

UKRAINE

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“Without your help we would not survive.”

A mother and child find refuge in the basement of a children's hospital in Kyiv.

“Will we survive tomorrow?”

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, was reflecting on the challenge facing the war-torn country – and went on to warn: “The situation is deteriorating in Ukraine.”

Missiles and aerial bombardments have destroyed houses, hospitals and whole swathes of cities. More than six million people are internally displaced, driven from their homes by a conflict which has killed at least 7,000 non-combatants – including more than 400 children.

But the Church is staying with the people.

Thanks to your love, ACN is ensuring

that they can continue ministering to those in dire need. Help for internally displaced persons (IDPs) includes:

- **Emergency assistance, tending to the needs of the displaced.**
- **Vital support for those caring for IDPs, including Mass stipends for priests.**
- **Vehicles to carry IDPs and ferry much-needed aid.**

Major Archbishop Shevchuk paid tribute to ACN benefactors around the globe who have supported their suffering brothers and sisters in Ukraine: “Thank you for being with us in such a difficult situation, thank you for praying for us. We managed to survive this because of the world-wide



Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk

solidarity of Christians, you are united with us through your prayers, thoughts and generosity.

“Without your assistance, without your help we would not survive – it is a miracle that we have survived for a year!” ✝

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ACN UNITED KINGDOM

Soup kitchen survives shelling



Main picture: Preparing food in the Albertines' kitchen.
Ancillary pictures: Organising the food distribution.

Brother Franciszek Grzelka, superior general of the Albertine Order, alerted ACN to the death and destruction near the Order's house in Zaporizhzhia, south-east Ukraine.

Brother Grzelka, who was in Zaporizhzhia delivering relief supplies, said: "During the last night of our stay, the area was hit by a direct missile attack. Between two and three o'clock in the morning, there were about 10 explosions in the city district in which our building is located. Several of these were very loud. **The windows and walls of our house shook. As we later found out, a seven-storey building in the immediate area was destroyed. More than a dozen civilians were killed and about 50 were injured.**"

Night-time attacks increased as Russian troops redoubled efforts to take the city.

Brother Grzelka, who is based in Poland, added: "The Brothers told us that in the days before we arrived, the other side of the city, where they run their soup kitchen, had been under attack by missiles and drones. Brother



Euzebiusz said that most of the attacks are launched at night, but there have also been explosions nearby when the meals were being served at about 10 in the morning. Luckily, none of the poor people were injured."

Before the war began, 150 people used the Order's soup kitchen but the number of people depending on the Brothers for food has now grown to more than 1,000.

Since the war started, the brothers in Poland have been transporting food and other vital supplies – including generators and medical aid – to Ukraine. Brother Grzelka said: "As long as we are able, we want to be there with them and live out our charism of helping those in need – of which there are many at the moment. We are grateful to everyone who supports our work both in Zaporizhzhia and in Lviv." 🙏



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“We could take in more refugees...”

The Sisters in Hoshiv have squeezed evacuees into every available corner of their convent – which currently houses 76 IDPs from the country’s war-torn regions – but the Sisters think they could do even more! Sister Yefrosynia, the General Superior of the congregation, wrote to tell ACN: “We could in fact take in up to 160 people, as we have made additional space in the conference rooms, classrooms and side rooms.”

The Sisters are giving their guests psychological and spiritual support. The IDPs are also able to help out in the kitchen or with other chores, which gives them an ordered structure to their day and takes their minds off their worries. A regular routine can often provide a path to inner healing.

But helping the guests they have already welcomed has quickly eaten into the Sisters’ savings, not only are there

additional costs for lighting, heating and water, but over the last few months the bills have been even higher than usual. Sister Yefrosynia tells us: “The costs are rising rapidly, especially in autumn and winter, when the days are shorter and we need heating in the rooms.”

Since the war began their income has dried up – so with nowhere else to go they turned to ACN. Thanks to your loving response to our previous appeal for Ukraine, we could respond with more than £25,000 so they can continue caring for the victims of war.

Sister Yefrosynia expressed their gratitude for your love: “Thank you for your willingness to help us. May the all-merciful Lord take pity on us and on the whole world and avert a tragedy for all mankind. May he forgive us our sins and reward our benefactors for their sympathy, their generosity and their sacrifices.”



The Sisters have welcomed 76 IDPs into their convent. Most IDPs are women and children.



Still supporting Seminarians

Even before the start of the war, support for seminarians was one of the top priorities for ACN. Thanks to your love, almost 800 seminarians have been supported over the last year. Many of the seminaries helped with the care of internal refugees. For example, students at Ivano-Frankivsk seminary found themselves looking after the IDPs taking shelter there. Now studies are largely back to normal, and the Church’s future shepherds continue to receive the best possible formation.



Masses of Masses

More than 130,000 Masses have been offered in Ukraine for the intentions of ACN benefactors – with your stipends supporting priests of both the Byzantine Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches in their vital pastoral mission.

