

# CATHOLIC COURIER

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## Legacy of life

Jim DiNolfo died 12 years ago, yet his life still inspires those who cared for him. With this story, we introduce "Insight," a new monthly feature. See pages 12 and 13.

## Tapestry symbolizes repression

By Richard A. Kiley  
Staff writer

ELMIRA HEIGHTS — The small tapestry hanging on the tetrapod cross at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Elmira Heights is beautiful and radiant, but it symbolizes something disturbing and troubling.

The tapestry — woven of red, white and yellow threads — depicts a church in flames — symbolizing religious persecution.

According to Father George Lukachyk, pastor, the tapestry is part of a longtime tradition in Ukrainian prisons, where women prisoners fashion miniature tapestries as markers for holy books. This particular tapestry's pilgrimage began in a Soviet prison in deep Siberia. It was created

by a Ukrainian woman, Orysa Senyk, who was imprisoned for more than 30 years for worshipping God as a Catholic.

"We will keep it there on the (altar) table where we perform the sacraments, to symbolize that the church is one with Christ," said Father Lukachyk, a self-described "voice of conscience" for Ukrainian Catholics in America. "When the church suffers and dies, Christ suffers and dies; When Christ suffers and dies, the church suffers and dies."

The Ukrainian priest said the 10-inch tapestry, which was made from threads pulled from old garments, was kept small deliberately so Senyk could hide it during sudden searches at the prison. Father Lukachyk received the tapestry by mail from Josyp Terelya, the international lay leader

of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Terelya, who now lives in Toronto with his family, was exiled from the Soviet Union in September, 1987, because of his religious activities. Since then, the former head of the Church of the Forest — the name given to the underground Catholic church in the Ukraine — has been lecturing throughout the United States to raise awareness of the repressed Ukrainian Catholic Church.

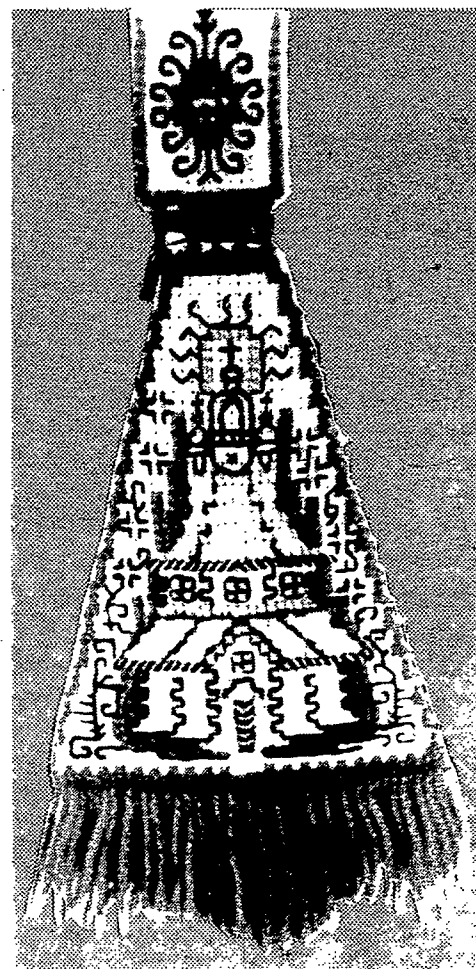
In a telephone interview last week, Terelya — through an interpreter — described the brutal way in which Senyk was treated by her captors. According to Terelya, the tapestry's creator was beaten so badly that her spine is now deformed.

"She was chained to a bed in a psychiatric concentration camp for 12 years,"



Father George Lukachyk, pastor of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Elmira Heights, studies the colorful tapestry symbolizing Soviet persecution of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier



Terelya said. "At times when others have been filled with hatred, she suffered, prayed and wrote religious verses.

"She not only makes beautiful tapestry, she writes beautiful poetry," Terelya added. "She's a deeply confirmed Catholic."

As is Terelya, who said he would rather be known as a religious activist than a dissident. He joined the Catholic church when he was 14 years old, causing his parents — whom he described as high government officials — to alienate him. Terelya was raised by his grandmother "in a devout Catholic home."

At 46, he has spent more than 23 years in 44 Soviet prisons and 15 concentration camps. He attempted prison escapes nine times. And despite countless beatings he has received for his religious beliefs, Terelya's unwavering faith has become an inspiration for the five million Catholics living in the Ukraine and two million more spread throughout the Soviet Union.

The Soviet government outlawed the Byzantine-rite Ukrainian Catholic Church in 1946, forcing Catholics who wished to continue worshipping openly to join the official, state-sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church. Soviet government officials consider the Ukrainian Catholic Church a threat to the leadership of the country because it gives its allegiance to the pope in Rome and can't be controlled as is the Russian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Catholic Church has always supported its people's desire to maintain Ukrainian culture, which is also a liability in a region of 50 million people. The Ukraine also has many natural resources and fertile agricultural land.

Terelya said the Russian Orthodox Church does not officially recognize the underground Ukrainian Catholic church because 80 percent of the Russian Orthodox Church is made up of Ukrainians. If religious freedom was permitted in the Soviet Union, he said, "the Russian Orthodox Church would be crippled" by the loss of so many people.

The lay leader added that more than 80 percent of Russian Orthodox priests throughout the Soviet Union are of Ukrainian descent, and claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church is merely an arm of the KGB.

Terelya said that the Ukrainian church has 18 underground bishops, 1,200 clergy and 1,300 monks and nuns ministering to the faithful, and operates two seminaries. Yet, he said, much work must be done if Ukrainians are going to win their independence.

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