule. Sometimes he celebrated two Liturgies - one in the morning and the other in the evening.

"In the camp, despite the strict regime, there formed a tradition. On feast days such as Christmas and Easter there was a general celebration for all those in the barrack. It was prepared well in advance. On the day of the feast, a table was placed in the middle of the barrack. It was covered and we placed our belongings (food) upon it. Fr. Velychkovsky approached the table to celebrate the Liturgy. It happened that at times on the great feast days of Christmas and Easter, he would invite another priest to join him. On those occasions, even though the Liturgy was short, it became even more solemn. We even sang softly. After the Liturgy and the sermon, Father would bless our food and we would all approach the table. It happened that sometimes a guard showed up. Usually they tolerated this celebration. Father would preach a festive and informative sermon. Unfortunately I cannot remember its details. If guards came to us during the Divine Liturgy, they would scold us under the pretense of keeping order and discipline, but that was all. During the Liturgy, Father was dignified. He was not nervous. In fact, he was joyful and confident in his actions."



A jam cover similar to the one used by Blessed Vasyl while in the barrack in Vorkuta



Fellow prisoner Myroslav Romash

Graces and Blessings

On February 12, 2016, I wrote a prayer request for my mom in the book, anointed her with Blessed Vasyl's oil and lit a vigil candle. She was very ill, not expected to live. She was paralyzed on one side from a previous stroke 35 years earlier, had bacterial pneumonia and congestive heart failure. She made a full recovery from pneumonia and left the hospital nine days later to return to her personal care home.

On August 25, 2016, I put a prayer request in the book for Helen, mother of one of my co-workers. Helen had been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and was expected to live just a few weeks. She continued to live. A follow-up test occurred in November. When she met the doctor to review the brain scan, the doctor said the tumor was gone. He didn't know why. She still has some health issues which are being followed up, but the brain tumor that I had prayed healing for was gone.

Cathy Furkalo

Please inform us of any blessings or grace you received, no matter how small they are.

MINISTRY IN UKRAINE



Venerating relics of Blessed Vasyl in Buchach



Blessed Vasyl Service in Zamulytsi, Kolomeya region



Tania & Oleh during a radio interview with Radio Emmanuel



Presentation to the medical staff in a hospital in Chortkiv



At the Barvynskiy College of Arts and Education, Chortkiv



A Mother's Prayer Group at the Blessed Vasyl museum from the village of Borshchovytsi



Prayers with seniors at Caritas in Chortkiv



Presentation at the Academy for Cantors in Chortkiv



Andriy, an orphan supported by Winnipeg individuals, visits the museum to give thanks.



Presentation in Ivano Frankivsk at the Church of the Nativity of Mary, built on the place where Blessed Vasyl was once superior

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 National Martyr's Shrine. May Blessed Vasyl bless each one of you.

Contributions listed below are from December 1, 2017 until February 28, 2018.

500+

In memory of Steve Sianchuk
Sianchuk family
In memory of Hlykeria, Wolodymyr, Olha, Stepha & Dionis Welyczkowsky
George & Christine Welleck
In memory of Sylvia Woroniak
Norman & Sandra Dobson

100+

Harold Baehnk
Canon Luhovy Assembly #374, Wpg
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Adela Zatwarnitski

In Honor Of...**in thanksgiving to Bl. Vasyl**

Mr. Chris & Mary Winchar

Boychuk Family & Friends

Olga Boychuk

Bill & Elizabeth, Dan & May Shumay

Paul Shumay

Frances Stelman

Olga Boychuk

John & Mary Hykawy

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Phyllis Shindak

Stan & Luba Sirdar

Iris Smellie

Vladimir and Marlene Solman

Kathleen Warrenchuk

Evelyn Zaboroski

Peace in Ukraine

Anonymous

For the Health Of...**Nataliya, Ivan, Danylo, Stefan**

Ivan Roman & Nataliya Markevych

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Janice Tycholis-Lloyd

children & grandchildren

Les & Natalie Storozuk

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

Thanks be to Blessed Vasyl, for his great love and attentiveness to our prayers. I should like to add...the most recent issue of; Fully Alive, was absolutely BEAUTIFUL!!! Sooooo 'FULL OF HOPE' for our youth! It made me very happy to see these blessed youth enjoying a favor they will never forget. Blessed Vasyl has marked them for life, by his intercession and great gifts of blessing and grace. The lovely letters the children wrote, show how edified they were by the bounty of this day of pilgrimage. WHAT richness of Faith! God's blessing upon ALL the ones involved with the details of making this blessed event happen! Heaven is allowed something to smile upon! Denise

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Please check out our online **Gift Shop** for the latest items at www.bvmartyrshrine.com.

Shrine Ministry in Winnipeg

Pilgrims from Scarborough and Brampton, ON (org. from Kerela, India)



Canon Luhovy Assembly #374 , Wpg and their families make a pilgrimage to the Shrine



Pilgrims from El Salvador



Gonzales family from Mexico



Confirmation Preparation Class and their families from St. Theresa's RC, Wpg

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

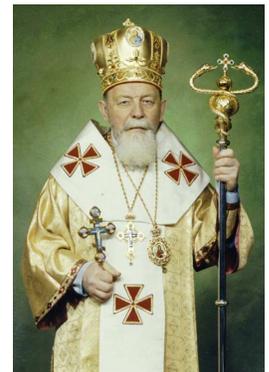
The Shrine is open to the faithful during the times of Liturgical Services. The Museum is opened on weekends after each Divine Liturgy.

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 National Martyr's Shrine
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