



Statement of the Council of Bishops of the  
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora at the

**CELEBRATION OF THE 32ND  
ANNIVERSARY OF UKRAINE'S INDEPENDENCE**  
24 August, 2023

As we celebrate the 32nd anniversary of Ukrainian Independence, we find ourselves in perhaps the most critical moments of all Ukrainian history. We witness yet another genocidal invasion of the nation by the armed forces of the Russian Federation whose main target are innocent civilians – mostly senior citizens and their grandchildren – sleeping in their beds at night. We hear the often-repeated allegation from Russian dictators, that there is no such nation as “Ukraine” and no such people as “Ukrainians”. This is followed by the declaration of the present Russian dictator at the beginning of his invasion: “When we are finished, there will be not a single person left anywhere who will self-identify as a Ukrainian.” Finally, we hear the promise made by the prime hierarch of the government “church” made in a Holy Day sermon that any soldier who dies fighting in the invasion of Ukraine (obviously murdering self-identified Ukrainians) will earn forgiveness of all their sins, thus equating them to the holy martyrs. Shortly thereafter, he began deposing his own clergy who, in Christian love, pray for peace rather than for victory over Ukrainians as he ordered them to do.

We witness millions of men, women and children fleeing from their homes and from the invaders to nations all around the world. We witness nations, some of which have been known as “traditional” enemies of Ukraine, opening wide their borders, their hearts, their minds, and souls in welcoming and supporting Ukrainian refugees on a scale seldom seen throughout world history. We witness the thousands of our parishes, clergy and faithful here in the United States of America, in South America, in Australia-New Zealand, in the countries of Western Europe and in Canada who have worked diligently to collect the funds and supplies necessary to support those remaining in all regions of Ukraine. Millions of dollars have been contributed to our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA because of donor trust in our ability to maintain transparency in the distribution of aid to all who desperately need it, especially through close cooperation with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

We witness the world’s greatest nations supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the defense of their nation, astounding the world with their success and professionalism. We witness the profound oneness of mind throughout all the “nation” – the people – of Ukraine. These are people of God who have, throughout all their lives, remained faithful to Him, beseeching that His “Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”. We witness men of all ages serving in the Armed Forces defending their nation with their every bit of energy and absolute certainty in the righteousness of their action. We witness a man who portrayed an “accidental” president

on television elected as the real President of Ukraine, becoming an inspiration for not only his nation, but for nations all around the world, uniting his people into one mind about who they are and what they must always be.

Yes, we are at a critical moment of Ukrainian history because that President and his government face what can become overwhelming pressure to negotiate an end to the conflict not of their own making by agreeing to sacrifices of land and people, which they have pledged NOT to do. We are at a critical moment because that President and his government may well face additional pressure to deal with critical issues existent at all levels of Ukrainian society that may do more to undermine Ukraine's future than any unjustifiable invasion.

We are not politicians and have no desire to be politicians. We, along with you, dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, are people of God whose responsibility is to pray for all the people of God throughout Ukraine. We have worked closely with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in our Christian aide programs, and we call upon the Church, her clergy and her people to once again become the active "conscience of the nation of Ukraine", which is her spiritual legacy. We call upon the Church of Ukraine to stress to her faithful always, the necessity of standing in humility before God in the Holy Trinity seeking strength to follow the Guidance of the Holy Spirit in the way we relate to one another and beseeching the Grace to profess our love for one another under ALL circumstances. We call upon all people of faith around the world to live and act in that same Grace and in compassion and mercy for all – through our "oneness" in the image of God.

Pray, dear brothers and sisters in our Lord, pray more fervently than ever before in your daily life. Pray for peace, pray for understanding, pray for open hearts, minds and souls that will be able to rebuild Ukraine so that like the proverbial Phoenix, she will "rise up from the ashes" to fulfill her destiny among the forever free nations of the world. Pray for the leadership of the nation and the Church that they may always be one with the people they serve.

We extend our deep gratitude to all who have stepped up in our parishes and as individuals to help in aiding the people of Ukraine. Your unconditional love continues to work miracles! Yes, we are at a critical moment as we celebrate this 32nd anniversary of Ukrainian Independence – and celebrate we do, because we have learned so much about the power of unity among the citizens of Ukraine, but also because of how much we have been blessed and enabled by our assistance to them. May the Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Remember your statement of faith as part of your daily prayers: "The Father is my Hope, the Son is my Refuge, the Holy Spirit is my Protection." Pray this and believe as generation after generation of our ancestors believed that we all can continue to work miracles amongst our people.



In our Lord's All-Encompassing Love,

**+ ANTONY**

*Metropolitan, UOC of the USA and Diaspora*

**+ JEREMIAH**

*Archbishop of South America (UOC of the USA)*

**+ DANIEL**

*Archbishop, UOC of the USA and Western Europe*