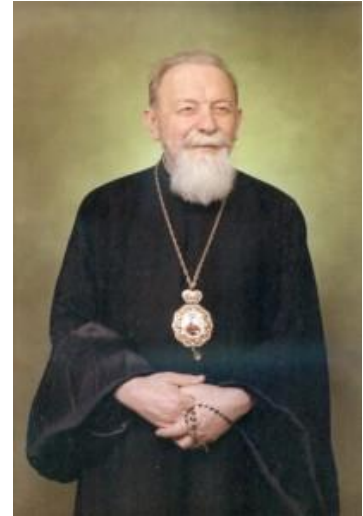# Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky, C.Ss.R. (1903–1973)

Born in 1903 in Stanislaviv, in Eastern Galicia (today's Western Ukraine), his father was a priest and his mother was also devout. When he is 15 years old, Vasyl joins the army to fight for the independence of Ukraine during World War I. In 1920 he enters the seminary in Lviv and is ordained a deacon in 1924. He then joins the Redemptorists and becomes a missionary. In August 1925 he professes his vows and in October is ordained a priest. He teaches and conducts missions and becomes prior of the monastery in Stanislaviv.

After the Soviets occupy Western Ukraine in 1939, he continues his apostolic work and in 1941 goes to Central Ukraine. His activities though cause suspicion among the Germans and, only three days after his arrival, he is ordered to leave. The Soviets occupy Galicia again in 1945 and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church is made illegal. On August 7, 1945, Father Vasyl is arrested for "anti-Soviet propaganda" and transferred to prison in Kyiv. He is sentenced to death and for three months on death row he teaches prisoners to pray, instructs them on the truths of Christian faith and prepares them to receive the Sacraments. Finally he is informed that his death sentence is commuted to a ten year prison term in the coal mines of Northern Russia. There, despite the exhausting work, he celebrates the Divine Liturgy almost every day using whatever was available for the vessels of the altar.

Released in 1955, he returns to Lviv and in 1959 is appointed a bishop. Ordained in 1963 in a Moscow hotel room by the Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj, who had just been released from prison and was on his way to the Second Vatican Council, he is made his vicar in his absence. In 1969 Bishop Velychkovsky is arrested again and sentenced to three years in a psychiatric hospital where he is tortured and drugged. Released in 1972, he is exiled from Ukraine. He spends some time in Yugoslavia, Rome and then, following the invitation of the Archbishop of Winnipeg, comes to Canada. He gives retreats to clergy till his death on June 30, 1973. He was beatified by John-Paul II together with other Ukrainian martyrs.