



A February 24, 2023 Tribute to Archbishop Gudziak and the People of Ukraine on the First Anniversary of the Invasion of Ukraine and a Request for Lenten 2023 Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving for Ukraine



A reflection from Bishop Barres on his February 5-12, 2023 Visit of Solidarity to Ukraine

From February 5-12, 2023 I had the opportunity to join Archbishop Borys Gudziak, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and Head of the Department of External Church Relations for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and Sr. Donna Markham, OP, President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, for a visit of solidarity to Ukraine. A short summary of each day of our visit with photographs is available on our diocesan website: drvc.org. I'd like to share with you a few highlights of the trip in the context of a tribute to Archbishop Gudziak.

In November 2022 at the USCCB meeting in Baltimore, Archbishop Gudziak gave an inspiring Address on Ukraine in which he thanked the American bishops and the people they serve for their solidarity with those who are suffering terrible injustices and atrocities in Ukraine.

Bishop Barres and Archbishop Gudziak, processing in front of Bishop Barres, presided at a funeral of two Ukrainian soldiers in the Garrison Church of Peter and Paul in the city center of Lviv. Bishop Barres, in the name of the US Bishops, conveyed words of prayer and sympathy to the family and friends of the soldiers killed in action.



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At the end of his Address, he invited American bishops to join him in his February 2023 trip to Ukraine. I was deeply moved and inspired by his Address and began a conversation with him. I came to the conclusion after prayer and discernment that the Holy Spirit wanted me on that trip despite the difficulties it involved.

One of the great highlights was the opportunity to develop a deeper friendship with an inspirational brother bishop. Archbishop Gudziak is a very impressive man, with real contemplative, theological, literary, liturgical and global affairs¹ depth.

His liturgical design of the three levels of the Ukrainian Catholic University Church in Lviv, which reflect Constantinople, Rome and Jerusalem, is a masterpiece of contemplative reflection on the Sacred Scriptures -- what Pope St. John Paul II called the complimentary “two lungs” of Eastern and Western approaches to Catholic Systematic and Liturgical theology.

It also reflects a pastoral heart for the University’s students, helping their growth in the Catholic faith and capacity to be public-square Catholics who bring the liberating salt and light of Catholic truth directly into society and the tragic experience of war and horrible injustice.



Funeral procession of two Ukrainian soldiers killed in action.

Ukraine is primarily an Orthodox country but Lviv in western Ukraine is the heartland of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (so called because while it uses the same Greek rites that the Orthodox do, it is a Catholic church in full communion with the Holy Father in Rome). Western or Latin-rite Catholics,

mainly of Polish descent, are a small minority in Ukraine, but the Ukrainian Catholic University is a center for them too.



Bishop Barres met with two Lviv bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church - Metropolitan Ihor Vozniak and Bishop Volodymyr Hrusa. They talked about serving internally displaced people and visited the crypt where the Church’s spiritual leaders of the twentieth century are buried: Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, who led the Church and the people through two world wars; Patriarch Josyf Slipyi, who spent 18 years in Soviet gulags for his loyalty to the Catholic Church; and Metropolitan Volodymyr Sterniuk, who was a shepherd for the Underground Church. Pictured also is Sr. Donna Markham, OP, President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, and second from right is Archbishop Borys Gudziak (right of Bishop Barres).

It is fair to say that even though Ukraine is under full assault by the Russian government, and that missiles are landing in Lviv, Kyiv and the rest of the country daily, the Catholic churches of Ukraine [and apparently their Ukrainian Orthodox sister churches as well] are vibrant and growing.

Pope St. John Paul II once said that every Mass “is always in some way celebrated *on the altar of the world*.”² That is certainly true in Ukraine. The Sacred Liturgies that we celebrated in Ukraine, and all Masses celebrated around the world daily, are mysteriously celebrated on the Altar of Ukraine and the suffering and cross-bearing of its people.

Archbishop Gudziak has great intellectual and pastoral depth. He completed a Ph.D. in Slavic languages at Harvard University in addition to his prior studies at Syracuse University and in Rome. He is both a theologian and a catechist.

Throughout the trip, he was a humble and sharing teacher emphasizing theological and biblical realities as they relate to the historical and current realities of the Ukraine war and the brutal realities of the massacres of innocent civilians in Bucha, a suburb of Kyiv, the Ukrainian capitol, and other places.

The Archbishop's "intellectual charity" is expressed in the communal meals at his residence with scholars, university professors, art historians, literary critics, global affairs and human rights experts, students and many others.

These "culture of encounter" meals reminded me of a passage from Pope St. John Paul II's reflection on the missionary life of the diocesan bishop in his *Rise, Let Us Be on our Way*: "It is well known that not all bishops are particularly interested in a dialogue with scholars. Many of them give greater priority to their pastoral responsibilities, understood in the broadest sense, than to their rapport with men of learning. In my view, however, members of the clergy, priests, and bishops, do well to take the trouble to establish personal contacts with the academic world and its leading figures. A bishop, in particular should be concerned not only with his own Catholic academic institutions, but should also maintain close links with the whole university world: reading, meeting others, discussing, informing himself about their activities. Obviously, he himself is not called to be a scholar but a pastor. Yet as a pastor, he cannot fail to take an interest in this part of his flock. Since it is his task to remind scholars of their duty to serve the truth and thus to promote the common good."³



On February 10th, during their stay in Lviv, Bishop Barros and Sister Donna Markham experienced three air raids as Russia launched a large-scale missile strike. During the second air raid alarm, Sister Donna and Bishop Barros spent the time with the students of the Ukrainian Catholic University at the campus shelter.

Archbishop Gudziak is the founding President of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. He has understood and implemented a Catholic vision and theology embodied in University architecture (in stark contrast to some of the remaining dehumanized Soviet architecture close to the University), collegium or dormitory life, liturgical life and the ongoing

formation of administrators, professors, staffs, alumni and students to have a fruitful influence in society and the public square.

In all the visits we made in Lviv and Kyiv, we kept meeting young UCU alumni with significant responsibilities—a communications professional in the Mayor of Lviv's office, a journalist and documentary film maker whose documentary film on the massacres at Bucha brought the atrocities to the world's attention.

It is clear that UCU and Ukrainian Catholics generally are playing and are going to continue to play important roles in Ukraine in the future. Many young Ukrainian Catholics from Lviv and elsewhere are currently fighting on the front lines.

But when peace finally comes—and let us pray that it comes soon and is a peace with justice for Ukraine and all people—the young men and women of Ukraine will lead the reconstruction of the country, push for its inclusion as a constituent part of Europe and will help to lead the ***re-Christianization of Europe***.



Bishop Barros and Sister Donna Markham (second from right) visited the main offices of Caritas Ukraine and met with Rev. Andriy Nahirniak, Deputy Director of Caritas Ukraine, and Rev. Viacheslav Hrynevych, Executive Director of the Caritas-Spes Ukraine Mission. The delegation also spoke with the representative of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Ukraine, Davide Bernocchi. Together with Fr. Roman Syrotych, Director of Caritas Kyiv, and his employees, they distributed humanitarian aid kits to the displaced people from Bakhmut.

I want to thank Archbishop Borys Gudziak and the Ukrainian people for their global and courageous witness to the injustices and atrocities that are currently appalling the entire world.

Here we should remember Pope Francis' words in *Fratelli Tutti*: "Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. All three together are essential to building peace; each, moreover, prevents the other from being altered." (227)

As we begin together the Lenten Season of 2023, please join me in offering dimensions of our prayer, fasting and almsgiving for the people of Ukraine, for a rapid end to this senseless and unjust war of aggression, and the conversion of hearts and minds to make such wars unthinkable in the future.

ENDNOTES

1. Yale University Professor Timothy Snyder's course, "The Making of Modern Ukraine," has been generously posted on line along with a syllabus and bibliography. It is well worth the investment.
2. Pope St. John Paul II, April 17, 2003, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 8.
3. Pope St. John Paul II, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way* (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 89-90.



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