

reads: “Mary, Advocate, Protectress, and Perpetual Help of Christians.”

Around the dome are eight life-sized angels. These were applied with a spray gun and a pattern for each of the six colors. Other decorative work was produced in a similar fashion.

Although the painting is the focal point of interest to the visitor, St. Mary’s Church contains other valuable paintings by outstanding artists. Reverend Metzger painted the Four Evangelists, one on each of the supporting pillars of the dome.

The work of Stephen Meush can also be seen in the Ukrainian churches of St. Basil’s in Regina, SK; Alvena, SK; Smuts, SK; Arran, SK and Transcona, MB.

### *The Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*

After the building of the east wing of the church in 1955 – 56, a large new icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was given a place of honor behind the altar in 1964. The icon was painted by Igor Suhacev of Toronto, ON.

The icon is a representation of the original miraculous icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, which is venerated today at the Church of St. Alphonsus in Rome, Italy. This original is so ancient that it cannot be said with certainty who painted it. One legend attributes it to St. Luke.

This Byzantine icon contains much symbolism, which teaches by means of a story. Frightened by the vision of two angels showing him the instruments of the Passion, The Christ Child ran to His Mother, almost losing, in His haste, one of His tiny sandals. Mary holds Him in her arms reassuringly and lovingly. But notice her eyes: they look not at Jesus, but at us, thus signifying her motherly concern also for us.

Christ’s little hands are pressed into Mary’s as a reminder to us that, just as on earth, He placed Himself entirely in her hands for protection. So, now

in heaven, He has given into Her hands all graces to distribute to those who ask Her.

Among other symbols used is the star of Our Lady’s veil. She is the star of the Sea, the one who brought the light of Christ to a darkened world, the Star that leads us to the safe port of heaven. The entire background is golden, symbolic of heaven and reflecting upon Her clothing shows the heavenly joy they can bring to tired human hearts.

The golden crown, placed on the original icon by order of the Holy See in 1867, is a reminder of the many miracles wrought by our Lady invoked under the title of “Our Mother of Perpetual Help”.

Pope Pius the IX entrusted this miraculous icon to the Redemptorists with the instruction: “See to it that Our Mother of Perpetual Help is made known throughout the world.”

It is most fitting that the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help holds the place of honor in St. Mary’s Church in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, a church under the pastoral care of the Ukrainian Catholic Redemptorists.

### *The Altar*

The altar was installed in 1965 and it, along with all the woodwork in the sanctuary, was designed by the same artist that painted the icon, Igor Suhacev. The woodcarving was done out of maple and birch by Warren Smith of Toronto, ON.

At the base of the altar are 28 figurines, representing Saints of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

The parish of St. Mary’s and the Redemptorists invite you to come and pray in this beautiful church which inspires a sense of reverence and awe. We would be happy to arrange an appointment for you to see the church and dome. **However, please call 306.783.4594 in advance so that someone is prepared to give you a tour Tuesday to Friday 9:00 am – 12:00 noon; 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm, May 1 to September 30.** For more information or comments please call the Parish Information Line 306.782.0654.

## St. Mary’s Ukrainian Catholic Church



Tourism   
**Yorkton**  
Where good things happen.

**Tourism Yorkton**  
Junction Highway 9 & 16  
Box 460  
Yorkton, SK  
S3N 2W4  
Phone: (306)783.8707  
Fax: (306) 786.6978  
[tourismyorkton@sasktel.net](mailto:tourismyorkton@sasktel.net)  
[www.tourismyorkton.com](http://www.tourismyorkton.com)

## *General History*

The first Ukrainian settler in Yorkton, Paul Brodsky, arrived in June 1902. Many others soon followed, immigrating mostly from the village of Hryhoriw and Chechiw in the area of Buchach, found in Western Ukraine.

On January 13, 1904, Fr. Achilles Delaere, CSsR, (a bust of him is found near the South entrance), arrived from Brandon, MB to serve the people of Yorkton. Along with other Belgian Redemptorists, he established St. Gerard's Parish in the years 1904-1905, and at the same time began working among the Ukrainian people. Up until then the Ukrainians had no spiritual guidance.

