

# Remembrance Celebration Gratitude

1912-2012  
100 Years  
since the Arrival of  
Canada's First Ukrainian  
Catholic Bishop  
Blessed Nykyta Budka  
Bishop & Martyr



## Waiting for the Bishop...

The wind blows across the prairie landscape. People gather in huddles along the worn path, and around 'quaking aspens'. The young trees line the pathway and are bending to and fro in the wind, their leaves fluttering...trembling. Men remove their hats as to not lose them to the wind. As the women chat with each other, children hide in the shadows of their wind-swept skirts. The opportunity to socialize would have been a rare one. This was an opportunity to catch up on the latest news about the family, the homeland, and so much more.

Some are looking towards the photographer. Something important is happening; important enough that a photograph is being taken. Why are these people standing outside in the wind? What brought them to this open, isolated, and barren landscape? And why was this photo being taken at all?

The time is 1916. The place is Borschiv (southwest of Vegreville), Alberta, Canada. The people gathered in the photo are some of Canada's earliest Ukrainian Canadian settlers, who left their beloved homeland to escape social and political oppression. Their search for a better life brought them to 'free lands' on the Canadian prairies, offered by the Canadian government. They are the early parishioners of St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church, who built their first church in 1905.



*They are awaiting the arrival of a leader...a bishop. Not any bishop; **their** bishop.*

It has been a long time coming. Some have spent twenty or more years sacrificing, struggling, and adjusting. They have been sharing a handful of priests with some 150,000 Ukrainian Catholics across Canada. Now, they are about to welcome Canada's first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop to their parish; the newly appointed and young, Bishop Nykyta Budka. **And, just as the delicate leaves of the aspen surrounding them flutter and tremble in the wind, so too do the hearts of these faithful as they await his arrival with great anticipation!**





# No Bishop to Call Their Own 1891-1912

Ukrainian Catholic immigrants began arriving in Canada in the 1890's. **They came alone with their faith.** Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were not yet accepted by the Latin rite hierarchy, thus very few Ukrainian Catholic clergy were coming to North America. For Ukrainian Catholics, the initial years in Canada were the ultimate testing ground for their faith. Like a young aspen tree bending and giving in the wind, so too was this era one of adjustment, tolerance, and resilience for the early Ukrainian Catholics in Canada.

It was a difficult and confusing time: the Latin hierarchy attempted to accommodate Ukrainian Catholics into their fold; radicals used every opportunity to push them into leaving their beliefs behind in the old country; the affluence of the Russian Orthodox (well funded by the Czar), was irresistible to some; and the Independent Greek Church (backed by Presbyterians) proselytized by way of adopting 'Eastern practices', but were really Protestants in disguise. Understandably, many Ukrainians did abandon their Catholic roots. They had no religious leaders in their midst to guide them.

The foundation which paved the way for the arrival of Bishop Budka was a long and tedious process. The first of several Ukrainian Catholic priests to come to Canada came from the United States. The first documented visit was from Fr. Nestor Dmytriw in 1897, who visited communities in Manitoba and Alberta. Fr. Damaskyn Polivka came to Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1899. He did not stay however, due to persistent challenges in working with the Roman Catholic clergy and existing hierarchy. At that time Archbishop Adélard Langevin believed that the Latin missionaries of French, German, and Polish origins would suffice to serve the Ukrainians.

Fr. Basil Zholdak, secretary to Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky (leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Church) was sent to Canada in 1901 to assess the situation. The widespread confusion, amongst the Ukrainian Catholic faithful who were spread across the Canadian prairies, was apparent. It was disarming to see that many Catholics had turned to Orthodoxy, influenced by their fears of Latinization. The result of Fr. Zholdak's report to Metropolitan Andrej was a resolution to provide Ukrainian Catholics in Canada with Ukrainian clergy who would be responsible to their own church authorities.

At the end of 1902, Fr. Zholdak returned to Canada with three Ukrainian Basilian priests, one lay brother, and four Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate. They began their work in Alberta with a supportive Bishop

Legal. In 1903, Archbishop Langevin, who was beginning to look at the "Ruthenian problem" from a different perspective, requested two more Basilians to be sent to Winnipeg.



Archbishop Louis-Philippe-Adelard Langevin of Saint-Boniface from 1895-1915.  
Source: Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Archives



Ukrainian Immigrants leaving Winnipeg for their homestead in Manitoba, 1898  
Source: (Manitoba Archives) via Red River Ancestry.ca

to the Eastern Church, after they had learned the language and liturgical practices of the Ukrainians. The Archbishop also assisted by means of gifting land and constructing buildings for several of the early parishes and schools.

Bishops, priests and faithful, however, continued to appeal for a Ukrainian bishop to be appointed for Canada. In 1907, Soter Ortynsky was appointed bishop for the Ruthenians (Greek Catholics) in the United States.

