

## **Collection of Ukrainian Saints, volume III**

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**In memory of Anastasija Androich, my beloved grandmother**

**Вечная память! Царствие Небесное!  
Memory eternal! May the Heavenly Kingdom be granted to her!**

**---ST. MYKOLA OF ISKRIVKA---**

Mykola Semenovych Mikhailichenko was born in 1885 within Petrivskyi District, his father was a priest with his grandparents having been merchants. The young Mykola would attend the Yekatinsburg Theological Seminary and be tonsured a Reader, serving in the village of Novobataysk near Rostov. It was around this time he married a woman named Anna, with whom they would have two children, a son named Dymytry and another unknown child.

Only a year after arriving in Novobataysk he would be ordained a Subdeacon in the Yekatinsburg Cathedral and would then be transferred to the Church of St. George in Petriovka's Novomoskovsk district (in today's Dnipropetrovsk region) he would then enroll in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and graduate with a Doctorate in Theology.

He was ordained to the Diaconate and appointed to St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg, the main cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church, and was well loved as a kind and humble man. In 1889 Fr. Mykola would be ordained to the priesthood and be appointed as a parish priest in Pavlovka near Yekatinsburg.

As a priest he was well known for his zeal and sobriety in serving. Church discipline was very important to Fr. Mykola, whenever his parishioners talked or were otherwise distracted during Church services he would say: "What's going on? Has a bear entered the Church?" Or ask people to leave the Church so that they wouldn't distract others. He had met St. John of Kronstadt and became one of his spiritual children during this time.

Fr. Mykola was also very diligent in keeping the Church building clean, teaching others that the Church is the House of God and must always be kept clean. In 1909 he would be transferred to the St. Nicholas Church in the village of Nikolo-Gegelino while also serving also many other parishes in the Verkhnedneprovsky district that were left without churches.

In 1914 he was in the mining village of Veslyoliye Terny and served in the Archangel Michael's Church there. At the request of Tsar Nicholas II he would be transferred to the village of Iskrivka in Kivorohrad Oblast in Ukraine, which had been left without a Church since the time of the Unia.

Arriving in Iskrivka, Fr. Mykola expected to find a building that could be converted into a Church; however the local population was unwilling to help, being distrustful of him, especially the village elder Viktor who despised Fr. Mykola. He at first served the Divine Liturgy in his home for the first few months and slowly won over the trust of the townsfolk, he was called when people fell sick and after he prayed over the ailing they would recover and be miraculously healed.

After winning the support of the village, Fr. Mykola broke ground on the Church foundation. Tsar Nicholas II would fund the construction of the Church – having a shipment of bricks and lumber brought in while also covering all the wages of the workers – with Fr. Mykola labouring day and night with his own strength to complete its construction.

The Church in Iskrivka would be dedicated in honor of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in honor of Fr. Mykola and the Tsar's Patron Saint. The St. Nicholas Church had two cupolas and a bell-tower with a red brick exterior, later the Tsar would donate a metal roof for the Church. For his service in Iskrivka, Fr. Mykola would be awarded and elevated to the rank of Archpriest.

Fr. Mykola was well regarded as a Holy Man during his life, healing many by his prayers and prophesying future events, he often spoke about the fall of the Russian Empire and told people their futures. As a result of his prophecies and healings people came from all over the Russian Empire to visit him, but Fr. Mykola remained humble and regarded himself as being unworthy to give the advice, only quoting the Fathers and not his own knowledge.

The village loved Fr. Mykola, one story shows he had a good sense of humour with his prophecy. Once when a villager was giving Fr. Mykola a ride in his carriage to the Church, he thought: "If only I weren't helping the priest! I could make five kopeks off of this ride!" But he didn't say this out loud. When they arrived at the Church Fr. Mykola gave the villager five kopeks, smiled and said: "Thou shouldn't think this way about priests... There are some of us who aren't misers."

He had his own land and had to work by growing wheat to support himself; he spent little of what he made on himself, rather supporting his family or buying decorations for the Church, including a pectoral Cross made of gold, a gem adorned Chalice and a gold frame for the Evangelion. He gave much of what he earned to the poor and needy, with his home becoming known for giving hospitality to anyone who asked.

Fr. Mykola travelled throughout Kivorohrad, once walking 12 kilometers to the village of Rybincho to pray in the home of the Krizhanovsky family. Fr. Mykola's mother had also moved to the village of Iskrivka around this time and fell asleep shortly before the Revolution.

In 1917 Tsar Nicholas II would abdicate after the February Revolution and the Bolsheviks would take over the government in October. During these troubled times Fr. Mykola began to prophesy that he would be killed for the Orthodox Faith on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919, that he would be buried three separate times and that there would be two great famines.

Shortly after the October Revolution a group of Makhnovists (anarchists) would arrive in the village with the intention of arresting the village priest. The officer when he saw Fr. Mykola recognized him and said: "Father! I remember you, you had taught us the Law of God!" And having been moved with compunction he ordered in no wise should any harm come upon Fr. Mykola.

He foresaw his own Martyrdom and wonder-working relics, telling people in Iskrivka: "Whoever prays and asks for help from the Lord, He will send it to them. And soon I will help, as I helped while I was alive."

In September 1919 the Cheka would dispatch a special detachment comprised of 50 men to Ukraine, with the goal of murdering as many clergy – particularly priests – as possible. On October 1<sup>st</sup> Fr. Mykola served the Liturgy on the Feast of

the Protection of the Mother of God and after the Liturgy he dismissed all the officers and clergy, telling them to hide as the Bolsheviks would raid Iskrivka the following day.

Once everyone had fled Fr. Mykola climbed the bell-tower and would ring the bells every few hours as if a great procession or funeral was taking place. Early in the afternoon on October 2<sup>nd</sup> the Cheka detachment arrived in Iskrivka, they removed Fr. Mykola from the bell-tower and began beating him and stripping him naked in the streets.

The Cheka brought Father to the cemetery after the humiliation and executed him by firing squad, in the official records of the Cheka, Fr. Mykola was the ninth priest killed by the special detachment. Before he was shot Fr. Mykola shouted: “This will be a great joy for many and people will sing 'Christ is Risen!' out of season. Know my friends; that much worse can happen than what thou can do to me.”

According to some accounts from the residents of Iskrivka the Cheka were originally not going to raid the village, but one of the village elders surnamed Koval – who hated Fr. Mykola since he could not intercede for the release of his son who had been arrested by the Cadets – had met the Cheka detachment on a road in the Kivorohrad region and told them of Fr. Mykola's presence in the village.

After he his murder Fr. Mykola's relics were thrown in a pit a short distance from the village. Locals were afraid to bury him as the Bolsheviks occupied the village and threatened to kill anyone who would bury him, some of the townsfolk who did not wish to see any harm come upon his relics would place branches and leaves over them; horses that were brought to work the field would whine and fall to their knees upon passing the relics of Fr. Mykola.

