Vatican
Vatican News
Pope Francis, using a cane, speaks with a group of children holding a Ukrainian flag and their

Pope Francis greets a group of Ukrainian children at the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall. During the audience, the pope noted that the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is Feb. 24 and prayed for an end to the war. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile


Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — February 22, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Pope Francis asked, "Can the Lord forgive so many crimes and so much violence? He is the God of peace."

At the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22 and with a group of Ukrainian parliamentarians seated in the front row, the pope noted that Feb. 24 would mark "one year since the invasion of Ukraine, a year since this absurd and cruel war -- a sad anniversary."

"The record of deaths, injuries, refugees and displaced people, destruction and economic and social damage speaks for itself," he said.

At every general audience and public recitation of the Angelus prayer for the past year, Francis has asked people to join him in praying for peace and in offering concrete assistance to the millions of Ukrainians who have sought safety abroad and for the millions of others displaced within Ukraine or struggling to survive because of the fighting.

Advertisement

But, with the anniversary of Russia's invasion just two days away, the pope's appeal Feb. 22 was even more intense.

Promising that Catholics continue to be close to the "martyred Ukrainian people who continue to suffer," the pope asked, "Has everything possible been done to stop the war?"

"I appeal to all those who have authority over nations to commit themselves concretely to ending the conflict, to reaching a cease-fire and to starting peace negotiations," the pope said. "That which is built on ruins will never be a true victory."