The need for a Ukrainian bishop in Canada was on the agenda at the 1909 Council of Quebec. And in 1910 Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky visited Canada to see for himself the state of affairs among the faithful.

After many representations in Rome and much pressing from the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Langevin and the western-Canadian bishops accepted the appointment of a Ukrainian bishop.



***In July, 1912  
a bishop was named for  
Canada with Winnipeg his 'See'  
(seat of a bishop's office).***



St. Nicholas School (est.1905) operated out of the basement of St. Nicholas Church until a two-storey brick building was constructed in 1911 at the expense of Archbishop Langevin.  
Source: Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre Archives (UCECA), Winnipeg.



Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from 1901-1944.  
Source: St. Volodymyr Museum, Winnipeg



Bishop Soter Ortynsky, First Bishop for Ukrainian Catholics in the USA from 1907-1916.  
Source: St. Volodymyr Museum, Winnipeg

# The Story of... Blessed Nykyta Budka Bishop & Martyr 1877-1949

**Nykyta Budka was born on June 7, 1877** in Dobromirka, Zbarazh District, Austrian Galicia (Western Ukraine), to Michael and Mary Budka. He completed high school in 1897, graduating with honors, and spent three years thereafter tutoring the family of Princess Teresa Sapieha. In 1901 Nykyta took his compulsory military training in Vienna and enrolled in the theology program at the University of Innsbruck in 1902.

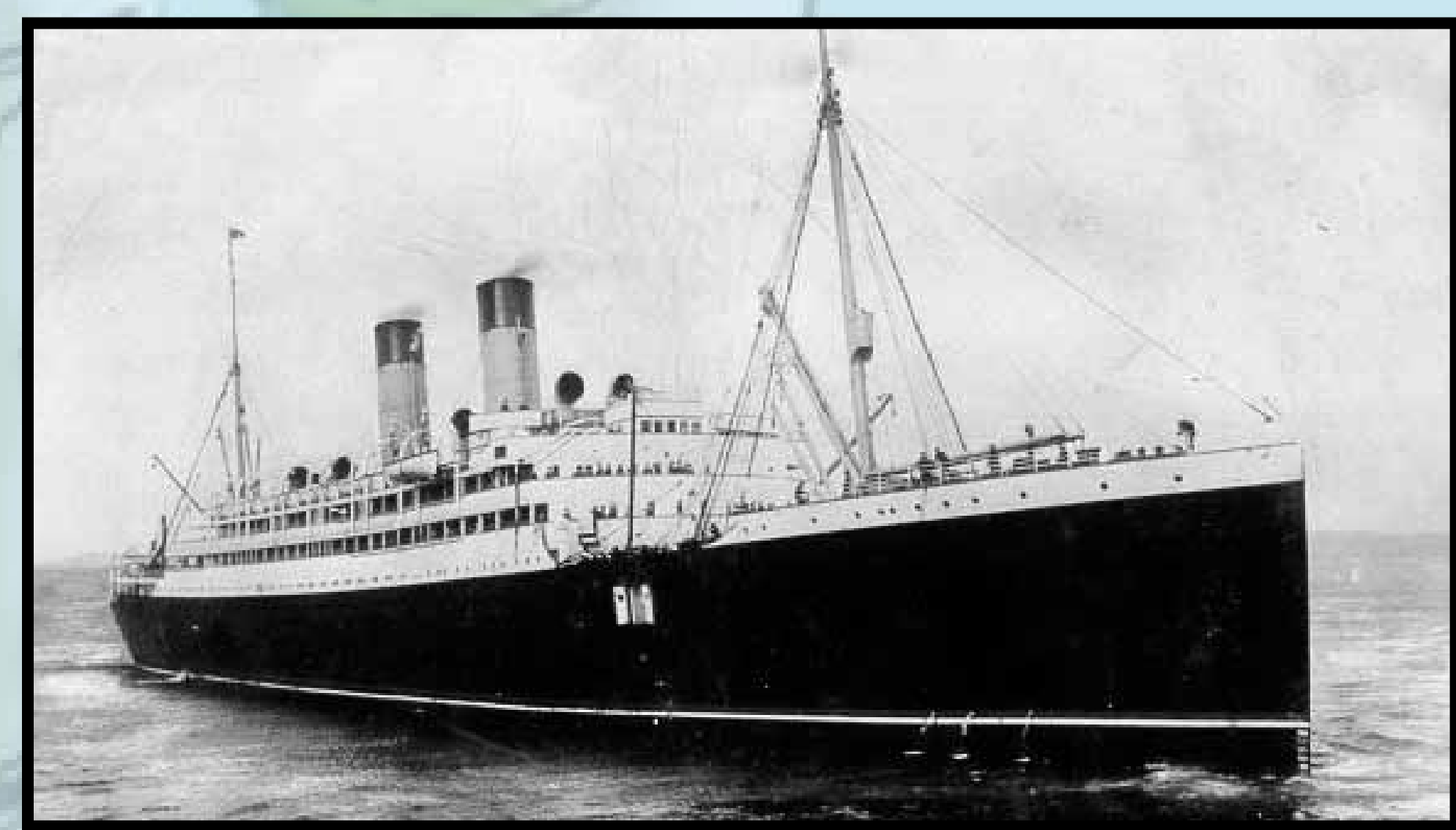
**Nykyta Budka was ordained a priest on October 14, 1905**, the Feast of the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was appointed prefect of the Theological Seminary in Lviv by Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky. At this time he prepared his thesis for Doctor of Divinity degree, of which he received approval after its submission to the University of Innsbruck.

