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NEWS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ST. LOUIS COUNCIL 3335

Knights of Columbus Front & Center to Help Ukrainian Refugees & Victims of the War



Left: Refugees fleeing the war on foot towards the border primarily with babies, the clothes on their backs, and what they can carry. Right: Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly addresses a Holy Hour for Peace in the Ukraine at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT. In the background is the Ukrainian Byzantine Bishop and the Roman Catholic Bishop. About 9% of the 44 million people are Catholic, mostly of the Byzantine Rite. The rest of the 44 million population is mainly Orthodox that broke away from the Church in 1054. In 2016 the Ukrainian Bishops consecrated the Country to Mary. Ukraine, about the size of Texas, is rather underdeveloped. Although progressing under democracy, the highway system is mostly two lanes. Watch the Children's Choir of Ukraine sing for world peace at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-hZ44sKH4&ab_channel=AMAZINGGRACE.

I feel close to Ukraine because we have relatives there and we visited them in 2017. Thus I have studied, prayed, and donated to help the refugees. So please permit me to share with you what I have learned. I think that you'll find this article quite interesting.

It's an invasion by about 200,000 Russian troops, engulfing much of the country of Ukraine.....really Goliath against David. Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent, gained dictatorial power in about 2008 as president. Russia is no longer Communist and there is freedom of religion and the gulag is gone, but the government methods are

similar. The press and the media are strictly controlled and dissidents are even murdered without trial. The people are told that it is not a war, but a special operation to liberate Ukraine of Nazis even though that their president, Volodymyr Zelensky is Jewish. The system is very totalitarian. At the same time the capitalistic oligarchs including Putin live high with multi-million dollar yachts. He perceived Ukraine as a threat because of its free democracy is an example to his own people and desires to ally itself with the West and join NATO, the strictly defensive alliance. Putin has grandiose visions of restoring the Russian empire as it was under the notorious Josef Stalin and the Czars of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Since Ukraine was part of that empire by conquest in those days although independent after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Putin believes that Russia has the right to retake Ukraine 30 years later. The Ukrainians are a distinct ethnic group although its language is related to Russian, both with Slavic roots as are the Poles and several other nationalities.

Putin expected to overrun Ukraine in a few days and install a puppet president. However, he and military experts were surprised at the extent of the Ukrainian resistance and heroism. Ukraine is asking for material help, especially antitank and anti-aircraft hand held missiles. Although now a stalemate, the Russia military may eventually win despite poor training, logistics, as well as poor command and control. Even if Russia wins, that will be followed by years of guerilla warfare, a similar war the Soviet Union lost in Afghanistan in the 1980s. If the sanctions on Russia are effective,

peaceful means by a united world can be a very effective deterrent to future aggression of “big dog subjugating little dog”.

According to MSNBC, NATO estimates that up to 40,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, wounded, captured or MIA in Ukraine in the first month. Some 10,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, including six generals. About 1500 Ukrainian soldiers have died. The indiscriminate shelling and bombing of the major cities has been incessant. Even civilian targets, including apartments, hospitals, schools, and refugee centers have not been spared. At least 1000 civilians have been killed and almost double that injured. Understandably, there has been an exodus of refugees, mostly women and children because men aged 16 to 60 must stay and fight.

Poland has generously opened its borders to Ukrainian refugees without any requirement for a visa or passport. Hungary and Moldavia have also been very generous. Our niece has volunteered to take in a family. At first, the supply of willing homes outstripped the demand because some hotel owners are giving up their hotels for use by the refugees. By the end of March Poland has received over two million refugees and more are coming. This is really Christianity in action. The Church through Caritas has been very active. Over the first month the military death toll is at least 1,500 on each side plus at

At the forefront are the Knights of Columbus USA collecting donations and Knights of Columbus Poland doing the bulk of the work. There are 1800 knights in the Ukraine as well. So it's a case of

brother knights helping other brother knights among many others in great need.

