

**BLESSED BISHOP AND MARTYR  
VASYL VEYCHKOVSKY, C.Ss.R.**



**LESSON PLAN  
Ages 6-8**

\*All information and resources provided by The Bishop Velychkovsky  
Martyr's Shrine (<http://www.bvmartyrshrine.com/>)

# Faithful to the End – A Martyr’s Story

To be integrated with the lesson on Saints and Martyrs.

**Aim:** To research and study the life and work of a modern day martyr in Canada, Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky.

To present to students that the martyrs, who suffered and died for Christ, help to strengthen our belief and faith and that we too are able to serve our Christian Community for the Glory of God.

**Materials that can used (available from Shrine office:  
[www.bvmartyrshrine.com](http://www.bvmartyrshrine.com))**

**Video, icon, pamphlet, brochures and resource material.**

**Books :** A Life of Blessed Basil Velychkovsky  
- John Sianchuk C.Ss.R.  
Be Not Afraid – A Martyr’s Story - An Autobiography Of  
Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R.  
Blessed Bishop Nicholas Charnetsky, C.Ss.R. and  
Companions – Modern Martyrs of the  
Ukrainian Catholic Church -  
Edited by John Sianchuk, C.Ss.R.

**Devotional Prayers:**

- Moleben in honour of Blessed Bishop and Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R.
- Acathist Hymn to Blessed Martyr Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R.

**Videos Available on You Tube:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZFgj6xxr94>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkyIymwJNMQ>

## **Resources Provided:**

- Videos (see youtube addresses above)
- Story of Blessed Vasyl's life
- His Chronology
- Map of Ukraine
- Map of Ukraine and Russia
- Stages of Sainthood
- Classification of Relics
- Crossword Puzzle
- Coloring Picture
- Icon (Icon written by Marianna Savaryn)
- Intercessory Prayers to Blessed Vasyl
- Brochure "A Hero of Faith"
- Brochure "Canada's Second Martyr's Shrine"

## **Introduction:**

A martyr is a clear witness of what it means to follow Christ. A martyr is one who gives up his life for Christ, his Church and his Faith. A martyr is a witness to us to help us stand firm in our belief and faithfulness to Christ. Like Jesus a martyr joins Christ on the cross.

## **Activity:**

A **video** on the Life of Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky is shown to the students. Read the story of the life of Blessed Vasyl if the video is not available.

**Discuss** Blessed Vasyl's early life, his missionary work and the difficulties he encountered in practicing his faith in his country of Ukraine.

Point out the birthplace of Blessed Vasyl and his places of imprisonment using the **map** of Ukraine and his Chronology.

Ages 6-8 color the icon of Blessed Vasyl.

Gather the class in front of the icon of Blessed Vasyl and together read aloud the **prayer** dedicated to Blessed Vasyl.

## **For the Catechist**

We live in a world in which we are bombarded daily through the media and by most of what we see around us with a message of what will fulfill us. They shout to us through sights and sounds, offering us various things and experiences that will make us happy. They entice us to buy the latest computer equipment, the latest electronics, fashionable clothing, a particular brand of food, larger homes and the fastest cars. All these things are to bring us happiness, fulfillment and sense of worth. We are encouraged to first look at ourselves, our needs, our comfort and our wants. The ideal in our culture is to live life in a selfish way and not to be affected by the pain of others. The word “to sacrifice” is foreign to our vocabulary. Nothing is allowed to get in the way to prevent us from fulfilling our plans and goals.

Into this selfish and self-absorbed world God has given us the testimony of Bishop Martyr Vasyl and other Christian Martyrs. They witness to today’s world of a very different set of values. Their lives point to some deeper value and ideal in life – that there are certain things in life that are worth dying for. Our recent Christian martyrs understood deep in their hearts that the key to true fulfillment, to true life, is our union in Jesus Christ. For this faith, they were willing to suffer much torture and even lay down their lives in order to remain faithful to Christ. What was important to them was very different from the ideals presented by our world.

The martyrs point out to us a different way of approaching life. They encourage us to embrace the cross. They proclaim by their commitment that Jesus is the only way to the fullness of life.

### **Activity:**

**Discuss orally** –What are we asked to do? How are we called upon to be witnesses to Christ today? Illustrate this with a drawing. For older grades a paragraph can be written.

Do a **report** on the life of Blessed Vasyl:

When and where was he born?

What touched you about his life?

What important facts in Blessed Vasyl’s life can be a symbol in your life?

Why did he come to Canada?

How did he die?

**Visual activities** that may be added to the report of Blessed Vasyl:

- a banner with his name on it
- a drawing or icon of Blessed Vasyl
- a drawing symbolizing something of his life or work

## **To the Catechist:**

Additional information which may be discussed with your class:

- Stages of Sainthood (see resources)
- Classification of Relics (see resources)

## **Summary:**

- Blessed Vasyl was called to bear witness to Christ – he suffered and died for his church, his faith and for his love of Jesus.
- Blessed Martyr Vasyl embraced the Cross of Jesus and now he is fully alive in Christ.
- A Martyr witnesses to us to help us stand firm in our beliefs and in our faithfulness to Christ.