In 1910, Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky visited Canada to observe conditions of the Ukrainian Catholics and laid plans to establish a Ukrainian Catholic Hierarchy. **On July 10, 1912, Father Nykyta Budka was appointed bishop for Ukrainian Catholics in Canada by Pope Pius X. He was ordained by Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky on October 14, 1912 (Feast of the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary), in St. George's Arch-Cathedral in Lviv.**

In Galicia (Western Ukraine), the news of the bishop's appointment was printed in various Catholic publications, such as *Dushpastyr (Pastor of Souls)*: "Our Catholic brethren in far-off Canada, having been forced to leave all that was dear to them in their homeland in order to seek a better life for themselves and for their children, rejoice at the news of this appointment. Yet they have reason for still greater jubilation, for their new bishop is truly a man of God; one who consecrated his life to help the needy and who now desires only that all our Ukrainian people in Canada be faithful children of God and of the Holy Catholic Church."

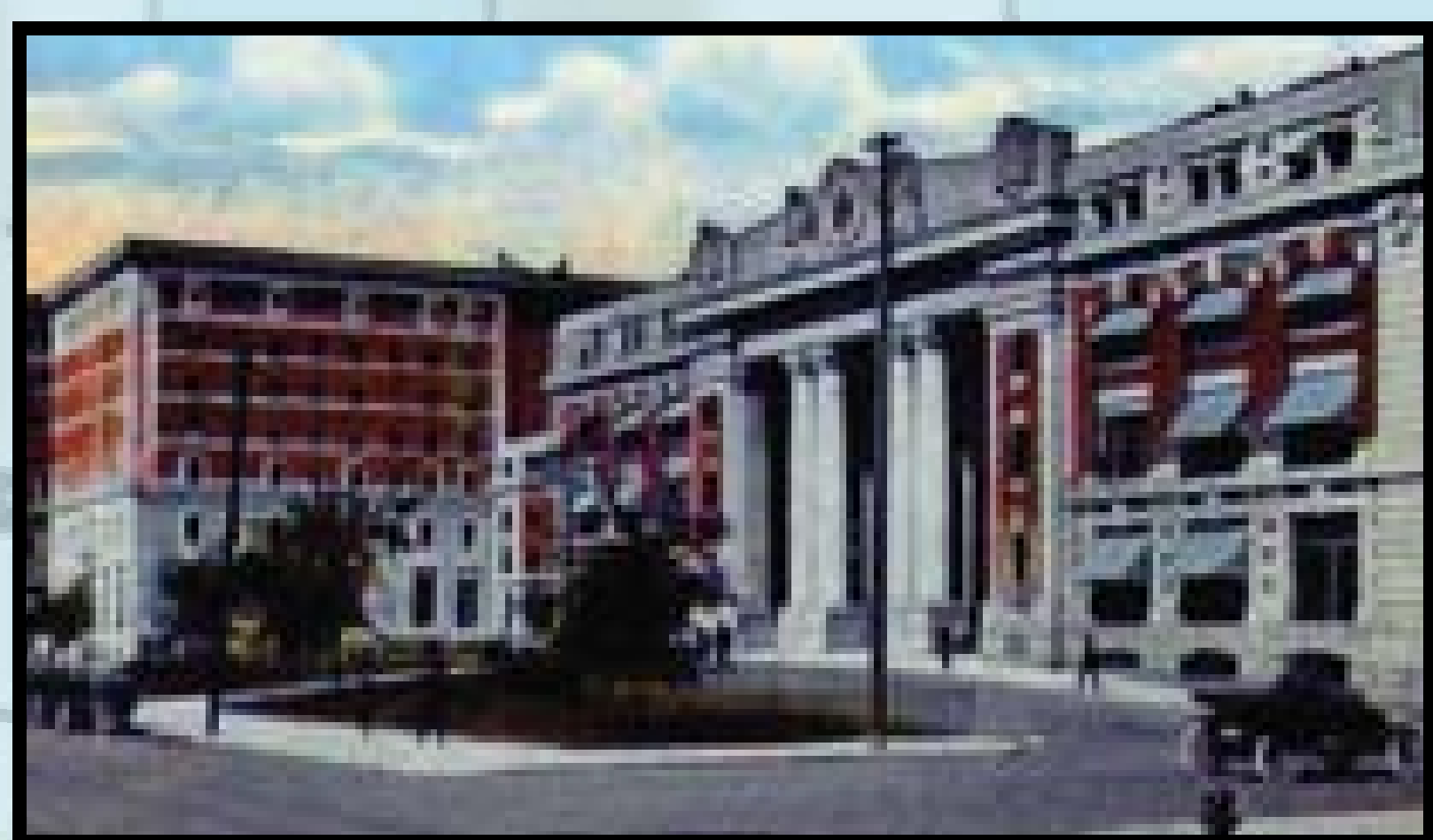
**On November 12, 1912 Bishop Nykyta Budka departed for Canada** with Father Lev Sembratovych (who served as interpreter) and Fr. Ivan Bala. They arrived in Halifax on December 6. By December 8<sup>th</sup>