Construction on the monastery was completed in 1913 and the church was finished in 1914. On August 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year the church was blessed by Bishop Nicetas Budka. It soon became the center for Ukaraianian Catholics from Wynyard, Sk to the Manitoba border.

John Logan was the contractor for the church. The exterior was made of beige bricks that were manufactured from the sandy clay found near the site of the church. It was the first Ukrainian Catholic Church in Western Canada to be built of brick. Until the building of the church, Ukrainian Catholics in Yorkton used the chapel at St. Gerard's Roman Catholic monastery for their services.

In 1920 Fr. N. M. Decamps, then the superior of the community, added a west wing to the new monastery and also an entire 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. These additions served at different times as a Juvenate (minor Seminary), major Seminary, and in the late 1940's and early 1950's as an elementary parochial school.

As the city grew, so did the Parish. In 1936, the population of Yorkton was 4, 931. In 1941, 4, 000 people attended the annual pilgrimage day or VIDPUST on July 7<sup>th</sup>, from Yorkton and district. The pilgrimage is still an annual affair, but it is now observed on the weekend prior to the July long weekend.

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, which originally was found behind the altar in the church, was a certified copy of the original icon in Rome and was had-painted on wood. It was blessed by Pope Benedict the XV in 1916. The icon still remains displayed in the church sacristy.

The east wing of the church was built in 1955 – 56. In doing so, special regard had to be given to the pillars which support the dome. The east wing had to be built narrow and long for this reason.

## *Yorkton's "Cathedral Dome"*

Few Yorkton citizens are aware that in their very own city exists one of the finest paintings of its kind in North America. The painting is in the dome of St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church. Art critics have likened it, particularly in it's soft matching colors, to the great religious paintings in Europe.

The painting covers the entire dome and has a curvature of over 62 ft. In 1941 an Ottawa art critic estimated the value of the painting at \$35,000.00 or more. In 003 it was estimated at over \$250,000.00.



It is the work of the late Stephen Meush who received his training in Lviv, Ukraine and after three years of study in Italy he spent a year in Krakow, Poland before coming to Canada in 1932. He was 36 years of age when he undertook the painting at St. Mary's Church

In September 1939. The task, which included a number of other paintings in the church, was completed in May 1941. Similar to most artists, Mr. Meush painted only when inspired. There were days when he sat idly with his thoughts and other times he would work day and night without stopping to eat. He died of a heart attack while fishing on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951. He was truly a gift to the people of the Yorkton district and beyond.

The top of the dome measures 55 ft. above the floor. The curvature required that the central figures, the 157 angels and the Cherubs surrounding them, be painted in a distorted manner so that from the floor level they would appear to be on a flat plain. At first, it was necessary for the artist to visualize a central point on the diameter of the base of the curve. Working from this point and a corresponding point on the floor he applied a series of geometric angels and logarithms to make his charcoal sketches. He spent two months making the projected drawings.

The main colors are softer hues of orange, indigo and red as seen by Meush in Saskatchewan sunsets. Gallons of the best artists' paints were applied, together with Meush's own inks, which he was continually seeking to improve. The paints penetrate to a depth of 1/8 of an inch to avoid injury to the images should plaster flake away. The painting (Fresco) is further protected by many coats of varnish.

The painting is an original and represents the Coronation of the Virgin Mary in heaven. The image stands out brightly and depicts God as "the ancient of days" (Daniel 7:9ff) blessing Mary. Jesus is depicted holding a Crown over Mary's head and the Holy Spirit is portrayed in the shape of a hovering dove.

Surrounding the throne of God are 157 angels of different sizes. Below the feet of Mary, there is a sky-blue streamer with a yellow inscription bearing the Old Slavonic words "Hail, Virgin, Full of Grace, Queen of Heaven, Holy, Holy, Holy, Alleluia!" Below the streamer there is an open book which reads: "Mary, Advocate, Protectress and Perpetual Help of Christians."