

Blessed Bishop Martyr Nykyta Budka **The First Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholics in Canada**



О мій Боже, з глибини моєї душі клонюся перед Твоєю безмежною Величчю. Дякую Тобі за ласки й дари, що ними Ти наділив Твого вірного Слугу Блаженного Мученика Єпископа Никиту. Прошу Тебе, прослав його також славою святого. Благаю Тебе, через його посередництво, уділи мені в своєму Батьківському милосерддю ту ласку (намірення), про яку я Тебе покійрно молю. АМІНЬ.

The first bishop the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada was born on September 7, 1877 Dobomirka, Zbarazh District, Ukraine and arrived in Canada on December 19, 1912. On December 22, his investiture was held in St. Nicholas Church in the presence of approximately 2000 spiritually uplifted faithful. The bishop initially resided in the Basilian rectory. In January, 1913, a home was purchased for the bishop's residence to which he moved in March of that year.

The tasks for the first bishop were monumental as his diocese stretched from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans and encompassed approximately 150 000 Ukrainians and approximately 80 churches and chapels. Initially there were 13 secular priests and 9 monks, including the bishop's secretary, Rev. Joseph Bala, who accompanied him to Canada, assisting in the service of this wide expanse of faithful and organized communities. The bishop's work focused mainly on visiting the faithful and organizing new parish communities. Bishop Budka worked hard on the Incorporation Act to legally safeguard church property and wealth which before his arrival was often the cause of misunderstandings and even led to divisions within parishes. No less was his concern for the education of the youth. The bishop directed much of his effort to building educational institutes and boarding houses for Ukrainian students and organizing parochial schools and catechism instruction for children. Of great assistance to the bishop were the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate who worked tirelessly among the faithful. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky's return visit to Canada in 1921 added impetus to Bishop Budka's work. During his meetings with the faithful, the Metropolitan continually encouraged them to remain united, to further their education and to preserve and continue their religious and cultural traditions.

In 1927, after 15 years of hard work in strengthening and expanding the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada, Bishop Nykyta Budka returned to Europe to compile and submit his report on the work accomplished to the church authorities in Rome. His health did not permit him to return to Canada. For sometime he was the general vicar to Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky in Lviv where he was arrested by the Bolsheviks in 1945 and was exiled to Siberia. There, in a dismal prison barrack, his life ended in martyrdom on September 28, 1949.

Article based on information from Ukrainian Catholic Churches of Winnipeg Archeparchy, *History of Ukrainian Catholic Churches in Canada, Volume 4* by Anna Maria Kowcz-Baran (Saskatoon, 1991) and other sources.