

UKRAINE UPDATE

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Exodus from the East


Refugees caught in the crush at a train station.

“Only God can answer the question of why we are suffering in this way,” Bishop Radoslaw Zmitrowicz told ACN. More than 14 million people have been forced to flee their homes since Russian soldiers first crossed the border.

Bishop Radoslaw, Auxiliary Bishop of Kamyanets-Podilskyi, said the Church has opened the doors of its convents and monasteries, but is struggling to cope with wave after wave of internal refugees – and is worried by a drop in the humanitarian aid coming from the international community.

But ACN is continuing to support the vital work being done by the Church across Ukraine. In the first three months after the Russian invasion alone, ACN approved 82 projects in the country amounting to more than £2.75 million (see *inside*).

Refugees of all faiths and none are being fed, clothed and accommodated by the Church – thanks to your love.

Bishop Radoslaw passed on his people’s gratitude for all the help ACN continues to provide: “I would like to say thank you for all that you do... ACN is on the front line of this help – so thank you!” 



ACN is helping 23 communities of Sisters in Lviv Archdiocese caring for displaced families.

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Transporting Aid

“Transport vehicles are also urgently needed. In many cases, the humanitarian aid has to be transported across long distances, on roads that are either in very poor condition or have been destroyed,” said ACN’s Head of Ukraine Projects Magda Kaczmarek, who visited the country recently.

ACN has now responded to this need, providing 19 vehicles to ferry relief supplies and allow priests and Sisters to visit displaced families to provide pastoral and spiritual care. ✚



Far from home

“We stayed for as long as we could, but in the end we had to leave because the bombing became too intense. Now everything is destroyed,” Halyna told ACN, explaining why she left her home town of Makariv.

Halyna found shelter in the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross in Buchach. She is one of around 130 being cared for at the historic monastery belonging to the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church’s Basilian Order, one of the six Basilian houses in western Ukraine – all of which have opened their doors to refugees. She says “We are very grateful to the monks who took us in, they have been very welcoming.”

But with a constant stream of refugees, the monasteries’ spending on fuel, electricity and water – not to mention medicine and food – has rocketed. ACN’s Magda Kaczmarek said: “At the moment, the greatest burden for Church institutions in Ukraine is ongoing expenses such as

electricity, water, heating, etc. The Churches have opened their doors to everyone... But this presents a financial challenge.”

So ACN has put together an aid package to allow the monks at all six monasteries to continue to comfort the refugees in all their troubles.

Halyna like many, wants to return. “We hope that the war will end soon, so we can go back home. If, that is, there is a home to go back to... But we are OK here, and grateful to everybody for their solidarity.” ✚



is ongoing expenses such as

What your Mass Stipends are achieving...

Wearing a bulletproof vest over his cassock, Father Andriy Bodnaruk pays pastoral visits to IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and those who have remained in their own homes, including a blind 90-year-old lady.

“I am doing what I did before: I serve God, the Church and our people. I remain close to the sufferings of the people,” says the young Greek-Catholic priest.

Fr Andriy is one of almost 1,900 priests receiving Mass stipends from Aid to the Church in Need which enable them to carry out their essential pastoral ministry. He celebrates the Divine Liturgy – as Mass is called in the Byzantine Churches – in underground refugee shelters.

Fr Andriy said: “I sincerely thank Aid to the Church in Need for their financial support during these difficult times.” ✚



Father Andriy Bodnaruk visiting an air-raid shelter.

‘God bless you for your sacrifice and solidarity’



Bishop Josyf Milyan on a pastoral visit to defensive trenches.



Some of the displaced families living in the classrooms of St Basil’s High School, Ivano-Frankivsk sheltering in the basement during an air raid.

In the three months following the Russian invasion, your love has enabled ACN to support 82 projects, amounting to more than £2.75 million, including:

- £1.3 million in emergency subsistence aid
- 19 vehicles to ferry relief supplies and provide pastoral care for IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons)
- 17 electrical generators including for monasteries looking after internal refugees

More than £300,000 went to 11 Church projects helping IDPs in particular need, these included:

- Extraordinary aid for Hoshiv Monastery, where the Sisters of the Holy Family are caring for c. 160 IDPs
- Purchase of fridges, washing machines, etc. for 55 convents looking after internal refugees
- Help for 10 parishes providing for IDPs in Ivano-Frankivsk Archdiocese

In addition to all this, ACN has provided Mass stipends for almost 1,900 priests, giving them an essential lifeline. And we are still supporting vital projects across the country.

Bishop Yosafat Hovera thanked you

for your help: “We sincerely thank Aid to the Church in Need, colleagues and benefactors for the gesture of sacrifice, solidarity and support.

“We are praying for you and may God bless you!” ✚



Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary making food to distribute to refugees at the train station.



The Church is helping children come to terms with the horrors of war.



Thousands of refugees making their way to Poland find refuge and respite at Lviv Archdiocese’s Seminary, where more than 200 are currently staying – mostly women with children or young people.

The seminarians put mattresses on the floor, wherever there was available space, to accommodate everyone. ✚



Sister Karolina, from ACN (Poland), and Magda Kaczmarek (standing, right), ACN’s Ukraine Projects Head, meeting refugees at the seminary.

When refugees get off the train...

ACN's office in Poland is the first point of contact for thousands of Ukrainian refugees arriving in the country. Father Andrzej Paś said: "It was an act of God's providence that we should have our office right next to the Wrocław train station. When the Ukrainian refugees arrived... we were already there to help."

Julka, a longstanding ACN volunteer, is delighted by how many locals are helping out. She said: "There are so many of them, and sometimes they are working 24 hours a day. Restaurant owners come to us bringing soup and sandwiches, and many people are offering their help to cook pots of soup, stew and casseroles." 🕊



Staff and volunteers from ACN helping refugees.

A sign from God

Roman, Anna and their two children are one of many families being cared for by the contemplative Benedictine Sisters in Solonka.

Originally from Kharkiv, the family endured 10 days of fighting and bombardment before fleeing – and not a moment too soon. They were in the hallway of their block with their bags packed to leave, when a rocket hit their building. "The house caught fire, all the windows were blown out," Roman tells ACN.

Arriving in Lviv, they sat on a bench outside the train station, worn out, worried and uncertain what to do next, when Sister Hieronima came up to them and offered them a place to stay. When they discovered that she had not planned to go to the station, but went there just in case anybody needed help, Anna said: "It was divine providence. A sign from God!"

The Benedictine Sisters are just one of 23 communities of Sisters in Lviv Archdiocese caring for refugees



– which your love has enabled ACN to support.

Despite having temporarily suspended their cloistered life to tend to IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), prayer is still central: "We have kept up our rhythm of common prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours, and we have additional hours of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Glory to the Lord in all things!" 🕊



Mealtime with the Benedictine Sisters in Solonka.



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12-14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA
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