Interesting are the words of gratitude of Pope Francis to Poland for taking in the bulk of the refugees. “You were the first to support Ukraine, opening your borders, your hearts and the doors of your homes to Ukrainians fleeing war. You are generously offering them everything they need to live in dignity, despite the drama of the moment. I am deeply grateful to you, and I bless you from my heart.” He called for humanitarian corridors to help refugees leave safely and said that those who create war should not think God is on their side.



Families, driven out of their homes by fears of shelling and missiles, use the underground metro subway in the capital Kyiv as a bomb shelter when air raid sirens frequently go off.

You can also participate. The Knights of Columbus announced Feb. 25 a commitment of \$1 million for immediate distribution to support Ukrainian refugees, including Ukrainian Knights and their families impacted by the recent Russian invasion of their country. The organization has also launched the Ukraine Solidarity Fund, an international fundraising campaign that will match all funds raised up to an additional \$500,000. Thus each dollar donated will be matched

by another dollar. To donate, go to kofc.org and click on “Donate” in the upper right corner of the home page.

Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly encouraged the organization’s more than 2 million members *to respond with continued prayers and material support.* “The situation in Ukraine is dire and worsening. The people of Ukraine and our brother Knights in that nation need our help.” The relief funding will be used to provide shelter, food, medical supplies, clothing and religious goods, as well as other humanitarian needs as identified, both directly in Ukraine and through refugee sites in Poland.

The Knights work with both the Latin and Greek Catholic Churches in Poland and Ukraine (Caritas), K of C councils in Poland, and with international humanitarian aid agencies to address needs quickly and effectively. Should fundraising efforts exceed immediate needs, consideration will be given to assist widows and orphans of brother Knights killed as a result of military action, and for assistance in resettlement and rebuilding for communities damaged by conflict and war.

Knights in Poland are aiding Ukrainian refugees at the border and providing housing for refugee families. At regional centers across Poland, Knights are also collecting supplies — including medicine, generators, sleeping bags and other necessities — and have begun to deliver them to the Archdiocese of Lviv in western Ukraine.

In a Feb. 25 video message to the more than 1,800 Knights of Columbus in Ukraine, Supreme Knight Kelly said, “*In this time of intense danger, know that your brother Knights of Columbus around the world are praying for you, your families and all the people of Ukraine. We ask that our Lord protect you and your loved ones and restore peace in your land. We ask that he give you strength and courage to persevere.*” See the oral message at

https://players.brightcove.net/802593642001/y6FLiIa0f_default/index.html?videoId=6298832211001

PRAY, PRAY for the Ukrainian people and peace in the world. Prayer is powerful! After World War II, the Soviets under Stalin had taken over Austria. After a campaign of prayer, the soldiers simply left with no real explanation.

For a fascinating movie in Ukrainian with English subtitles, watch “To Believe”. It shows the heroism that Ukraine displayed in preserving the Faith under violent Russian Communist persecution in the 1930s. This movie should give an appreciation of the tremendous thirst for independence of Russian domination. Go to <https://ondemand.ewtn.com/free/Home/Series/ondemand/video/en/to-believe>

Monthly Business Dinner Meeting - Monday March 28 at 6:30 pm, preceded by either Mass or Rosary at 5:30 pm in the church. Prayer is essential to our success. Members are urged to attend both it and the meeting that follows with supper, great fellowship, decision making on future activities, planning, and coordination. The input of every knight is most valuable. Our Council is as strong as each knight makes it. That begins with YOU! We cannot be an effective Council without the Lord’s help and guidance together with your participation. Some of the men make great sacrifices to attend the meetings. May all do the same! Talk up the meetings and get your brother knights to attend. ***The next 4th Monday of the month Dinner Meeting will be on Monday April 24 at 6:30 pm.*** Please talk it up. We’re struggling to reorganize and be

as active as we were before the Covid-19 pandemic. With your help we can become a Star Council again as we were in the past.