After three days had passed one of Fr. Mykola's spiritual children with his wife would secretly bury his relics by night without a coffin. In 1920 the village of Iskrivka would be recaptured by soldiers of the Ukrainian People's Army under the command of Symon Petilura, the local populace arranged for a solemn burial and a proper funeral for Fr. Mykola, when his relics were exhumed they were found to be incorrupt and a pleasant fragrance emitted from them.

A local woman named Maria recounted: “When I was only nine years old they

exhumed his body and a fragrance filled the air. I understood as they dug deeper and deeper we were getting close – as the fragrance was getting stronger – it was very distinct, similar to blossoming pears. When they finally uncovered the entire grave his remains were preserved, not completely as God allows some decay to show us that it is still a human body. When we brought the relics to the Church the smell was incredibly strong. Impious people complained and said there was an unbearable stench, whereas the believers rejoiced in the fragrance...

During the funeral the fragrance came as like a cloud throughout the service, it was not weaker or stronger depending on distance or whether the coffin was open or closed – it was the same everywhere – it is a miracle and one that cannot be explained by any other means... We also saw many cases of healings occur, so many that we stopped recording them after a while. One miracle I remember was about six years after the funeral, a family came from Kryvyi Rih with their baby boy who had a heart defect.

In three months time the boy was to undergo an operation at the Amosov hospital, but the doctors warned even if the treatment was successful, the boy would not live long. This family came and stayed in Iskrivka for three days and took the boy to the grave (of Fr. Mykola), praying rigorously before it, they also took the baby to the Holy spring and bathed him in the water.

Around a year and a half later they came to visit and I asked them: 'How is the boy?' To which they replied: 'Come and celebrate, look! The boy is running, cheerful and healthy!' 'I am glad the operation went well' I said, to which the boy's parents replied: 'There was no operation, they examined him and said it was no longer necessary... The doctors were shocked and asked what medicines we might've used, to which we said we had no knowledge of medicines and didn't use any...'

We have seen all sorts of healings, from people with mental disorders, pyelonephritis, sclerosis, varicose veins, heart defects and so on... But to have them all go away without any treatment after visiting the relics..."

A wooden Cross was placed over the grave of St. Mykola – not far from the St. Nicholas Church he had built and served at during his earthly life – and sometime before the Holodomor a small chapel would be built near his grave. The Bolsheviks would convert the St. Nicholas Church into a grain warehouse during the Holodomor, but it was noted that all the grain that was kept in the Church

would spoil, no matter how well they sealed the Church or what preservatives they put in the grain.

Before his Martyrdom Fr. Mykola sent his wife and son to Kryvyi Rih, Matushka Anna would be forced to change her name twice as to avoid any persecution from being a priest's wife and his son Dymytry would change his name after he was released from a Soviet prison camp. Dymytry became a photographer but in 1937 he would be arrested and killed for being the son of a priest, leaving his eight children as orphans.

His words about two great famines soon came true, first with the famine in 1921 and the Holodomor in 1930-1933. In 1934 the Soviets would arrest the Catacomb Archpriest Fr. Fyodor Sidelnikov and accused him of belonging to a “counter-revolutionary church structure.” At his testimony Fr. Fyodor mentioned how he had served as an altar boy with St. Mykola in the village of Iskrivka years prior. He would be executed by the Bolsheviks via firing squad later that year.

Soviet soldiers who attempted to desecrate the grave of St. Mykola would suddenly fall ill or die and eventually even hardened atheists feared touching or visiting the Church or grave of St. Mykola for fear of divine punishment. The faithful secretly visited the grave of St. Mykola and an area in the local forest where St. Mykola served moliebens and performed exorcisms in the summer called the “bluvka”, which began to gush forth Holy Water from a spring and cured many of illnesses.

The Soviet authorities attempted to disprove the miracles associated with St. Mykola and sent a scientific team to investigate the spring, claiming that the water contained more natural minerals which was the result of the healing rather than the blessing of the Saint. The scientific team would not find more minerals in the water and eventually declared the healings to be mass hysteria, without any evidence.

Vasyl Zagrebin recounted miracles at the spring: “During the time they were building a dam on the Dnieper river in the 1930s one of the workers from Kryvyi Rih came to Iskrivka with crutches after breaking both of his legs; the doctors said he would more than likely never walk again. He had heard of the Holy Spring in the forest where Fr. Mykola used to serve and wished to drink from its waters; but by this point people feared going there due to the Soviets and the area had overgrown.

After the worker spoke to the locals he learned the location of the spring and immediately went there, upon arrival he let go of his crutches and fell to the ground, using his bare hands to dig out the well and remove the thorny brush that had grown over it... When he uncovered the spring he drank the water with his dirty hands and immediately stood up and walked back to the village. He left his crutches at the spring and they were there left there for many years as a reminder of the great miracle that had taken place...

I myself went to the spring to collect water and brought it into my home, as did many of the locals in Iskrivka. One year a particularly bad famine caused by blight came upon our crops. Fearful, I began to use the Holy Water from the spring to bless the only plants that could grow in that season – eggplants – and only after a few days they went from being diseased and withered to being healthy and edible. People began noticing even the eggplants watered with the Holy Water could cure people of ailments...”

According to the testimony of Mykola Uara: “...(in the 1980s) my grandmother would take me to Fr. Mykola's grave, which she had done with her parents and my father. No one dared to touch the Cross as there were many stories of bad things happening to people who did so irreverently. We would sit by the grave and lay on it if our backs hurt and soon our pain would be soothed. We often ate dirt from the grave when we sick and recovered shortly. We weren't the only family that did this, many came – young and elderly – to do the same...”

On September 15<sup>th</sup> 2001 the relics of St. Mykola would be transferred to a new Church on the border of the Kivorohrad and Dnipropetrovsk regions and interred in a reliquary inside of a Church dedicated to the New Martyrs of Russia – later dedicated solely to St. Mykola of Iskrivka – thus fulfilling his prophecy that he would be buried three times. On the day of the solemn transfer dozens of pilgrims were healed after following the procession of the relics from Iskrivka to the new Church.

In 2013 the spring near Iskrivka was expanded. In 2019 for the centennial of the Martyrdom of St. Mykola his relics would be uncovered and displayed and found to still be incorrupt. Two photographs of St. Mykola would also be discovered in 2019 – one undated with his wife and another one taken in 1912 with two altar boys with the text written on the back: “To Nikanor Gerasimovich Kurochka... my beloved spiritual son...”

The current priest of the Church in Iskrivka that holds his relics, Vasyl Zagrebin, stated in an interview in 2019 that he has a record book which has: "...hundreds of miracles and intercessions associated with the Saint... including some of my own experiences... so many people visit his relics and we hear weekly about miracles happening."

On his reliquary in Kivorohrad are inscribed the words: "No prophet is loved in his homeland." St. Mykola of Iskrivka is the only known New Martyr who was killed in the village of Iskrivka. Many icons can be found of him throughout Ukraine and the Holy Church celebrates his Holy Memory on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **---ST. RODION OF SPASOVY---**

Little is known about Fr. Rodion's life. He was born into a peasant family in 1843 in the city of Kharkiv and spent most of his life there, he would eventually be tonsured a monk with the name Rodion, likely after St. Rodion of Patras. His last name or the name of his parents is unknown.

On October 17<sup>th</sup> 1888 Tsar Alexander III and his family were travelling from Crimea to St. Petersburg, the train was near the village of Borki – about 49 miles from Kharkiv – when at 14:14 hours the train derailed. The Tsar and his family were completely unharmed, even with the roof of the train car collapsing on the Tsar and the Grand Duchess Olga and Grand Duke Mikhail being thrown from the train.

In commemoration of the miracle that protected him, Tsar Alexander III commissioned a skete built in Borki and the village renamed to Spasovy. The Spasovy Skete was attached to the nearby Holy Domrion Monastery in Svyatogorsk. The Tsar would be present at the consecration of the grounds on October 30<sup>th</sup> 1888 with the Monastery being dedicated to the Image of the Saviour Not Made by Hands – a copy of said Icon being present in the Tsar's train car when it derailed.

Over 400 locals helped build the Monastery – which was completed on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1891 – with the Grand Duchess Maria Fedorovna and Grand Duchess Xenia Aleksandrovna laying the last bricks with their own hands. In the Church were over 50 hand painted icons, with 38 of them being on the Iconostasis and a chapel on the exact spot where the Tsar's train had derailed.

Tsar Alexander III requested that Fr. Rodion from Kharkiv be appointed the Archimandrite of the Spasovy Skete and would visit the Monastery on the Feast of the Image Not Made by Hands on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1894 along with other members of the Royal Family. In total Tsar Alexander III visited the Monastery three times before his repose on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1894.

Fr. Rodion would be present at Tsar Alexander III's funeral where he wept bitterly for the Tsar who he considered a close friend. He consoled the future Tsar and Martyr Nicholas II at the funeral and also met St. John of Kronstadt and would correspond with him until his repose in 1909.

In December 1918 Soviet sailors under the command of admiral Pavel Dybenko captured Kharkiv; the sailors were a menace upon the city, looting stores, murdering and robbing locals. On December 29<sup>th</sup> the Bolsheviks would arrive at the Spasovy Skete and arrested Archimandrite Rodion, Hieromonk Afansiy and Hieromonk Aleksei, taking the Fathers with them to an unknown location.

A few days later one of the sailors had gotten drunk in a local bar and openly bragged about having murdered Archimandrite Rodion and the two Hieromonks a few nights prior. The drunk Bolshevik admitted they took the three monks into a field outside of the city, there they began to beat the monks and eventually he took a knife and scalped Fr. Rodion, then slit his throat, ending his earthly life after 75 years.

After the confession of the sailor, the locals searched the fields outside the city and found the relics of the three Martyrs, with the details about the murder of St. Rodion being confirmed by medical examiners. Sts. Rodion, Afansiy and Aleksei were buried in a potter's field without a proper funeral a week after their Martyrdom. When the White Army under the command of General Aleksandr Kutepov captured the city of Kharkiv in June 1919 the Martyrs would be given solemn burials.

In the few months the Bolshevik sailors terrorized the city of Kharkiv they murdered 101 monks, including six Hegumens of Monasteries and several Diocesan officers. The Bolsheviks also destroyed several Monasteries and Churches in Kharkiv and the surrounding area, including the Spasovy Skete.

The village of Spasovy would be reverted to its previous name of Borki after the

Bolsheviks captured Ukraine and during the Second World War the remains of the Spasovy Skete were destroyed by German bombings. In the post-Soviet period the village of Borki was renamed back to Spasovy and in 2003 the Spasovy Skete was rebuilt.

Dybenko's wife Zenaida was the daughter of a priest – something she carefully concealed – and after her arrest by the NKVD in 1938 during Stalin's Great Purge, she confessed to being the daughter of a priest under threat of torture and was charged with treason against the Soviet state, being sentenced to ten years in a labour camp. Pavel Dybenko would be arrested for treason after his wife's confession and executed by firing squad that same year.

### ---THE NEW MARTYRS OF MGARR---

The Holy Transfiguration Monastery was founded by Archimandrite Isaisas (Kopynsky, later Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia) near Lubny on a bank of the Sula river called Mgarr. The Monastery's construction was funded by Raina Vyshnevetska – the aunt of St. Petro Mohilya – and completed in 1619. In 1622 the Brotherhood was established as a legal entity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by Metropolitan Isaisas and became a spiritual fortress in the fight against the Uniates in the Left-Bank of Ukraine.

Previously a Monastery had existed in Mgarr which had been destroyed by the Mongol invasions in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1692 the Cossack Atamans Ivan Samilyovych and Ivan Mazepa commissioned the German architect Johannes-Baptist Sauer (architect of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chernihiv) and the local architects Martyn Tomashevsky and Afansiy Pyryatynsky to build a stone Church for the Monastery.

On May 9<sup>th</sup> 1653 Ataman Bogdan Khmelnytsky issued a decree prohibiting anyone from demanding anything of the Brotherhood of the Mgarr Monastery without the consent of the Archimandrite. Around this time the famous painter Ivan Maximovitch (one of of St. John of Shanghai's ancestors) painted the Icons for the Iconostasis in the Cathedral.

In February 1654 Patriarch of Constantinople Athanasius III moved into the Monastery after being exiled and fell asleep in the Lord on April 14<sup>th</sup> while seated upright in the Bishop's throne in the main cathedral. He would be buried in the Monastery graveyard and soon after miracles began to occur at his grave and in

1662 he would be glorified as a Confessor for his zealous defense and suffering for Orthodoxy.

In 1663 Ataman Bogdan Khmelnytsky's son Yuri would enter the Monastery and be tonsured a monk with the name Gideon; later he became the Archimandrite of the Monastery. Starting in the 1690s and finishing in the 1770s the acclaimed Mgarr Chronicle would be written, containing an invaluable resource of the spiritual life and historical documentation of the Lubny region. Sadly only excerpts exist of the Chronicle today, as all known manuscripts went missing after the Soviets took over Ukraine.

Between 1737 and 1744 St. Joasaph (Gorlenko) of Belgorod would be the Archimandrite of the Mgarr Monastery and after he became the Bishop of Belgorod, the next Archimandrite was St. Ilarion (Rogalevsky). Later St. Ilarion became the Archbishop of Chernhiv and was killed by agents of Tsaritsa Anna Ivanova, who ordered his assassination after he spoke out against the seizure of Church properties and the rapid secularization of Russia.

In 1785 a bell tower, and chapel would be built on the site where Patriarch St. Athanasius III fell asleep, with his reliquary being there until 1917 when they were moved to Kharkiv, where they remain today. In 1786 a series of new building including the Hegumen's residence, a two-story brick guesthouse and the Annunciation Cathedral – a beautiful Church done in the Greek-Byzantine architectural style – used during the summers, were all completed.

In 1889 Bishop Ilarion of Poltava requested a Church be built near the Monastery gardens to replace the chapel located there, the Church would be completed on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1891 and be dedicated to St. Sergius of Radonezh with the Church being consecrated by Bishop Ilarion.

