

Rev. Peter Iwachiw: A Life

Rev. Peter Iwachiw was born Petro Andrii Iwachiw (Eng. pron. “Eevakheev”) on January 19, 1925, in the village of Perevolochna (Переволочна), Zolochiv district in western Ukraine, then part of Poland (Galicia province). He was born on the Feast Day of Jordan to Kateryna *née* Fabianska and Mykhailo Iwachiw (Ewachew), though his birth certificate read “January 27,” when his birth was registered. He was the elder of two brothers; the younger, Vasyl, died as a youth from burns resulting from a fire. In 1928, their father Mykhailo left to find work in Canada; they kept in touch sporadically, then lost contact during the war.

In Perevolochna, young Petro graduated from the 7-grade village school and then helped his mother to manage the household. He was a voracious reader, and recalls reading practically every book in the village library. In 1939, the Soviet army entered Ukrainian Galicia. In 1941, the Nazis arrived. Obliging all young men to work in Germany, they assigned the 16-year-old Peter to an aircraft factory in Hamburg. In 1943, armed with a medical certificate referring to the supposed declining health of his mother (she was healthy), Peter was allowed a two-month leave for home, following which he fled into the woods to join a Ukrainian partisan battalion training to fight the Soviets. He later joined the Ukrainian police academy in Lviv (Львів/Lwów/Lemberg) and was sent by the Soviets in July, 1944, to the trenches in southwest Poland. Peter again fled with friends to form a Ukrainian partisan unit. He trained in guerrilla warfare in Austria. In the war’s aftermath, Peter spent time at displaced-person camps in Karlsfeld, Berchtesgaden, and Munich, worked for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Munich, and graduated from the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) University. He arrived as a refugee in Canada on June 5, 1948.

In Toronto, he reconnected with his father, worked for the Canada Packers company, and organized a branch of the “SUM” Ukrainian Youth Association. Wishing to study theology, he entered the Basilian Fathers’ theological academy in Moner, Alberta, then moved to Edmonton, and finally returned to Toronto in 1951. He met Iryna (Irene) Ciupka there and married her on September 15, 1951. Together they raised four children: Terenya (b. 1952), who became Executive Director of the Ivan Franko Homes for the Aged; Zenon (b. 1954), a career banking executive; Marian (b. 1958), who was ordained as a Ukrainian Catholic priest and served parishes in Chicago and Detroit before his premature death in 1994; and Adrian (b. 1962), now a professor at the University of Vermont. Peter also worked to reunite his mother, Kateryna, with his father, Mykhailo, which they did in 1968; they remained together for the remainder of their lives.

Following many years of work as a postal clerk, salesman, insurance agent, and real estate broker, Peter decided in the late 1970s to fulfill his childhood ambition of becoming a priest. He enrolled in theological studies taught by the Orthodox Ukrainian Church of the USA and was offered the priesthood by Metropolitan Mstyslav, but opted to wait for the opportunity of ordination in the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, which was then not ordaining married clergy in North America. He undertook further study at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome, and was ordained a deacon by Bishop Isidore Borecky in Toronto in 1980. He traveled to Australia and in 1985 was ordained into the priesthood by Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Ivan Prashko.

He spent much of 1985 through 1987 in Australia, then returned to Canada. Over the next twenty-five years, he served as pastor of the Ukrainian Catholic parishes of St. Mary’s in Cambridge, Ontario; Holy Protection of the Mother of God in Guelph; and St. Basil the Great in Toronto. He also served as chaplain of the Ivan Franko Home for the Aged in Toronto for many years and, upon taking residence there, of its sister home in Mississauga. He lived there with his wife, Irene, from 2014 until her death in October, 2018, and on his own afterward. Just as he had been eager to learn about the world as a boy, reading every book in his village library, he remained curious about the world to the very last, watching multiple news sources and pondering the meaning of the global pandemic that had come to his own doorstep.

He passed away on May 8, 2020, after a brief illness resulting from the coronavirus. He leaves behind his dear daughter Terenya (Terry Tonkovich) and sons Zenon (Iwachiw) and Adrian (Ivakhiv), together with eight grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. May his memory be eternal. *Vichna yomu pamiat’.*



Sharing ice cream at his favorite Chinese buffet, on his 95th birthday