

of divinization by grace. The hagiography of a saint, just as the content of his or her icon, consists not so much in presenting a biography as in portraying his or her spiritual qualities. The fullness of a saint's spiritual life is described in hagiographies as the achievement of the communion with God. This communion is attained by living a life of profound prayer, love of neighbour, and harmony with the surrounding world.

d. New Ukrainian Martyrs and Confessors of Faith

322 With a history of more than a thousand years, the Kyivan Church glories in a vast assembly of saints. In the words of Patriarch Josyf, "the Ukrainian Church's witness of faith in Christ and his one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, was confirmed by the bloodied seal of a fearless profession, and suffering; by martyrdom and the mountains [of bodies] of our sacrificed people."²⁸³ Truly, the "blood of martyrs," known and unknown, became the "seed of the Church."²⁸⁴

323 Among the martyrs of our Church, a special place of honour is given to the hieromartyr Josaphat, Archbishop of Polotsk, who suffered for the unity of Christ's Church in the time of the Union of Brest. His personage as a passion-bearer is an example of self-sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation. Like Saints Borys and Hlib, he preferred to sacrifice his own life than to see the shedding of his brothers' blood.

324 The martyrdom of the Church continued in the following centuries. In 1709, the Basilian monks of Polotsk embraced a martyr's death at the hands of the Russian Tsar, Peter I; and in 1768 the 68 martyrs of Berdychiv died for their faith. In the nineteenth century, two great waves of persecution took place, in 1839 and in 1875. This martyrdom was crowned by the glorification of the Pratulyn martyrs—simple villagers, who stood faithfully by their home church in Pratulyn (and in the vicinity of Kholm) to their death, killed by the bullets fired by tsarist police. Great was also the martyrdom of the Church in the twentieth century during the reign of the atheistic regime. In 1946, when the activity of the UGCC was prohibited, churches were expropriated, possessions confiscated, and persecution of the faithful began. All the bishops of the UGCC in Ukraine were arrested. Many priests, monks, nuns, and laity were murdered, while others were imprisoned and sent into exile.

²⁸³ PATRIARCH Josyf Slipyj, *Завіщання* [Testament] (December 22, 1981).

²⁸⁴ TERTULLIAN, *Apologia*, 50: PL 1, 535.

325 Many faithful continued to witness to their faith in the underground Church gathering for divine services in private homes. They received the Holy Mysteries secretly, and listened to broadcasts of the Divine Liturgy on Vatican Radio. The Communist authorities constantly persecuted the underground Church: priests were imprisoned, and many laypersons were expelled from educational institutions or their jobs. This heroic period of martyrdom lasted from 1946 to 1989. Among the confessors of the faith who experienced imprisonment and exile in the twentieth century were the heads of the UGCC, the Venerable Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky (1865-1944) and Patriarch Josyf Slipyj (1892-1984). Several martyrs and religious were also numbered among the choir of the blessed—bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and one layperson—by Saint Pope John Paul II during his pilgrimage to Ukraine, June 23-27, 2001. They are the new and venerable martyrs (*prepodobnomuchenky*) of the UGCC of the twentieth century.

326 Copiously bedewed with the blood of many martyrs, the Church in our time reaps the grace-filled fruits of the holiness of her children. Martyrs and confessors are those who, for the sake of the glory of the age to come, sacrificed themselves in this present age. Their contribution to the future of the Church is beyond measure, because it is the gift of one's entire life, "even to death upon the cross."

May the supplications of the ancient righteous ones of the land of Ukraine and the sufferings of our confessors of the holy Gospel rise as fragrant incense before the throne of the Most High; for it is by their sacrifices that the Church of Christ is regenerated and strengthened in the midst of our people.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ *Floral Triodion*, Sunday of All Saints of Rus-Ukraine, Vespers, Stichera at Lytia.