



BLESSED NYKYTA BUDKA

Bishop and Martyr BY ARCHBISHOP LAWRENCE HUCULAK, O.S.B.M.

The first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop in Canada, Nykyta Budka, was born June 7, 1877, in the village of Dobromirka, Ternopil Province, in western Ukraine. He was ordained to the priesthood on October 14, 1905, and continued with doctoral studies at Vienna.

In his priestly ministry, he worked with seminary formation and especially with emigration issues at a time when many Ukrainians were leaving their traditional homelands for western Europe (Germany and Bosnia) and North and South America (Brazil, Argentina, USA and

Canada). It was while carrying out pastoral ministry in Bosnia that Budka received notice that he was appointed bishop for the Ukrainian settlers in Canada. He was ordained bishop in Lviv on October 14, 1912, the anniversary of his priestly ordination. He arrived in Halifax on December 6, 1912, and was installed in Winnipeg's St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church on December 22, 1912.

Bishop Budka faced many challenges in ministering to Ukrainian Catholics throughout Canada including vast distances to travel, minimal parish organizational life, few clergy and civil recognition of the

Church in Canada. The poor health he experienced in Europe continued in Canada and contributed to a deterioration in his abilities over the years. By the end of 1927 he returned to Europe where he eventually assisted Metropolitan Andrew Sheptycky, head of the Church in Ukraine.

Following the death of Metropolitan Sheptycky, the Communist authorities arrested the leadership of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ukraine including Bishop Budka on April 11, 1945. He was tried on June 3, 1946, and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He died on October 1, 1949 in a concentration camp near

Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

On June 7, 2001, during the historic pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II to Ukraine, Bishop Budka, together with other martyrs for the faith, were beatified, adding the title Blessed to their names. Blessed Bishop Nykyta Budka had become a Canadian citizen while living in Canada, and never renounced his citizenship. Through his pastoral ministry and his martyr's death he intercedes for us before the Lord, our God.

Archbishop Lawrence Huculak, O.S.B.M., is Metropolitan of Catholic Ukrainians in Canada.

Photo courtesy of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg