

24 February 2023

**AN APPEAL BY THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS IN CANADA
MARKING THE ONE YEAR COMMEMORATION
OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE**

To the Reverend Fathers, Religious Sisters, Venerable Monastics,
People of Ukrainian Descent, and all People of Good Will:

***“You shall not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day...” [ps. 91:5]***

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

Today, on our calendars we mark a year since a new stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war began with brutal cruelty and destruction, cynicism and falsehood. Every day of the past year has been a repetition of February 24, adding to the bitter statistics of losses and multiplying the grief experienced by many. Thousands of innocent men, women and children have lost their lives; many have been tortured, held in prisons and camps, and forcibly deported. Millions are forced to wander around the world, having lost everything, seeking refuge far from their homes. Many cities and villages have been erased from the face of the earth, leaving only traces in the history and memory of those who lived there. Countless are the deep emotional wounds from the losses, tragic memories, and longing for relatives, inflicted by the war on those who survive and are suffering - especially the children!

This war is not limited to the context of armed battles, but also occurs in the struggle for consciences, spiritual values and ideals with all the evils that war entails. Most importantly, it requires from everyone a clear choice for good or evil. The war challenges us to demonstrate our love for Ukraine, for its God-given freedom, political-and human rights. War challenges the very sincerity of our love for our neighbor and the Lord God. Every Ukrainian in and outside of Ukraine is called to discover a deeper awareness of his or her national, political and ethnic identity. The enemy are those who want to stop this process and plant other values which contradict the truths of the Christian faith, the foundations of our spirituality and our Ukrainian identity. And they are looking for all kinds of insidious ways to achieve their goals.

We, the Ukrainian Catholics in Canada, call upon all people of good will to steadfastly resist the spread of the evils of war, the killing of innocent people, and the destruction of the nation of Ukraine. Let us draw our strength from the Lord at all times in our struggle (cf. Ps. 26:1). As the Apostle Paul says, let us gird ourselves with the belt of faith and take the armor of justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the spiritual sword to "resist the wiles of the devil" and "against the principalities, against the authorities, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spirits of malice in the heavenly spaces" (Eph. 6:11-12). Fervent and constant prayer to the Lord is our weapon against which enemy forces are powerless, and with it we draw the grace of God. We pray not to succumb to feelings of hopelessness and oppression, excessive worries and cares (cf. Ps. 137:7).

Let us take the psalmist's words, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps. 118:105) closer to heart and listen to God's voice in our lives. The word of God teaches us

goodness, truth, love, understanding and ability to make right decisions that are sometimes very difficult, especially during times of deep tragedy and loss. In His word, we will find God who is near to us in solidarity, offering us comfort and healing.

Let us continue our works of mercy for the needy in Ukraine and those who seek refuge here in Canada, as a humble manifestation of our sincere faith and for the greater glory of God. In doing so, we share the time and talents with which the Lord has blessed us, knowing that everything will return a hundredfold. By giving temporal goods now, we will receive eternal goods in the future.

In solidarity and compassion with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, who continue to suffer from the lack of food, water and other basic necessities of life due to the ongoing war, let us renew our practice of fasting and abstinence to remind ourselves of the many blessings we enjoy in our peaceful, daily lives here in Canada.

More than ever, we need to support each other through prayer, kind words and good deeds. A person who receives something through you will thank the Lord and praise Him always. "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Heavenly Father" (Mt. 5:16).

The outcome of this war is crucial and will have global significance and consequences. We pray for victory, which will be realized only when we put all our efforts together. Let us unite, pray, and work for the common good! Let this Lenten season be an opportunity to reach new spiritual heights and to better ourselves so that we can carry out our part in bringing to an end the tragedy of war.

May God bless the Ukrainian people both in their homeland and throughout the world. May He grant them the strength of a strong Christian faith, of enduring good health and the support of a multitude of people of good will. May He grant victory over evil and peace to Ukraine!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
Apostolic Administrator of Saskatoon

+ David Motiuk
Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
Apostolic Administrator of New Westminster

+ Bryan Bayda, CSsR
Eparchial Bishop of Toronto

+ Andriy Rabyi
Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg