

ADDRESS BY THE EPISCOPATE OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FULL-SCALE INVASION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION INTO UKRAINE IN 2022

Venerable fathers, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

During these days, with pain and prayer, we remember the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a tragic stage of the war, which was a continuation of the aggression against Ukraine that had begun in 2014. This war brought untold suffering, loss, and destruction to the Ukrainian people and deeply wounded the hearts of millions of people around the world.

Since the very beginning of this aggression, the Ukrainian people have been enduring difficult trials. Throughout this time and to this day, we have been witnessing the loss of human lives, the separation of families, the forced displacement of millions of people, the obliteration of cities and villages, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites and Christian sanctuaries.

The full-scale invasion of 2022 was marked by the particular brutality of military action, which brought great suffering to the civilian population. This phase of aggression revealed to the entire world the depth of the tragedy and the scale of the suffering of the Ukrainian people, reminding the world once again of the urgent need for a just and lasting peace.

As the Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, we offer our prayers to the Lord God for the repose of the souls of all innocent people who were tortured and then killed, for the healing of the wounded, for the comfort of those who have lost their families and homes, and for the liberation of those taken captive. We also pray for the defenders of their

homeland so that the Lord may strengthen their courage, strengthen their spirit, and preserve them from all that is evil.

We convey our deep gratitude to our country Canada, as well as to the clergy and laity of our Church, who have selflessly supported Ukraine and her victims through government programs, humanitarian aid, and unceasing prayer during these years of war. May the Lord reward each and every one of them for their expression of love and benevolence.

Let us remain united in faith, hope, and love. Let us remember the value of mutual support. This anniversary is a reminder of the responsibility of each one of us, to be witnesses of the truth, bearers of love, and servants of peace. The Holy Scriptures teach us: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). However, true peace is impossible without truth and justice. Therefore, we call on all believers to pray unceasingly for a just and lasting peace for Ukraine, for the victory of good over evil, and of light over darkness.

With this, we bless the continued unceasing prayers in our Churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada for an end to the war in Ukraine.

May the All-Merciful Lord, Who unceasingly shows His love for humanity, strengthen the Ukrainian people in their trials, grant them the long-awaited victory and just peace, and bestow upon all of us the strength to stand firm in the truth of Christ.

With the Hierarchical blessings and prayers for Ukraine,

‡ Ilarion, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

‡ Andriy, Bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Eparchy