

## **Brief Biography of St. Vasily of Kineshemy**

The following is a translation from an article with regard to St. Vasily, a saint canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church. It is taken from Wikipedia, in Russian, and rendered somewhat imperfectly here in English. Corrections will be made at a later time. The same with further information to be added.

Not to be confused with Bishop Vasily of Mozhaik and in the world known as Veniamin Sergeevich Preobrazhensky, born January 7, 1876 in Kineshma, Kostroma province and dies August 13, 1945, village of Birilyussy, Krasnoyarsk Territory; bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church, Bishop of Ivanovo, vicar of the Vladimir diocese.

In 1885 he entered the Kineshma Theological School which he graduated in 1890 with the first category with the right to enter the theological seminary without an exam. In the same year he entered the Kostroma Theological Seminary after which in 1896 he was sent to the Kiev Theological Academy. In 1900 he graduated from the KDA with the degree of candidate of theology for the dissertation “Slavic-Russian skete Patericon”.

In 1901-1910 he was teacher of accusatory theology, history and exposure of the Russian schism and local sects at the Voronezh Theological Seminary. During this time, he wrote a dissertation “On the skete Patericon” for which he received a master’s degree in theology.

In 1910-1911 he studied in London where he was engaged in an in-depth study of European culture. He knew ancient and new European languages perfectly. While living in England, he became interested in the scouting movement, personally talked and listened

to lectures by the founder of the world scouting movement, Robert Baden-Powell.

Upon his return, he taught foreign languages and general history at the Mirgorod Men's Gymnasium, from 1914 he taught Latin at the Peter and Paul Gymnasium in Moscow, and during these years he graduated from the Pedagogical Institute.

After a special trip to England in 1914, where the future saint studied the scouting method in detail, his two books “Boy Scouts” were published, recognized as the best at the First Scout Congress in 1915 which decided to familiarize **all the** schools, gymnasiums and lyceums in Russia with the works of V. S. Preobrazhensky.

He was a participant in two pre-revolutionary scouting congresses. In a 1917 book, he adapted the “scouting” system for Orthodox Russia.

There is a story about how in the summer he and his comrades were riding on a boat that capsized. Dying, he turned to God with a request to save his life, promising to completely devote himself to serving the Church. At that moment he saw a thick long board and, grabbing onto it, swam out. All the others who were with him died.

In the fall of 1917, he returned to Kineshma and became a psalm reader at the Church of the Ascension where his elderly father served. Soon Vasily Preobrazhensky began to create Orthodox circles in Kineshma and its environs, the main purpose of which was the study of the Holy Scriptures.

On July 16, 1920, in Kostroma, Archbishop Seraphim (Meshcheryako) of Kostroma and Galich was ordained a celibate priest. In 1921 he took monastic vows with the name Vasily in honor of Basis the Great.

In the same year, he was arrested by the Ivanovo-Voznesensk provincial Cheka “as a politically unreliable person as a hostage during the days of the Kronstadt rebellion.”

On September 14, 1921, he was consecrated Bishop of Kineshma, vicar of the Kostroma diocese. His episcopal consecration was performed by Archbishop Seraphim (Meshcheryako) of Kostroma, Bishop Hierofey (Pomerantsev) of Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Bishop Sevastain (Vesti) of Nerekhta.

He lived in extreme poverty on the outskirts of the city in a small bathhouse, sleeping on the bare floor with a log under his head . He was a talented preacher - his sermons attracted many people to the temple.

When famine began in Nizhny Novgorod, in his sermons he urged parishioners to take in the orphaned children of deceased parents. He himself rented a house in which he settled 5 orphan girls and assigned them a teacher—a pious Christian. He created Orthodox spiritual circles that united believers—in these circles they studied the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the church.

He was a staunch opponent of the renovation movement which caused sharp rejection by the authorities.

On March 4, 1923, Bishop Vasily was appointed Bishop of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. However, the active bishop did not manage to stay long at the Ivanovo See. The authorized representative of the OGUP wrote on March 22, 1923: “in order to paralyze his intense desire to raise religious feelings among the masses (among whom he enjoys great influence), I would suggest that Bishop Vasily be expelled from the Ivanovo-Voznesensk province to one of the remote

areas of the RSFSR.” In May 1923, he was arrested and exiled for 2 years to the village of Ust-Kulom, Zyryansky Territory.

In July 1925, he returned to Kineshma, gathered his spiritual children around him, but six months later the authorities demanded that he leave the city. He lived in the village of Anapol, in a house built by his cell attendant Alexander Chumakov, who accompanied him in two exiles.