The Fool-for-Christ Paisiy (Yerotsky) – a Lubny native – had visited the Monastery many times as child in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was from these visits he wished to become a monk, eventually moving to Kyiv and becoming a well known Holy Fool at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Mgarr Monastery was considered a foremost spiritual center in Ukraine, having been visited by almost every Zaporozhian Ataman and many foreign dignitaries including Prince Ludwig Dant of Hesse-Hamburg, who became a great financial supporter of the Monastery. Many Russians, including Tsar Peter I,

Alexander Pushkin and Taras Shevchenko visited the Monastery, with the latter two having written about their visits.

On July 10<sup>th</sup> 1919 the Soviet Red Army's "Antonov" regiment captured the Sula river region. The Fathers of the Mgarr Monastery fled and hid in barns around Lubny, as the Bolsheviks entered the Monastery and turned the buildings into barracks for their soldiers. The Bolsheviks desecrated the Church and hosted parties – inviting unclean women, drinking excessively and doing unspeakable acts – under the roof of the Monastery's main Cathedral.

By July 20<sup>th</sup> the "Volunteer Army" of the White Army led by General Viktor Leonidovich would recapture the Sula river region from the Bolsheviks. The monks returned to the Mgarr Monastery and reconsecrated the altar, church buildings and cleaned up the mess left by the Bolsheviks. By August 4<sup>th</sup> the White Army was forced to retreat and the Bolsheviks would once again enter the Monastery.

On the night of August 4<sup>th</sup> the Bolsheviks looted the Monastery's pantry and took whatever valuables they could find. The Fathers being undeterred resolved to still celebrate the Divine Liturgy for their patronal Feast of the Holy Transfiguration on August 5<sup>th</sup>. In the early morning hours of August 5<sup>th</sup> the Bolsheviks would round up the remaining monks – 25 in total – on charges of having helped the White Army.

The monks led by their Hegumen Fr. Ambrose were loaded up in trucks and driven to Lubny, where after waiting for two hours they were told they would be sent to the village of Kruhlyk – seven kilometers from Lubny – to be given hard labour at a steel mill. The Red Cavalry unit would divide the monks into three groups and lead them on a forced march to Kruhlyk.

On the night of August 6<sup>th</sup> while the monks were on the road nearing the village of Pырvatyn, Soviet cavalry officer A. Bakay ordered the monks to be shot; Bakay personally executed Hegumen Ambrose with a revolver and the men under his command opened fire on the rest of the Fathers. Those who survived the initial gunfire were killed with bayonets.

Eight monks survived by playing dead or escaping when they heard the initial volleys of gunfire, among the survivors were: Hieromonk Ilarion, Hieromonk Mitrofan, Hieromonk Feofil, Hierodeacon Isaac, Hierodeacon Nifon, Hierodeacon

Modestiy, Hieodeacon Evseviy and the Monk Khristian. Despite many of them enduring serious injuries and the youngest of these Fathers being 42 years old, they all made full recoveries and recorded the accounts of Martyrdom of their brother-monks for future generations.

Of the Mgarr New Martyrs who were killed by the Bolsheviks on the night of August 6<sup>th</sup> were: Hegumen Ambrose, Hieromonk Arkady, Hieromonk Ioannikiy, Hieromonk Jonah, Hieromonk Joseph, Hieromonk Nikanor, Hieromonk Afansiy, Hieromonk Feofan, Hieromonk Serapion, Hieromonk Nikostratus, Hierodeacon Julian, Monk Ioannikiy, Monk Herman, Monk Nazarius, Monk Parfeniy, Monk Patap and Monk Dorymedon.

The Bolsheviks took the shoes, clothing and all personal belongings from the monks after the executions and left the bodies there on the road for the locals to see. Later Cheka agents came and took photographs of the bodies of the Martyrs, with the Soviets placing the photographs in local newspapers to terrorize the Orthodox Faithful.

Pious people from Pyrvatyn would bury the Martyrs at the Church of the Saints of Scythia in the village and placed a large Orthodox Cross over the graves. In 1921 the Bolsheviks converted the Mgarr Monastery into a camp for the “Pioneers” and “Komsomol” youth organizations, in 1937 it was converted into a military prison and from 1946 onward the buildings were used as military warehouses. Finally in 1985 it was converted back into a camp for the Pioneers.

Years of desecration and looting meant only the Transfiguration Cathedral, Annuciation Church, the bell-tower and some of the 18<sup>th</sup> century cells survived. Only portions of the walls of the 17<sup>th</sup> century cells and the stone gate survived. In 1993 the Monastery would be once again re-open as a Monastery and repairs would begin on the damaged buildings.

In 2013 the Ukrainian government gave the Monastery financial assistance. In 2014 construction began on a new library and the library was finished in 2019. That same year the Ukrainian government for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Mgarr Monastery declared the Monastery to be a protected landmark.

In 2008 the relics of the Martyrs were brought to the Mgarr Monastery and placed in the crypt of the Church. The memory of the Holy New Martyrs of Mgarr is

celebrated by the Church on August 6<sup>th</sup> and in icons they the Martyrs are sometimes depicted alongside St. Joasaph of Belgorod and St. Ilarion of Chernhiv in Heaven.

### **---ST. MYKHAILO OF KYIV---**

Mykhailo Omelyanovych Edlinsky was born on January 8<sup>th</sup> 1859 in the village of Yushkove Orshan, Mogliev province, within the Russian Empire (now modern day Belarus). His parents names are not known however they were of Belarusian ancestry. At first Mykhailo studied law and wanted to become a lawyer and while working on his law degree he decided to take classes at the Mogliev Theological Academy.

After graduating from law school and from the Mogliev Theological Academy, he would enroll at the Kyiv Theological Academy where he graduated in 1885 with a degree in Theology. He would teach theology at the Kyiv Theological Academy and law at the Kyiv 1<sup>st</sup> Commercial School in 1896.

Due to his excellent teaching abilities he would be requested to teach at a private school for young women, there he met one of the teachers whom he later married named Anna Nikolaevna. In 1893 he would be ordained to the priesthood and be appointed the rector of the Borisoglebsk Church in Podil. In 1900 he was elevated to the rank of Archpriest, in 1907 he would retire from teaching theology at the Kyiv Theological Seminary after the birth of his son Georgiy; his only children who would later become a priest and have six daughters of his own.

In 1902 he founded an orphanage in Kyiv and a Church school for impoverished children so they could learn about the Law of God. The orphanage would also come to house a nursery and from its income fund a homeless shelter. Fr. Mykhailo spent much of his own money to host educational lectures or theatrical performances to teach children about Russian history and the Orthodox Faith in Kyiv and Podil.

He often corresponded with St. John of Kronstadt, who praised him for his asceticism and spiritual direction. Once a group of pilgrims came from Kyiv to visit St. John in Kronstadt, to which he responded: "Why hast thou travelled so far to see me? Thou have Father Mykhailo Edlinsky in Kyiv."

Father Mykhailo was very merciful to everyone he met, giving much of what he

earned to the poor. He visited the hospitals around Kyiv to pray for the sick – who were often healed by his prayers – and whenever he saw an ambulance, he would chase after it to meet them at the location where someone was sick or injured.

One time Fr. Mykhailo became very ill and an ambulance was sent for him. Many of the people whom he had healed with his prayers heard of how Fr. Mykahilo was in need of prayers himself and ran towards his house near the Church in Podil. As Fr. Mykhailo was being put into the carriage there was a large crowd gathered, weeping and entreating God to protect their beloved spiritual father.

During the summers Fr. Mykhailo would wear a tattered straw hat filled with holes. Even when people offered their hats or money to buy a new one, Fr. Mykhailo refused and said what he wore was befitting of him.

One miracle shows Fr. Mykhailo not only had the gift of healing but also of bilocation: In Kyiv there was a child suffering with a tumor in his stomach, the doctors did not think the child would survive and the operation to remove the tumor was too dangerous. One night Fr. Mykhailo came into the hospital room and asked the child what was wrong.

The child explained he had a stomach tumor and that the doctors were afraid to remove it. Fr. Mykhailo – moved with compassion – took his hand and made the sign of the Cross over the boy's stomach, whereupon the swelling and pain immediately went away. The boy started shouting with joy, the nurses rushed into the room and when they saw the swelling was gone, they asked the boy what had happened, the boy said: “The priest from Podil, Mykhailo, came and healed me!” To which the nurses disbelieved as they saw no one come through the corridor.

The next day the boy's parents summoned Fr. Mykhailo and asked where he had been, to which Fr. Mykhailo responded he was serving a molieben for the boy in his Church in Podil. The parents and nurses asked some of the parishioners in Podil who confirmed he was in Podil and never left for Kyiv.

At one time the political party known as the “Black Hundreds” were attempting to start a pogrom against the Jews in the city of Podil, Fr. Mykhailo and the Archpriest Fr. Aleksandr Glagoglev – the rector of the St. Nicholas Church in Podil and a member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences – would meet the Black Hundreds in the streets, holding their Crosses and condemning them publicly for wishing to cause violence against innocent people.

Members of the Black Hundreds attacked the priests, beating them and hurling insults, whereupon the police arrested many members of the Black Hundreds and stopped the pogrom. In 1910 he was elevated to the rank of Protopope and allowed to hear Confessions as a married priest – a rare honor in pre-revolutionary Russia – and was also made a Diocesan officer in Kyiv.

Fr. Mykhailo would establish a lay brotherhood for the Borisoglebsk Church in Podil, be placed as a chairman of the Kyiv Society for Moral and Religious Education and become a member of the Kyiv's People Committee for Sobriety – a cause that mattered very much to him as he had seen many families torn apart by alcoholism – as a Diocesan officer he would build soup kitchens for the poor and instituted a system of issuing coupons rather than money to help the beggars of the city.

Other priests in Kyiv and Podil began to visit Fr. Mykhailo for Confessions, as he was considered a foremost spiritual father in the lands of Little Russia. During the First World War he would visit injured soldiers who were brought to the hospitals in Kyiv and hold regular services for them. He was a supporter of the restoration of the Patriarchate and the election of St. Tikhon in 1917-1918, writing and publicly preaching that the elevation of St. Tikhon was a cause for great rejoicing for all Russian people.

During the civil war in Ukraine he prayed for the victory of the White Army against the Bolsheviks. In 1922 when the Soviets captured Ukraine, Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr Glagolev continued to hold public services and called upon the people to prepare for Martyrdom. In 1925 when the Soviets issued passports to the Ukrainian people Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr would host public burnings of passports, which led to them being arrested. Due to the large crowd of people that gathered outside the jail demanding their release, the Soviets released them out of fear of the people.

In 1927 when Sergei Stragorodsky issued the infamous “Declaration”, Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr were quick to condemn it and called Sergei to repentance. As a result the OGPU closed the Borisoglebsk Church in Podil, which they later demolished in 1933.

Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr would both move to Kyiv and would serve at the Church of St. Nicholas the Good before its closure in 1935. Both Fr. Mykhailo and

Fr. Aleksandr belonged to the Catacomb or “Josephite” Church led by St. Joseph of Petrograd. After the closure of the St. Nicholas the Good Church they moved to the St. Nicholas Naberezhny Church.

While the Catacomb Church was illegal and the St. Nicholas Naberezhny Church had technically been closed, the Church was not being used for anything else and was left unlocked, meaning the two priests could serve the Liturgy secretly for the faithful. On October 17<sup>th</sup> 1937 Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr were arrested by the NKVD and the next day they were brought to trial and sentenced to death for belonging to “anti-Soviet fascist organizations of Churchmen of the 'Tikhonite' orientation.”

While held in prison, NKVD agents offered multiple times to release them if they joined the Sergianists; each time the two priests refused. On November 17<sup>th</sup> 1937 shortly before midnight, the 78 year old Fr. Mykahilo and Fr. Aleksandr were executed by firing squad either in the cemetery of Lukyaniv or outside the village of Bykivnya. It is unknown where the relics of the Martyrs were buried.

After the sentences, all records about Fr. Mykhailo and Fr. Aleksandr would be destroyed by the NKVD with a *damnatio memoriae* being placed on them. Fr. Mykhailo's wife and son would survive him – both being forced to change their names – his son would become a priest and serve as the rector of the Makariyiv Church in Kyiv until his repose. Fr. Georgiy wrote a book about his father which was only published after the fall of the Soviet Union.

In some of the internal drafts of the ROCOR's list of New Martyrs of Russia in 1979 and 1980, St. Mykhailo of Kyiv was listed among them; the ROCOR eventually glorified the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in 1981. St. Mykhailo contributed to Archbishop Anatoly (Martynovsky) of Mogliev's book “Pilgrims, Warriors and Martyrs for the Orthodox Faith and the land of Russia: From the Christianization of Russia to modern times.” (published 1889).

St. Mykhailo also wrote two books of his own, “Miraculous icons of the Saviour, Mother of God and the Holy Helpers of God: To whose help we entrust in times of illnesses and everyday needs” (published 1896) and “Great ascetics and Martyrs of Moscow” (published 1898). Many of his letters are preserved in Fr. Georgiy's book about his father; “A Heart that loved the Lord” (published 2004).

There is one surviving undated photograph of St. Mykhailo, taken shortly after he

was elevated to the rank of Archpriest. He is well beloved throughout Ukraine and Russia, the Church celebrates the memory of the New Martyrs Mykhailo Edlinsky and Aleksandr Glagolev on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **---ST. MYKOLA OF TVER---**

Mykola Ilyich Legedya was born in the village of Novgorodka in the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine in 1895. He studied at the Odessa Theological Seminary and graduated in 1916, in 1920 when he turned 30 years old he would be ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop (St.) Nykodym (Krotkov, who was later Martyred by the Bolsheviks) of Chyhyryn.