During the conflict, priests have been providing spiritual support for those gripped by fear and anxiety – and wherever needed they have given material help too. But the war has meant that parishes are unable to support their priests financially, making Mass stipends a crucial lifeline.

And with priests now often saying Mass in underground shelters or other locations where the faithful are, we have also helped them purchase 130 Mass kits, so they can celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass wherever it is needed.

Archbishop Mykhailo Klapkiv of Ivano-Frankivsk thanked all those benefactors who had sent Mass offerings via the charity: “We thank you for your very great solidarity, support and willingness to help, which we appreciate very much! We are heartily grateful to you for once again being able to support our clergy with Mass stipends in this time of war! Your Mass stipends are of salvation to many of our priests in need.

“Thank you for your help! We pray for you every day and sincerely wish you God’s rich blessings!”



Credit: Jakub Szymczuk/GOSC NIEDZIELNY

Welcoming the Children of War

The Handmaids of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in Lviv are well equipped to welcome the tearful children who have had to leave their homes behind.

Running an orphanage, the Sisters are used to working with children, and have been helping IDP children deal with the trauma they have lived through. Women and children make up 80 percent of all internal refugees.

The Sisters turned part of the orphanage's premises into accommodation for IDPs – and today 30 of them from Mariupol, Kharkiv, Zaporizhya and other parts of eastern Ukraine are being fed and accommodated.

The Handmaids of the Immaculate Virgin Mary are also providing spiritual support for their visitors. One of the Sisters tells us: "In the evenings we pray the Rosary together with our guests in the convent chapel.

"And when the air raid sirens go off and the people are forced to seek



ACN is supporting the Sisters, so they can help displaced families.

shelter in the basement, we go down there with them and pray the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet together with them, asking God to protect us all in his providence." 🕊



From cloistered prayer to hosting families



The Benedictine Sisters have welcomed families with open arms.

The contemplative Benedictines in Solonka suspended their silence and solitude to open the doors of their monastery to families affected by the war – welcoming more than 500 people since the conflict began. They currently have 75 guests and as Sister Klara told ACN: "Some of them don't have a home to return to."

Despite having temporarily paused their cloistered life to tend to IDPs, Sister Klara stressed that they have not only kept up the Liturgy of the Hours, but they have increased adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. **"May the Lord be glorified in all things!"** 🕊



Credit: Ukrinform/Alamy

Pilgrims to refugees

The small shrine village of Stradch used to be a pilgrim destination – today families fleeing the war zone head there to escape the violence.

The Pilgrim's House – which was built to give those visiting the village somewhere to stay – had barely opened when it became a refuge for those travelling away from the conflict.

Over the past six months it has housed more than 350 evacuees – and is still full to capacity, looking after 50 people, including 19 children from six months to 16 years old.

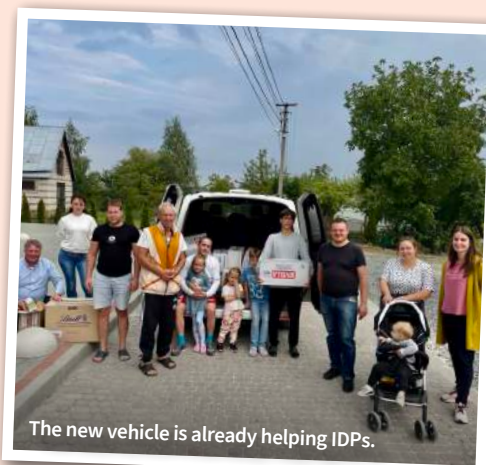
But the shrine's custodian, Father Ivan Koltun, did not have a vehicle, so picking up refugees from the train station, taking them to register as displaced persons with authorities in the district capital Yavoriv, and travelling to do a massive food shop to feed 50 people were all presenting major difficulties.

Father Ivan told us: "To ferry the food we need a means of transport. This is an acute need at the moment –

and often we buy food over the border in Poland, because the prices there are not as high as in Ukraine."

So ACN offered the shrine assistance to buy a minibus. The charity has helped the Church in Ukraine purchase 80 vehicles since the war began to provide pastoral and humanitarian care, distribute relief supplies and ferry IDPs.

Father Ivan was overjoyed: "We are very grateful for your help buying a vehicle. This will enable our work, caring for the refugees." 🙏



The new vehicle is already helping IDPs.

Stradch's Christian inheritance

Stradch is where Fr Mykola Konrad and lay cantor Volodymyr Pryjma were martyred by the NKVD (Soviet secret police) during World War II. Their bodies were found in the forest, where they were killed as they returned from visiting a sick parishioner.

The village is also home to a Marian shrine, commemorating a thirteenth-century apparition of Our Lady, who was seen taking the souls of 2,000 Christians martyred there to heaven. Stradch comes from the Ukrainian "strachenyi" meaning executed. There is also a life-sized Way of the Cross (see main picture), which Pope Pius XI enriched with an indulgence in the early twentieth century.



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