Gather together in front of an icon of Blessed Vasyl and a candle. Conclude with this intercessory prayer below or the longer prayer found in the resource material.

Encourage the students to pray for their particular needs.

## **Intercessory Prayer to Blessed 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 Vasyl Velychkovsky to be a faithful witness to you unto the point of death. Through his intercession I ask for the following favor \_\_\_\_\_, for your Name is glorified forever. Amen.

**BLESSED VASYL VELYCHKOVSKY, C.Ss.R.  
BISHOP and MARTYR**

Blessed Vasyl was born into a priestly family in Stanislaviv, (now Ivano-Frankivsk,) on June 1, 1903. Vasyl was raised and educated, mainly by home schooling. The First World War interrupted his studies. In 1911, during a mission, young Vasyl was dedicated to the Mother of God and she became his protectress. After becoming a Redemptorist, he promoted devotion to our Mother of Perpetual Help with every mission he conducted.

Blessed Vasyl entered the Major Seminary. After being ordained a deacon, Blessed Vasyl entered the Redemptorist novitiate in 1924. On October 9, 1925, he was ordained to the priesthood. His heart was in preaching missions and recognizing this gift, he was soon assigned to preach missions, first in Stanislaviv and in 1928 to Volyn. In all, he preached to over a million and a half faithful.

In 1940, on the feast of our Mother of Perpetual Help, while the city was occupied by the Soviets, Blessed Vasyl daringly led a procession of 20,000 people through the streets of Stanislaviv with the Icon of our Lady. After the procession he was arrested, but soon released. In 1944, Blessed Vasyl volunteered to go to Ternopil even though the Soviet front had already arrived. Amidst the shelling of the city, he did his pastoral work courageously and boldly.

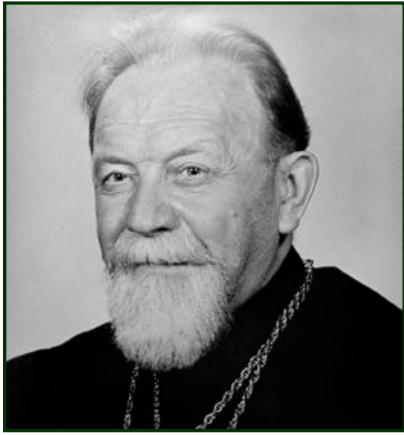
On August 7, 1945, the Soviets arrested him. He was given a chance to leave the Catholic Church. He quickly responded with "No, Never." After one year of interrogations and tortures in the KGB prison, he was finally sentenced to die by firing squad. He was on death row for three months. There he catechized his fellow prisoners. When his name was called, he left the cell ready to die for Christ, but at that moment his death sentence was commuted to ten years in Soviet labour camps.

He spent most of his years working in the coal mines of the Vorkuta region above the Arctic Circle. Upon completion of the sentence, he was sent to Lviv in 1955. Here he began to work in the underground church. His apartment became the centre of church activity. In 1959, Rome appointed Fr. Vasyl to be bishop of this underground church. Unfortunately there was no one to ordain him. In 1963, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj was released from prison to attend Vatican II. He summoned Fr. Vasyl to come to his Moscow hotel room where he secretly ordained him to the episcopacy. Metropolitan Josyf left for Rome, while Bishop Vasyl returned to Lviv to fulfill his episcopal work.

In January of 1969, Bishop Vasyl was arrested. He was sent to Komunarsk in Eastern Ukraine where he suffered chemical, physical and mental torture. Near death in 1972, he was released from prison and was exiled from Ukraine.

Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada, invited him to come to Winnipeg. He arrived June 15, 1972. After being in Canada for a year and overcome by the tortures and death-causing drugs which he received while in prison, he died a martyr's death on June 30, 1973. On June 27, 2001, Pope John Paul II beatified him as a martyr.

June 2014, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, proclaimed Blessed Vasyl as Patron of Prison Ministry for the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The proclamation took place at the Marian Shrine of Zarvanytsia, Ukraine July 19 and 20, 2014 with 200,000 people in attendance.



**Blessed Vasyl  
Velychkovsky, CSsR  
Bishop and Martyr**

**BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF HIS LIFE**

- 1903 June 1, born in Stanislaviv, Ukraine
- 1925 Aug. 29, became a Redemptorist
- 1925 Oct. 9, ordained a priest in Zboisk
- 1940 First arrest after Mother of Perpetual Help procession
- 1945 Aug. 7, arrested in Ternopil
- 1946 Sentenced to die by firing squad
- 1946 Sentence commuted to 10 yrs in prison camps in Vorkuta
- 1955 Released from Soviet prison
- 1963 Feb. 4, consecrated Bishop secretly in Moscow Hotel
- 1969 Jan. 27, arrested and imprisoned in Komunarsk
- 1972 Exiled from Ukraine. June 15 arrived in Canada
- 1973 June 30, dies in Winnipeg
- 2001 June 27, beatified by Pope John Paul II

*Blessed Vasyl, pray for us.*



VOLYN

KOVEL

KIEV

LVIV

TERNOPIL

HALYCHYNA

GREATER  
UKRAINE

IVANO FRANKIVSK  
(STANISLAVIV)

KAMIANETS-  
PODILSKYI

KOMUNARSK



# Commonwealth of Independent States - European States



## STAGES OF SAINTHOOD

Although all of us hope to be saints, that is, in eternal glory in heaven for all eternity, a few people are so recognized by the Church as having achieved this state. This recognition by the Church allows the faithful to have public cult, that is, public prayers to the holy person and to ask for his/her intercession. This official recognition of the holiness of a person goes through three major stages.

### 1) VENERABLE

After a person has died, if there is some popular opinion about the sanctity of an individual, and some group or individual have the will to do the work, they apply to the Congregation for Saints in Rome. If their application is accepted, then the Cause is opened and the process begins. First all material that was written by that person (letters, articles, books) are collected and examined so that there is nothing against the faith in them. Witnesses who knew the person are interviewed to determine if this person lived a holy life. If the material passes a strict examination, then the person can be declared a Venerable by the Pope. Now people can begin praying to this Venerable. Prayers are composed to this person. The cult of his/her veneration is then spread.

### 2) BEATIFIED (BLESSED)

After a person is declared a Venerable, one *bona fide* miracle must take place, that is, a miracle proclaimed as such by the Church. There are several requirements for a miracle to be *bona fide*:

- a) The illness must be incurable and medically verified.
- b) The healing must be complete, permanent, and soon after the prayer.
- c) The healing must be a result of prayer to the Venerable.
- d) The healing has to be verified by doctors.
- e) The miracle has to pass the scrutiny of the Tribunal in Rome

Once the miracle is obtained, then the Venerable can be proclaimed a Blessed by the Pope. Now church services can be written in this person's honor. The Blessed's feast day is proclaimed and it is celebrated by the Local Church ( eg. Ukrainian Catholic Church).

### 3) CANONIZATION (Sainthood)

After a person is declared a Blessed, a second *bona fide* miracle must take place for the Pope to declare this person a Saint. Once a person is declared a Saint then their feast day is celebrated by the Universal Church (throughout the whole world).

A **Martyr** is declared a Blessed automatically, but does need one *bona fide* miracle to be declared a Saint.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF RELICS**

**1<sup>st</sup> Class Relics** - a first class relic is the body of the Saint or Blessed, or any portion of the body. In our case, Blessed Vasyl's body was totally intact except for the extremities of his toes. We do have 1<sup>st</sup> class relics from his toe bones, finger and toe nails, and some hair. We have portions of the clothing that he wore in the coffin. This cloth also becomes a 1<sup>st</sup> class relic because in some way they have been saturated with his presence for thirty years. 1<sup>st</sup> class relics are placed into reliquaries and are distributed throughout various churches which request them according to the wish of the Postulator in Rome.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Class Relics** - are objects, clothing and vestments that the Blessed used during his life time. 2<sup>nd</sup> Class relics are usually not divided and distributed but are displayed in museums.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Class Relics** - are objects such as cloth, rosaries and icons that have been touched to the 1<sup>st</sup> class relics of the Blessed. These are distributed among the faithful for their veneration and devotion. They are used in prayer for healing at times of illness and distress. They are to be kept in a place of honour, eg. a prayer corner, in a prayer book, near icons, or other places of prayer.



**BLESSED BISHOP AND MARTYR  
VASYL VELYCHKOVSKY, C.Ss.R.**

БЛЖ  
СВЩ  
МЧ

ВАСИ  
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## INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

**O great and holy martyr**, our blessed father Vasyl, you were on fire with God's Word and have followed His Will even unto death. You have been sanctified and purified by the Cross and now you stand in God's Presence wearing the martyr's crown interceding on our behalf. You, who have confidence before the Lord, pray for us who come to you with love and devotion. For we come to you with all our needs knowing that Lord hears His faithful ones. Intercede for us before the Almighty God, that each one receives according to their needs; bring comfort to the sorrowful and hope to the lost; heal the sick; give courage to the young; bring a change of heart to all those who fall into sin; enlighten our minds with the truth of the Gospel; inspire us always to follow Christ; help us always to choose the good; give us courage in times of distress, faith in times of despair, hope in times of darkness; and strengthen our commitment to love our Lord. Grant that each one of us be saved through the grace and mercy of God, that together with you we may praise and glorify Him who is wondrous in His saints: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

*In the following prayer when you come to the blank space, mention by name the person for whom you are praying and also mention either their illness in general or in particular.*

**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 favor \_  
\_\_\_\_ for your Name is glorified forever. Amen.

**Our Father**, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

**Hail Mary**, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.