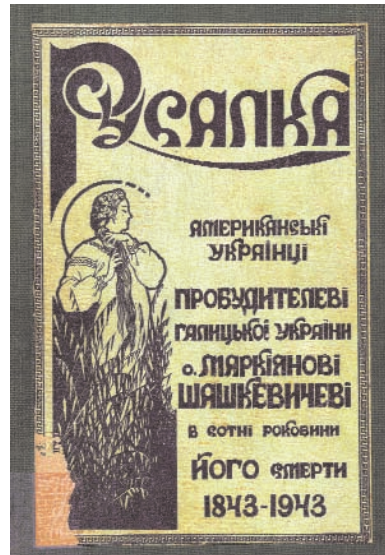


This year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Markian Shashkevych (1811-1843). In his brief life Fr. Shashkevych managed to lay the foundation and to plant the seed for the rebirth, revival, and further development of Ukrainian national identity in Western Ukraine and the use of the Ukrainian vernacular in writing. More importantly, he advocated the use of the Ukrainian language, rather than the commonly practiced use Polish or German, when delivering sermons in Eastern Rite churches. What Taras Shevchenko did for Ukrainian thought in the Ukrainian area under tsarist (Russian) control, Shashkevych did for the Ukrainians in the Western areas.

Fr. Shashkevych had to face many stumbling blocks, not only from the official Austrian/Polish authorities, but also from many more of his own brethren who did not want to disturb the status quo; this included even some members of the Church hierarchy. He did,



however, have two faithful friends who supported him – Yakiv Holovatsky and Ivan Vahylevych. In history, the three became known as the *Galician Triad*.

The *Triad* compiled a book of literary writings in the vernacular Ukrainian, the first of this kind, of which the first version the censors in Lviv did not give their permission for printing. Finally, the same work was taken to Budapest and in 1837 one thousand copies were published under the title, *Rusalka Dnistrova*. Two hundred copies were distributed and the rest were sent to Lviv, and there the police confiscated all of the 800 copies and did not release them for distribution. *Rusalka Dnistrova* became the herald, the forerunner for the further development of Ukrainian literature in the vernacular.

Father Markian Shashkevych died in extreme

poverty, ill with tuberculosis which resulted in his going blind and deaf, but to the end he continued to work for the realization of his ideas. He was buried in the little village where he had been pastor. But on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, when the Galician Ukrainian Society finally realized the importance and immortal services of Father Markian's work – through the efforts of the Enlightenment Society – his earthly remains were transferred in 1893 to the Lychakiv National Cemetery in Lviv. In 1906 through the efforts of the aforementioned Society a monument was placed on his gravesite at the cost of 2590 crowns. As to who the sculptor was – there is no mention.

Father Markian Shashkevych was born in the village of Pidlyssia. The inhabitants of this village also wanted to commemorate him. So, in 1911 on the highest peak in the area known as the Bright Hill, they erected a metal cross. Just as the Shevchenko monument in Kaniv was erected to pay homage to that great poet and be a constant reminder of his work and

ideas, so too the metal cross on the Bright Hill in Pidlyssia was to be the beacon for Western Ukrainians.

Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky tried to instill devotion to Father Shashkevych among the Ukrainian immigrants in America. He wanted to instill in them the importance of the preservation of their Ukrainian identity and culture. For this reason he founded the Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford which he wanted to fill with artifacts reflecting Ukrainian culture, history, etc. In the 1930s he placed an order with the then noted Ukrainian sculptor Serhii Lytvynenko in Lviv to produce a miniature replica of the gravestone of Father Markian Shashkevych and the metal cross on the Bright Hill of Pidlyssia. Both items we now have in our Museum collection.

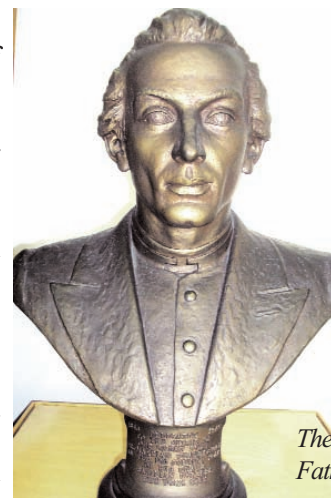
Apparently in the 1930s there was an effort by Ukrainian-Americans to produce a bust of Father Shashkevych by Archipenko. In our archives we have a collections list and a letter from Myron Surmach to this effect. What happened to this effort is not known, but the bust of Father Shashkevych by Archipenko did not materialize.

In 1943 the Basilian Fathers in New York organized a concert commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Father Shashkevych. For these ceremonies an Italian sculptor produced a bust of Shashkevych which was later donated to our Museum. On this occasion they also published a commemorative book which included valuable and interesting materials pertinent to this day.

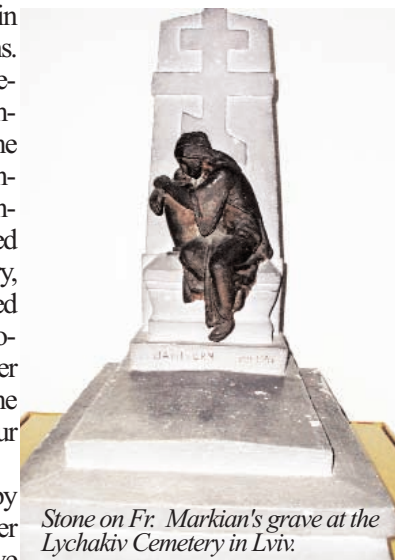
Father Shashkevych wrote under the pen name of Ruslan. In the following excerpt of his *Ruslan's Psalm* we can learn much more about him:

... Because hope did not flee from my heart – because Who if not God?  
 You may frighten my fate away, and chase away happiness,  
 The days will become sorrowful and my world will collapse,  
 My world will become desolate and will become my enemy,  
 Happiness will languish and weeping will ensue,  
 Sorrow in the morning and grief in the evening,  
 The night will be sleepless but distress will come in the daytime,  
 You may tear out my eyes and my soul, but you will not tear out  
 My grace nor my faith, you will not tear away my love,  
 Nor my faith – because my heart is Ukrainian and my faith is Ukrainian.

Our Museum is indeed a fortunate recipient of the rich Ukrainian legacy of Father Markian Shashkevych!



The bust of Fr. Shashkevych commissioned by the Basilian Fathers in 1943 for the 100th anniversary of his death.



Stone on Fr. Markian's grave at the Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv.

Explore and Experience Our Past

The Sower  
 December 25, 2011