Since 1926: Bishop of Vyaznikovsky, vicar of the Vladimir diocese. According to Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), this appointment was temporary, since the bishop could not return to Kineshma and manage his vicariate.

He wrote about his stay in Vyazniki: “I feel calm here for now: I’m not having spiritual children yet, because I’m not sure about the longevity of my stay here. There is also very little administrative hassle.” In Vyazniki the saint finished work on “Conversations on the Gospel of Mark.” In the spring of 1927, he was exiled to Kineshma.

In 1927, he was appointed Bishop of Ivanovo, but did not take over the administration of the diocese, since the authorities sent him to Kineshma, and in July 1927, “to prevent the strengthening of reactionary Tikhonovism,” forced him to leave for Kostroma.

He reacted negatively to the “Declaration” ” (July 29, 1927) of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), which called for complete loyalty to Soviet power. He was a supporter of Metropolitans Agafangel (Preobrazhensky) and Kirill (Smirnov).

On November 19, 1928, the OGPU board decided to exile him to the Urals for three years . The bishop and his spiritual children were, in particular, found guilty of “not limiting themselves to the spiritual

enslavement of backward layers of believers, especially women, they involved them in circles and sisterhoods, used national prejudices, and financially supported active churchmen exiled for anti-Soviet activities " He served his exile in the village of Malorechka, twenty-five kilometers from the regional town of Taborovo, Yekaterinburg Region where he performed divine services every day.

Upon returning from exile, from 1932 he lived in Orel. In March 1933, he was arrested again and sent to prison in Kineshma. He was sentenced to five years in prison (his faithful cell attendant Alexander Chumakov was sentenced along with him), while imprisoned in a camp near Rybinsk, he worked on the construction of a canal.

In January 1938, he was released from the camp, lived in Rybinsk, then in the village of Kotovo, Yaroslav region with Iraida Tikhova. He created a small religious circle and served secretly in a small temple, which was built in a bathhouse.

On November 5, 1943, he was arrested again and imprisoned in the Yaroslav internal prison. In January 1944, he was transported to Moscow, to the internal prison of the NKVD and then was imprisoned in Butyrka prison. He was sentenced to five years of exile. By that time he was seriously ill, and after the verdict was announced he suffered a severe heart attack.

He was sent to the prison of the city of Krasnoyarsk, then sent to the distant village of Birilyussy where he died on August 13, 1945. Before his death, he asked a nun who was serving exile in the same village to read the canon on the outcome of the soul. When she read the last prayer, the saint himself said in a firm voice: "Amen," and quietly rested.

The name of Vasily of Kineshma was included in the draft list of new martyrs and confessors of Russia in preparation for the canonization performed by the ROCOR in 1981. However, the list of new martyrs including the name of Bishop Basil was published only in the late 1990s.

On October 18, 1985, his relics were found and brought to Moscow; then transferred to the Vvedensky Convent in the city of Ivanovo. In 1993, he was canonized as a locally revered saint of the Ivanovo diocese. Glorified in August 2000 by the Jubilee Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in the guise of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

In 2011, in Kineshma, next to the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, the chapel of St. Basil of Kineshma was opened.

In June 2012, his relics were received from the Vvedensky Monastery in the city of Ivanovo by the secretary of the Synodal Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate for the Canonization of Saints, Hegumen Damascene (Orkovsky) on the basis of the order of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill and taken to an undisclosed place (at the same time the relics of the Hieromartyr Vladimir Vvedensky were transferred to the monastery). In the desktop calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church published in the same year by the publishing house of the Moscow Patriarchate, the memory of Hiero-Confessor Vasily on July 31/August 13 and October 5/18 was absent, as well as the names of 35 other new martyrs (his name is not included in the Council of Saints of the Ivanovo Metropolis, approved on 7 May 2015 by Patriarch Kirill; at the same time, the decision on his decanonization was not made by either the Holy Synod or the Council of Bishops held in February 2013 (only they can make decisions on (de)canonization on behalf of the entire Church). According to Andrei Kuraev, this could happen

due to the discovery of new documents containing indications of facts “that do not correspond to Christian ideas about how a saint (not an ordinary person, but an exemplary saint) should behave during interrogation and even under torture.” Tikhon (Shevkonov) who had a negative attitude towards such a step, explained: “Representatives of the commission have already spoken and responded that this is not “decanonization” at all, but these are actions for additional research.”

On April 4, 2014, the Museum of St. Basil of Kineshma was opened in Kineshma. The new building exactly follows the contours of the burnt house in which Vasily Kineshensky served during the years of exile. Among the exhibits are a cassock, censer, manuscripts and other personal items that were kept in the families of the saint’s spiritual children for more than half a century.