the bishop celebrated his first Divine Liturgy on Canadian soil in Montreal. When he arrived in Ottawa on December 16, he was received by and dined with the Governor General, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, and with the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden.



The Canadian Pacific Ship, "Empress of Britain", on which Bishop Budka sailed to Canada.  
Source: www.greatships.net

His scheduled arrival in Winnipeg, which was to be the Seat of the Episcopal See, was December 18. It was on this cold winter day that a large crowd of faithful gathered and waited patiently at the train station to welcome the bishop. Poor weather conditions, however, delayed the train and the bishop arrived in Winnipeg the next day, December 19 to a significantly smaller welcoming group.



C.P.R. Station & Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg, 1915  
Source: www.yourrailwaypictures.com



Bishop Nykyta Budka. Source: UCAWA



The village of 'Dobromirka' in Western Ukraine, birthplace of Nykyta Budka.  
Source: UCAWA

**The installation of Bishop Nykyta Budka took place on December 22, 1912 in St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Winnipeg, followed by an evening concert presented by the students of St. Nicholas School.**

The Ukrainian Catholic faithful in Canada joyfully received their first bishop!

Upon his arrival in Canada, Bishop Budka found twelve Ukrainian-born priests (including five Basilians), four Belgian Redemptorists, and five

French Canadian secular priests serving approx. 150,000 Ukrainian Catholics with 80 churches. The new bishop having had previous experience working with immigrants began the extensive visitations and gradually brought order to his vast diocese.

A house was purchased for the Bishop in March, 1913 at 511 Dominion Street in Winnipeg. By April, Bishop Budka issued his first and second pastoral letters; the first entitled, "Guide for Immigrants" and the second, "On the Need to Get Organized". A third pastoral letter was issued in May; "On the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Liberty to our Church". By November a fourth letter was issued entitled, "We are Ruthenian Greek-Catholics".



Parishioners of St. Nicholas Church. Source: UCEC

The **Ukrainian Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Canada was established in 1913** once the Dominion Diocesan Charter was received. At this time fifty churches across Canada were incorporated as Greek-Catholic Churches. By 1922, one-hundred and sixty were incorporated.



Bishop Budka's Coat of Arms featuring the 'Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary' on whose feast day Bishop Budka was ordained to priesthood and episcopacy.  
Source: Painting by Yuri Lesiuk, 2009, UCAW



Signature and Episcopal Stamp of Bishop Nykyta Budka (above)  
Official letterhead used by Bishop Budka (left)  
Source: UCAWA





**Bishop Budka's time in Canada was far from easy. He endured much suffering in his cross-country travels to the widespread parishes. Over the course of the next fourteen years rising stress over financial and various administrative challenges would force Bishop Budka to take several leaves to convalesce.**

The faithful who lived in such remote areas appreciated a visit from their Bishop, and this is reflected in the following account (author unknown) published in the Ukrainian Catholic newspaper, *Progress/Postup*, Sunday, January 13-20,1980 – Year XXI. No.2-3 (961-2), pg 2.

Priest in Ojima, MB travelling by horse and cutter.  
Source: UCAMA



*"Bishop Budka was a true missionary. He would often leave Winnipeg for a mission church to serve the Divine Liturgy like any ordinary traveling missionary priest without fanfare or ceremony. He would be paid ten dollars for his services, just like any other priest at the time. He visited the Ukrainian Catholic Church*

*at Glenhope, Manitoba more than once on Christmas day or on the Feast of Jordan for a church service, which were few and far between in those days.*

*Pioneers of the McCreary and Glenella districts of Manitoba remember how Bishop Budka used to arrive by train at McCreary in the middle of the night to be greeted by the icy winds and cold forty degree below climate. He would be taken by sleigh – sometimes by slow oxen, fifteen or twenty miles to the nearest mission church. Very often large stones were heated and placed under his feet to keep warm – more or less- until he should arrive at his destination, and completely exhausted, he would collapse into bed in some lonely farmhouse."*



Blessing of Ukrainian National Hall, Sept. 23, 1917 in Mundare Alberta.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.



Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate with Bishop Budka, Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Basilian clergy in Winnipeg, 1921.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.



Bishop Budka and Metropolitan Sheptytsky visit Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church in Sandy Lake, MB, 1921.  
Source: St. Volodymyr Museum, Winnipeg



Bishop Budka visits his faithful in Sifton, MB, 1917.  
Source: St. Volodymyr Museum

*"Among other things, Bishop Budka was an accomplished storyteller and would keep people in rapt attention in some farmhouse or parish hall for hours on end with his tales. If the people of the McCreary and Glenella districts are Catholic today, it is in no small measure due to the work of Bishop Budka, of happy memory. May his soul rest in peace!"*



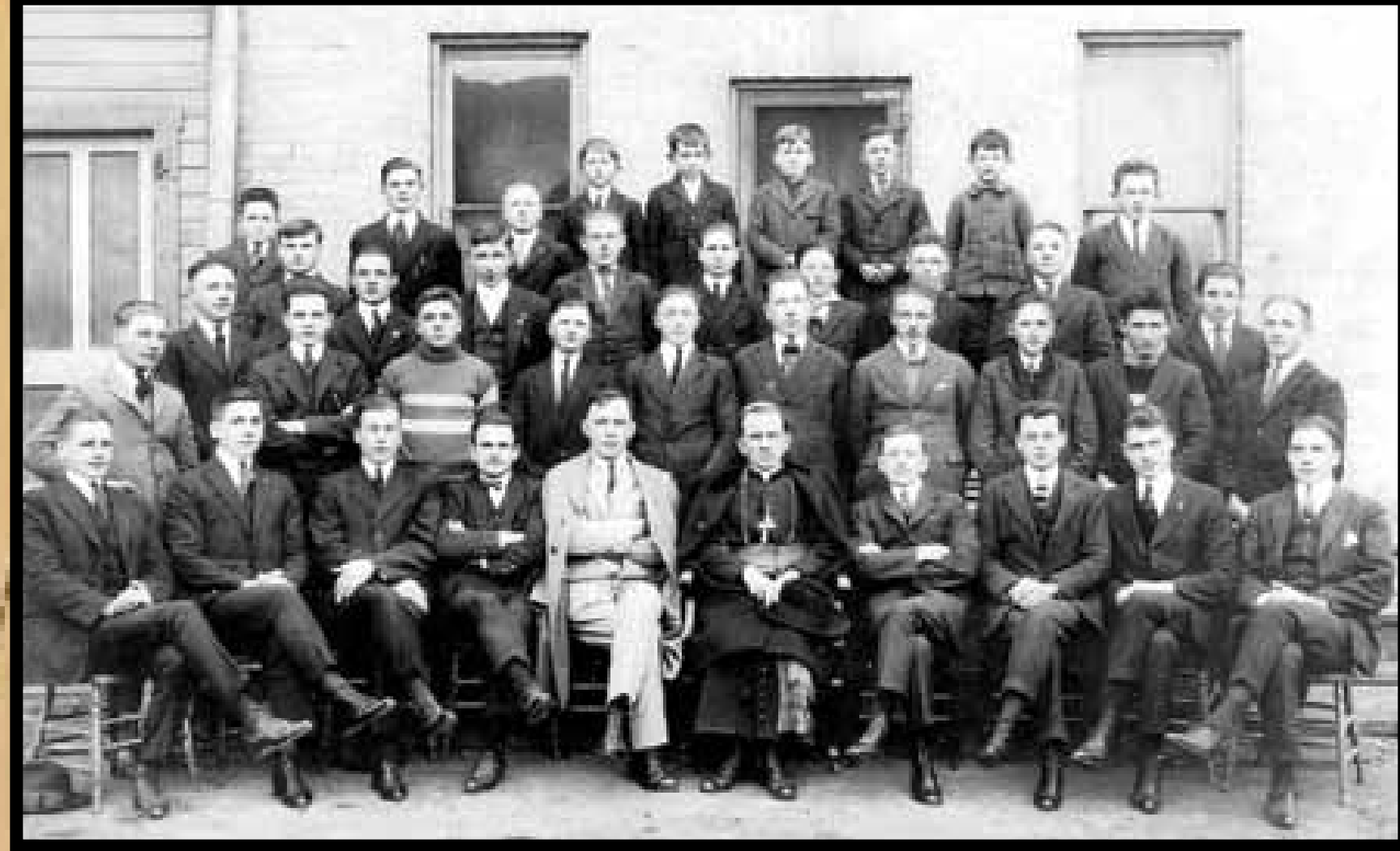
Bishop Budka and clergy in winter, 1923.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.



Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Bishop Budka in Winnipeg, 1921.  
Source: St. Volodymyr Museum, Winnipeg



Bishop Budka and children in Winnipeg, 1922.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.



Bishop Budka with students at the Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky Student Residence in Winnipeg, 1923.  
Source: UCECA

assisted Metropolitan Sheptytsky in Lviv, also serving as parish priest of St. George's Arch-Cathedral for a time.

Shortly after returning to

his homeland, from 1930 Bishop Budka dedicated himself to the caring for Zarvanytsia Shrine (Ternopils'ka Oblast, Western Ukraine). A plaque commemorating Bishop Budka was erected at the Shrine in 2000.

On April 11, 1945 he was arrested and deported along with the other Ukrainian Catholic bishops, including Josyf Slipyj, Vasyl Velychkovsky and

Mykola Charnetsky. All were imprisoned in Russian labour camps. They were charged with anti-Communist activity and 'spying' for the Vatican. **On September 28, 1949, Bishop Budka died in the labour camp.**



Prison photo of Bishop Budka

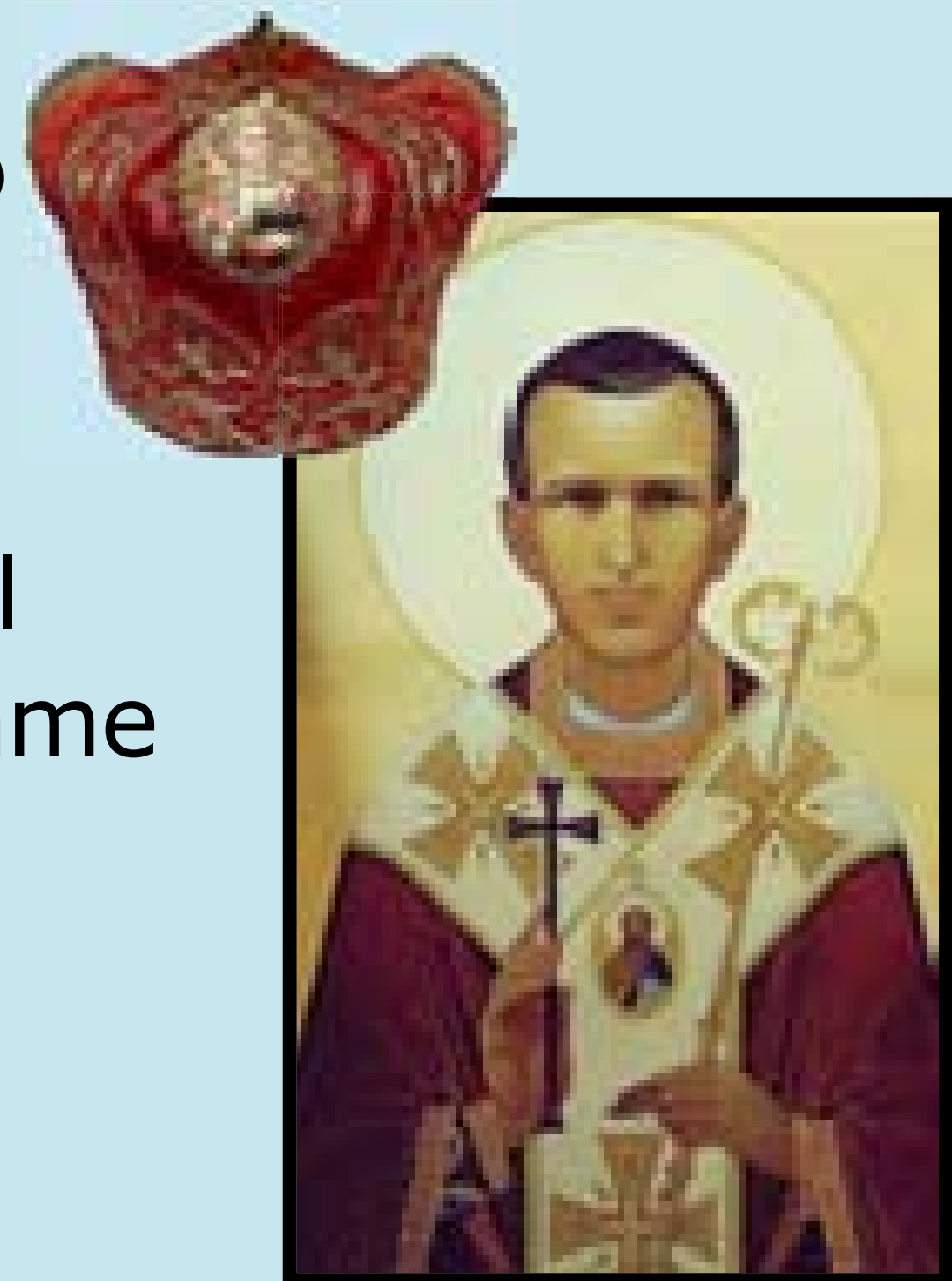
On June 27, 2001 Pope John Paul II beatified a group of martyrs from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. These martyrs, including Bishop Nykyta Budka, were victims of persecutions conducted by Nazis or Communists between 1935 and 1973. Due to his beatification Bishop Budka holds the title, **"Blessed Nykyta Budka – Bishop and Martyr"**. To date, the exact location of his remains has not been found.