Fr. Mykola at first served in the villages of Mytrofanivka and Varvarivka. Later he would serve at a Church in Novgorodka then Svyato-Troitska, later he would transfer to Kolomna and Vyshnevolotsky and finally to Tver. When Sergei Stragorodosky issued his “Declaration”, he condemned Sergei's teachings and began to commemorate St. Joseph of Petrograd as the rightful First-Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> 1938 Fr. Mykola was arrested in Tver under Article 58-10 of the Soviet criminal code for belonging to a “counter-revolutionary Church structure of the 'Tikhonite' orientation” and sentenced to 10 years of hard labour in a penal camp. He would be sent to the Siberian VTT or “Siblag” district within the Soviet Union's “GULAG” system.

Fr. Mykola would be brought to the village of Temirtau and held at the “Gomo-Shor” camp, where the prisoners were forced to build a railway line between Mundybash and Tashtagol so they could carry coal from the Kuzbas coal mines to Western Russia. The conditions in the camp were harsh, prisoners were forced to work 16 hours a day with only one meal consisting of soup broth with a few vegetables – only being a few hundred calories at most – and during the winter to endure below-freezing temperatures with little protection.

The camp was overcrowded, with over 11,000 prisoners being placed in an area less than one square mile. Prisoners who could not fulfill quotas would be beaten by the guards and often personally by Makarov, attendant officer of the “Goshorlag”. Fr. Mykola lived and worked among these inhumane conditions surviving for over two years until February 12<sup>th</sup> 1940 when he fell asleep in the Lord and was transferred to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Most prisoners only survived six months in the camp, as most were killed by hypothermia, starvation or disease long before their sentence could ever be served. The relics of St. Mykola of Tver were buried in one of many mass graves near Temirtau and have not been positively identified.

The Gomo-Shor camp would be closed in 1941 when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. The harsh conditions of the camps in Siberia would be written about by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his 1959 work “A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.”

In 1989 St. Mykola and many other New Martyrs of Russia were formally rehabilitated by the Soviet government; however in recent times the modern Russian government – especially since the Russo-Ukrainian war began in 2022 – has reversed many of these decisions and declared the New Martyrs to have been “traitors and criminals”, among them St. Mykola of Tver.

The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of St. Mykola on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **---METROPOLITAN FEOFIL OF KHARKIV---**

Fyodor Ivanovich Buldovsky was born on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1865 in the village of Vasilyevka, Khorol region, Poltava province in the Russian Empire (modern day Ukraine). His father was an Archpriest at Kladovyshchenskaya Church in Poltava. He would enroll as a student in the Lubny Theological Academy and graduated on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1880. He would obtain a second doctorate from the Poltava Theological Academy in 1886 and after graduation he would become a school teacher in Vasilyevka.

Fyodor married a woman named Maria and had three sons and a daughter. His sons were Vitaly, an Army Officer, Oleksandr, a professor at a school in Poltava and Aleksei, who would become a priest and would serve at the St. Nicholas Church in the town of Mayachka in Kobelyatsky district. His daughter was named Elena and lived with her father most of her life.

In 1887 Bishop Ilarion (Yushenov) of Poltava and Pereyaslav would ordain him to the Priesthood and appoint him as the rector of the St. Nicholas Church in the village of Mayachok in the Kobelyatsky district. He proved himself to be an active pastor, having built two parish schools in Mayachok, establishing a lay

brotherhood, a Church library, a cultural center and a teahouse during his ministry.

In 1900 he would serve as the second priest at the Poltava Memorial Church of All Saints while also teaching the Law of God at the Poltava Diocesan school and the Kobzychensky Zemstvo primary school. In May 1908 he would be appointed a Diocesan officer for Makarievsky and join the lay brotherhood of Makarievsky.

For his work in Makarievsky Fr. Fyodor would be awarded the Order of St. Anna in the third degree in May 1909. Throughout his ministry he was well known as a “Ukrainophile”, speaking in the common Ukrainian language rather than the “High Russian” in his sermons and campaigning for more autonomy within the Ukrainian Exarchate.

In 1910 his wife Maria fell asleep in the Lord, shortly thereafter he would be tonsured a monk with the name Feofil after St. Theophilus of Antioch. Between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 1917 Fr. Feofil would attend the Poltava Clergy Synaxis and deliver a report about how the Ukrainian Exarchate should be administered after the February Revolution. Fr. Feofil's report would be well received by Archbishop Parfeniy (Levitsky) of Poltava.

Archbishop Parfeniy would ask Fr. Feofil to become his secretary. The following year in 1918 at the All-Ukrainian Church Council in Kyiv he would be elected as a Church delegate to the Ukrainian People's Republic under the government of Ataman Pavlo Skoropadsky. At the same Council he would denounce the Renovationists and be placed as a permanent Diocesan officer in Poltava.

The time during the Civil War was very difficult for Fr. Feofil, one of his sons Vitaly had become an officer of the Sich Riflemen and was killed by the Bolsheviks in 1919. The shift of power within the Ukrainian People's Republic to the presidency of Symon Petilura would result in a restructuring of the government and Fr. Feofil's church delegate status being left vacant.

In 1920 Fr. Feofil was captured by the Red Army and sentenced to death. Fr Feofil would escape prison before he could be killed with the help of Cossacks under the command of Ataman Skoropadsky. During the events of the 1921 so-called “Kyiv People's Church Council” where the former priest Vasyl Lypkivsky created an illegal church structure, Fr. Feofil and Abp. Parfeniy would strongly condemn Lypkivsky and his followers.

While struggling against the Lypkivskites, in the autumn of 1921 Abp. Parfeniy would petition Archbishop Mikhail (Ermakov, who later signed the infamous “Declaration”) to help him consecrate Fr. Feofil to the Episcopacy and appoint him as a Vicar Bishop to the Poltava Diocese; Abp. Mikhail refused to help Abp. Parfeniy consecrate Fr. Feofil due to personal grudges he had against him.

When Archbishop Parfeniy reposed on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1922 Fr. Feofil was saddened, having lost a man whom he considered a spiritual father. He continued to speak out against the Bolsheviks and the Lypkivskites and was arrested again by the Communists in 1922, but escaped prison with a group of other inmates. He was present at the Kyiv Clergy Conference on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1922 where his presentation was praised by Patriarch St. Tikhon.

On January 13<sup>th</sup> 1923 Feofil Buldovsky would be consecrated a Bishop by Vladyka Parfeniy's successor Archbishop Grigori (Lisovsky, later the founder of the sect known as the “Gregorians”) of Poltava and his two Vicar Bishops, Bp. Pyotr (Kireyev) of Zolotonosha and Bishop Nikolai (Braylovsky) of Cherkasy and Chigrin in the Dormition Cathedral in Poltava. Vladyka Feofil would be another Vicar for the Poltava Diocese as the Bishop of Lubny and Mirgorod, which had been left without a Bishop since the Revolution.

When Fr. Feofil arrived at the Dormition Cathedral in Poltava to be consecrated to the Episcopacy, he wore a tattered riassa and kamilavka. At first the guards outside the Cathedral turned him away, thinking he was an impoverished monk and not the Bishop-elect who was to be consecrated. After his consecration Vladyka Feofil became Abp. Grigori's secretary.

Bishop Feofil travelled to Moscow after his enthronement, but would not arrive until September of 1924. There in Moscow he met with Metropolitan Sergei (Stragorodsky, eponymous namesake of the heresy of Sergianism) and would discuss the need for an autonomous Ukrainian Church, a condemnation of the parasynagogues of the Lypkivskites and Renovationists and how to maintain canonical order during the persecutions of the Bolsheviks.

Met. Sergei agreed with Bishop Feofil on all matters except for granting autonomy to the Ukrainian Church and recommended Vladyka Feofil break communion with Abp. Grigori – who had since gone into schism from the Temporary Higher Church Authority led by Metropolitan (St.) Joseph of Petrograd – and commemorate him instead. Upon his return to Lubny in December 1924 Vladyka

Feofil broke communion with Abp. Grigori.

On December 12<sup>th</sup> 1924 Met. Sergei elevated Vladyka Feofil to a ruling Bishop and bestow on him the rank of Archbishop, soon after they would consecrate the Archpriest Sergei Ivanitsky as the Bishop of Chernigov. Mikhail Ermakov, who became the Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia – succeeding Met. Antony (Khrapovitsky) – would not accept Vladyka Feofil as a ruling Bishop, secretly convening a Council against him.

Metropolitan Mikhail attempted to get the support of Patriarch (St.) Tikhon to condemn Abp. Feofil, who refused to make or accept any accusation against Archbishop Feofil. Thus Mikhail Ermakov decided to wait until Patriarch Tikhon's repose on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1925 before taking any action against Archbishop Feofil.

Without inviting Vladyka Feofil and gathering 13 “bishops” (many of whom had been ordained by the Gregorian schismatics or the Renovationists) a trial would only last for one session with no witnesses being brought forth. Mikhail Ermakov and his followers declared Abp. Feofil to be defrocked and excommunicated. Abp. Feofil and Bp. Sergei upon learning of this, refused to recognize the decision and excommunicated Met. Mikhail and the other “bishops” for making an illegal assembly and causing a schism in the Church.

While trying to involve other Bishops to heal the schism, Abp. Feofil would write a letter to Met. Sergei, who promised he would condemn Met. Mikhail's actions. In January 1926 Met. Sergei would betray Abp. Feofil, condemning him and the “Lubny Sobor” as schismatics. Disheartened, Abp. Feofil would write to other Bishops, but by this point the persecution in Russia had meant most Bishops were imprisoned or killed, leaving the situation unresolved. One of the few Bishops who would write in support of Abp. Feofil was St. Damascene of Glukhov.

Archbishop Ioannikiy (Sokolovsky) – who was on trial for hiding Church vessels and funds from the Soviets – wrote a letter condemning Met. Mikhail and claimed his actions served the Soviet state in an attempt to divide the Church. Abp. Ioannikiy would declare his loyalty to Vladyka Feofil and become a sitting member of the Lubny Sobor.

Archbishop Feofil would receive Pavel Pogorilko – one of the “bishops” of the Lypkivskites – into his communion after hearing his Confession and correcting his orders. After a probationary period, Pavel would be consecrated to the Episcopacy.

The cathedral seat of Lubny was the Mgarr Transfiguration Monastery, but since it had been closed by the Soviets, Abp. Feofil instead had his residence in a small summer house outside of Lubny, nor far from Mgarr.

Vladyka Feofil continued to serve and consecrated another Bishop with the help of Bishop Sergei of Chernigov, Bishop Sergei (Labutsnev) was appointed as a Vicar in Zolotonosha. In 1927 Sergei would send out his “Declaration” claiming the Orthodox Church had to be subservient to the god-fighting Bolshevik government. Archbishop Feofil and the Sobor wrote a letter in response, condemning the Declaration and calling Sergei to repentance.

The Lubny Sobor continued to struggle against the Lypkivskites, Renovationists, Gregorians and Sergianists, ordaining several new priests for existing parishes in Polish-occupied and Soviet-occupied Ukraine as well as establishing new parishes. There would be over 200 parishes that commemorated Abp. Feofil throughout Ukraine by August 1927.

As a result of condemning Sergianism, the OGPU would order the arrest of Vladyka Feofil and all of his clergy in Soviet Ukraine. Pavel Pogorilko and Ioannikiy Sokolovsky would be intimidated into joining the Sergianists, Sergei of Zolotonosha would end up renouncing the Faith completely.

By the end of 1927 Archbishop Feofil convened a secret meeting of the Sobor in Lubny, where he convinced the remaining Bishops Sergei (Ivanitsky) and Vladyka Iosif to ordain more clergy, but by early 1928 Sergei Ivanitsky would join the Sergianists. The persecution of the Soviet authorities against Archbishop Feofil in Ukraine was severe, with the operations of the OGPU reducing the number of parishes to only two dozen by 1929. By 1930 Archbishop Feofil and Vladyka Iosif – who were already in hiding – decided to dissolve the Lubny Sobor and act according to Ukaz № 362, becoming Catacomb churchmen.

During this time in the 1930s not much is known about Archbishop Feofil's activities; in 1937 he would move to Luhansk to serve Catacomb Christians there. His son Fr. Aleksei would be arrested on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and executed by firing squad on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1937 in Kharkiv for belonging to a “counter-revolutionary organization”. His son Oleksandr was arrested on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1937 and killed by firing squad in Vladivostok on August 21<sup>st</sup> 1938 for “anti-Soviet behavior.”

In 1939 the Catacomb churches in Luhansk were discovered and dismantled by

the Soviet authorities, however they failed to capture Archbishop Feofil. By the end of 1940 Archbishop Feofil had no churches to serve, moving to Kharkiv and serving the Divine Liturgy secretly with only one or two faithful present and under constant fear of the Bolsheviks.

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the German invasion of the Soviet Union the Germans would capture Kharkiv in October 1941. Abp. Feofil in late September would enter communion with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and be elevated to the dignity of Metropolitan of Kharkiv and be placed as administrator of the churches in Poltava, Sumy, Voronezh and Kursk.

His first action as the Metropolitan of Kharkiv would be serving a panikhida for Patriarch St. Tikhon and giving a lecture about the Sergianists and warning the faithful to avoid Alexey Gromadsky, who was placed by the Sergianist church as the Exarch of Ukraine.

In November 1941 members of the German Gestapo visited Metropolitan Feofil along with the Diocesan officers of Kharkiv and demanded that Vladyka Feofil support the political positions of the Nazi Party, work for German interests in the Church, condemn the Soviet church structures, commemorate Adolf Hitler and the German Army in the Liturgy, to give five percent of all Church funds to the German government, for the clergy to report anyone who spoke against the Germans – even in Confession – and to not baptize Jews.

Vladyka Feofil agreed to condemn the Soviet church structures, pray only for the victory of the German Army and to not actively go against the German government, but refused to fulfill all the other demands. The Gestapo attempted to arrest Metropolitan Feofil, especially after he converted several Jews to the Orthodox Faith, but he avoided arrest due to the efforts of General Petro Dyachenko.

After months of trying to arrest Metropolitan Feofil, in January 1942 the Gestapo would write in their records that he was no longer a threat and did not need to fulfill their demands. That same month Vladyka Feofil blessed members of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Insurgent Army (also called the Poliska Sich) led by Ataman Taras Bulba-Borovets who were fighting against the Bolsheviks.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1942 Archbishop Nikanor (Abramovych), Archbishop Oleksandr (Inozemtsev) and Bishop Igor (Guba) would consecrate Mstyslav (Skrypnyk) to

the Episcopacy and enthrone him as the Bishop of Pereyaslav in the cathedral of St. Andrew the First-Called in Kyiv. Metropolitan Feofil would be the first to send a congratulatory letter to Bishop Mstyslav – a Poltava native – and shortly thereafter the two became close friends.

In a personal letter to Bishop Mstyslav dated July 14<sup>th</sup> 1942 Metropolitan Feofil wrote: “God by His providence has been pleased to save me from death at the hands of the Bolsheviks, but they would take my sons to unknown places. My oldest Vitaly, during the Civil War, my second Oleksandr – a professor in Poltava – to Vladivostok where he has been missing since 1937. My third, the Archpriest Aleksei, was also taken from Kharkiv the same year and is still missing... I pray God may unite us in this life or the next.”

Metropolitan Feofil would not know the fate of his two younger sons during his earthly life. He would give much advice and instruction to Bishop Mstyslav, who considered him a mentor; Metropolitan Feofil invited Bishop Mstyslav to Kharkiv many times until Vladyka Mstyslav's arrest by the Gestapo in August 1942.

At a meeting on July 27<sup>th</sup> 1942 with Bishop Mstyslav of Pereyaslav and the Archpriest Fr. Aleksei Potulinsky, it was discussed how to organize the Kharkiv Metropolis and the reports written by Fr. Aleksei recorded: “...we recognize the parishes subordinate to His Eminence Feofil in the territories of Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy and Kursk to be an integral part of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church under our First Hierarch Polikarp (Sikorsky).”

Sometime in the summer of 1942 Metropolitan Feofil would establish contact with Metropolitan Serafim (Lyade) of Berlin, the ROCOR Bishop over Europe. The two became close friends and through the cooperation of Abp. Oleksandr and Vladyka Feofil, Metropolitan Serafim and the ROCOR considered the UAOC to be canonically regular and allowed concelebration between their clergy during the war years.

In the fall of 1942 he visited Slovakia and Hungary, being given an audience with the President of Slovakia Jozef Tiso. When Tiso – who was also a Roman Catholic priest – wished to pray together before a meal; Metropolitan Feofil walked out of the room and refused to eat anything that had been blessed by him.

In Hungary Metropolitan Feofil ordained a Hungarian man surnamed Shad to the priesthood. Shad invited Metropolitan Feofil to Budapest to help consecrate a

Bishop for the country with the trip being planned for March-April 1943, but this was cancelled due to the Soviets capturing the city of Kharkiv.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1942 he was present at the Sobor in Lutsk for the elevation of Archbishop Polikarp (Sikorsky) to the rank of Metropolitan and proposed a resolution to the Sobor that no clergy from the Lypkivskites be accepted without a correction of orders. Metropolitan Polikarp would give Metropolitan Feofil temporary administration of the churches in Crimea during this Sobor meeting.

Vladyka Feofil's ministry in Kharkiv during the war would be very difficult; constant bombing raids by the Soviets and Partisan attacks – along with the German reprisals to them – would leave the city in ruins and the population in fear. Vladyka Feofil would serve without any fear of death, even as bombing raids occurred while he was serving the Liturgy he would not attempt to hide or show any effort to protect himself from harm, trusting completely in the will of God.

Vladyka Feofil personally visited the sick and infirm, gave bread to the hungry during famines and alms to those who lost everything. On the first day the Soviets recaptured territory within the city of Kharkiv on February 19<sup>th</sup> 1943, Soviet soldiers occupied the Bishop's residence in the city and took Metropolitan Feofil as a hostage.

Despite Metropolitan Feofil being an enemy of the Bolsheviks and wanted by the Soviet authorities, he showed great hospitality to the Soviet servicemen, offering them tea and bread. The soldiers were confused by these actions, knowing that he was considered a “traitor” by the Soviet state and would ask Metropolitan Feofil about his life, which he told in detail. The officer of this group – a hardened atheist – had pangs of conscience and decided not to report Metropolitan Feofil's whereabouts to the Soviet army command, leaving him in peace temporarily.

Metropolitan Feofil continued to serve peacefully until August 1943 when the Soviets fully captured the city from the Germans. The Moscow Patriarchate Exarch in Ukraine Mikhail Yarushevich shortly after the capture of the city sent an ultimatum to Metropolitan Feofil; that he must sign a document condemning the German government and commemorate Sergei Stragorodsky as Patriarch. Vladyka Feofil would agree to condemn the German government – as he had personally witnessed several atrocities committed by their forces – but refused to commemorate Sergei.

Vladyka Feofil requested Mikhail to give him time to write a letter to Sergei, which would delay his arrest for a few months. He would receive another ultimatum on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1943 which prompted him to write a letter to Sergei Stragodorsky the following day on November 10<sup>th</sup> stating:

“I send my greetings as a friend. I had heard about thy appointment as Patriarch from various clergy and from the telegram that was sent out... I wished to send an explanatory letter but; there was a delay... Nevertheless any past wrongs between us I forget, for I do not wish there to be any bitterness between us for any mistakes I may have made... I cannot set my case on paper by law, which thou brother, know... I am a 78 year old man, halfway dead as is from illness. I cannot come to Moscow so I ask for thee to be a mediator with His Eminence (Mikhail). I hope to ask this as a friend:

As for the request to join the Patriarchate, I already mentioned my advanced age and illness. I only have two companions, not counting the supervisors the Soviets have placed over me. My daughter also lives with me and cares for my health. If I wish to join the Patriarchate, thou will know... Otherwise I ask to be granted a peaceful repose.”

As a result of this letter the NKVD arrested Metropolitan Feofil on November 12<sup>th</sup> charging him with collaboration with the German forces and being part of an “illegal counter-revolutionary Church organization.” In court he argued that even by Soviet law there was a guaranteed freedom of religion and that he had almost been arrested by the Germans because he refused to collaborate with them.

He was found guilty by the Soviet court and placed in a makeshift prison camp in Ukraine, being deprived of the most basic of needs and enduring severe torture by the Soviets. He asked several times to be brought to Moscow to stand trial there before the Supreme Court, but soon he was deprived of his right to appeal or have meetings with lawyers.

While in prison he was offered to join the Moscow Patriarchate several times by priests and bishops of the MP with the promise he would be released if he did; each time this offer was proposed, Vladyka Feofil refused to join the MP. It was recorded by the NKVD that he reposed on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944 but how he was killed, where he was killed and where he is buried was not recorded; as of today his place of burial is still unknown.