Bishop Budka's successor in Canada was Basil Ladyka. In 1948, Edmonton and Toronto became separate eparchies (dioceses), Saskatoon in 1951, and New Westminster in 1974.

In 1956, Winnipeg was given the status of Metropolitan See for all Canada. This was the first Metropolia to be located outside Ukraine, with Metropolitan Maksym Hermaniuk at the helm.



Miracle working icon of the Mother of God at the Zarvanytsia Shrine, dating back to the 13th century.  
Source: www.artemarialedumonde.org



In 1914, he experienced significant stress over the controversy involving two of his pastoral letters. Austria-Hungary had protected Ukrainian Catholics from Poland and Russia, and when the Austrian heir to the throne was assassinated in 1914, the bishop supported Austria's call to its citizens to defend their homeland. (Ukrainian immigrants from the Ukrainian areas of Galicia and Bukovyna would have Austro-Hungarian Empire on their passports as their country of origin).

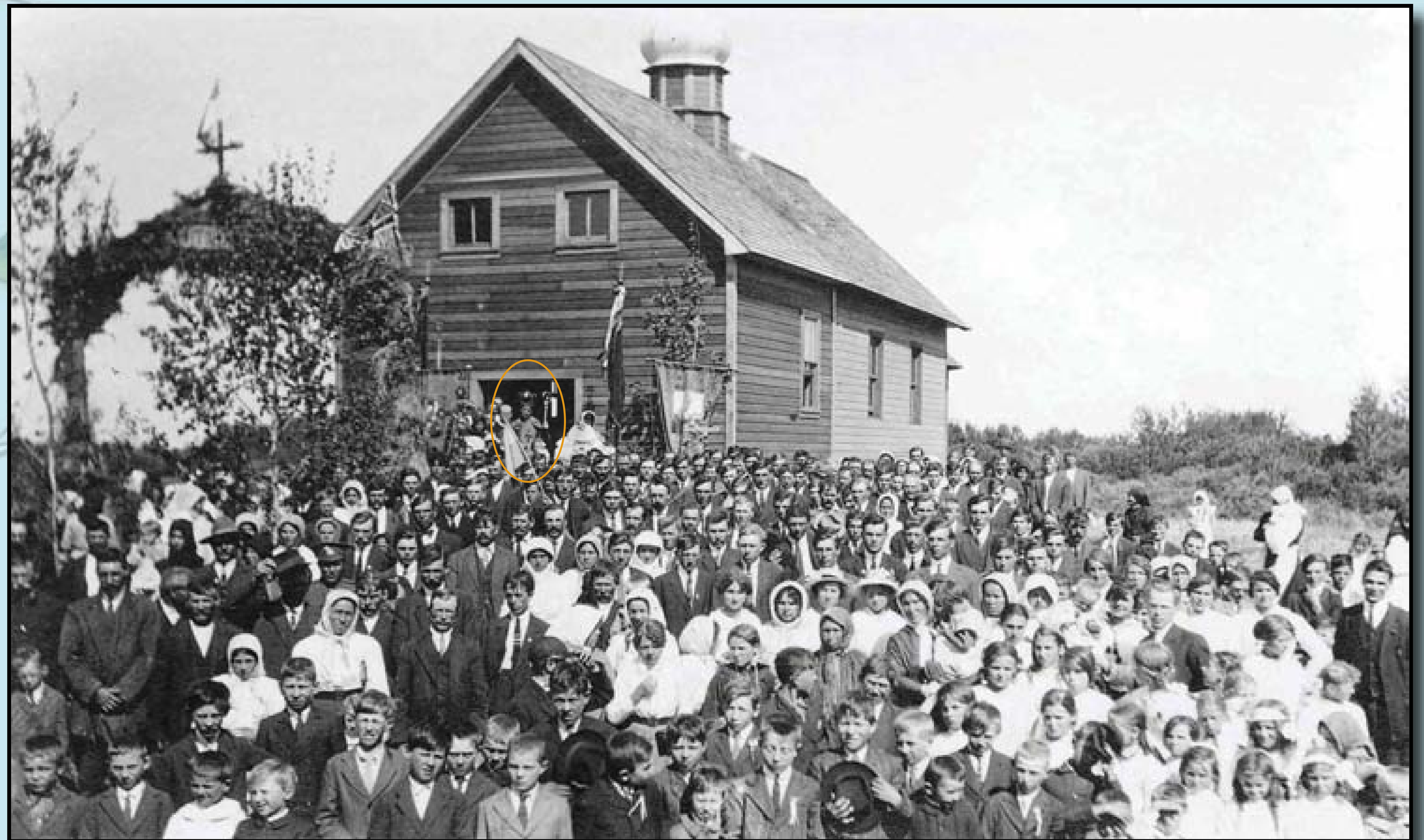
He first urged Ukrainian citizens of Austria living in Canada to carry out their duty to Austria (thinking a war between Russia and Austria was inevitable). One week later, when Canada entered the war (Britain had declared War on Germany), he issued a second letter reversing his position and urging them instead to prove their loyalty to Canada and Britain. During WWI, even with 5000 Ukrainian immigrants being interned in Canadian concentration camps, Bishop Budka showed staunch Canadian patriotism. His opponents, however, used his first letter to attack him. He was arrested in Hafford, Saskatchewan on July 8, 1918 on a charge of sedition (an offense tending toward, but stopping short of an act of treason/disloyalty to one's country). A trial was held on July 15, 1918 but the charges were withdrawn, the case dismissed and the plaintiff fined five dollars.

The difficulties continued, however, with eleven charges of treason laid against Bishop Budka in 1919 by the Great War Veterans' Association of Winnipeg. After yet another trial (at his own request in order to clear his name), Bishop Budka was again dismissed due to a lack of evidence. The judge, in fact, apologized and praised his patriotism.

# The Wait is over... the Bishop has arrived!

The parishioners of 'Borschiv Tserkva' (*Borschiv Church*) in Alberta are gathered around the entrance of the church for a photograph. An archway is decorated with tree branches (most likely, aspen) and church banners are held: all signs that this is a special procession, a special event. The attire of the people also suggests the importance of the event: men in suits, women and children in their Sunday best. There is a mix of old-country fashion and new Canadian influences. Most important to note is the presence of a special guest of honour (he can be seen in the doorway of the church)... the one person this large group of men, women, and children traveled from near and far to see...their new and first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop in Canada...**Bishop Nykyta Budka**. He is the beacon of spiritual hope amid the hardships, burdens, and loneliness of Canadian pioneer life.

The aspen tree grew in abundance across the Canadian prairie and for early immigrants became essential to their survival: as a main source of firewood; building material; and part of the 'parkland bush' which provided necessary vegetation and wildlife as sources of food. This resilient and enduring tree silently served as a life-giving source during a time when survival was a daily endeavor. The link between the aspen and Bishop Budka is a fitting one. Its practical



Congregation in front of Borschiv Church, Borschiv, Alberta (with Bishop Budka in the doorway of the church), 1916.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.

applications served the people in ways that ensured their survival. Also important to note is its use in decorative form for celebratory occasions (such as the welcoming of bishops), special feast days, and for the building of liturgical furnishings and grave-markers. **Most importantly, the arrival and leadership of Bishop Budka in those early days was an essential source of survival... in the form of spiritual strength and hope for the survival of their precious Ukrainian Catholic faith.**

## Did you know?

- The aspen tree is a universally positive symbol, known for such characteristics as overcoming fear, doubt and for determination, necessary traits for the survival of the Ukrainian immigrant as well.
- The tree is known as a source of strength, shelter, protection and life...all of which can be likened to the leadership Bishop Budka brought to the people.
- An individual aspen tree can live to about one-hundred years...a fitting connection to this story celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Bishop Budka's arrival to Canada.
- Perhaps the most powerful and intriguing is the aspen's symbolic link to 'strength of community'. Aspen trees reproduce by sprouting shoots from their roots and this allows them to grow in a cohesive grove. Even fire damage will not kill a 'grove' of aspens if the roots remain alive.
- A 'grove' of aspens is actually a single living organism that can reach several thousand years in age...by human standards, virtually immortal. And the bark of aspens contains chlorophyll, so they are able to continue growing during winter months.
- A 'grove' is able to endure and survive and actually is strengthened through diversity. They are healthiest when they include trees at all different levels of maturity. By the same token, **our Ukrainian Catholic faith and heritage is strongest when its membership includes stewards of all ages, from children, to young adults, to middle-aged and senior.**



Bishop Budka with congregation of Exaltation of Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church, Innisfree, Alberta, 1914.  
Source: Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare, Alberta.

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Parishioners in Mundare, Alberta enjoy a meal together under the shade of the aspens. Source: UCAWA

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