News



A church destroyed by a Russian attack on the village of Bohorodychne in Ukraine's Donetsk region is pictured on Feb. 13. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine entered its third year on Feb. 24. (OSV News/Reuters/Vladyslav Musiienko)

Gina Christian

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

February 24, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

With Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine entering its third year, seven U.S. cardinals have become patrons of a new effort to heal the suffering of Ukraine's people due to Russian aggression.

On Feb. 20, the Ukrainian Catholic bishops of the U.S. announced that their Metropolia Humanitarian Aid Fund has been restructured as the "Healing of Wounds of the War in Ukraine Fund."

The fund is aimed at "healing physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds inflicted by the criminal Russian invasion," the four bishops said in a report accompanying the announcement. They are: Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia; Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Eparchy of Stamford, Connecticut; Bishop Benedict Aleksiychuk of the Eparchy of St. Nicholas in Chicago; and Bishop Bohdan J. Danylo of the Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma, Ohio

In the report, the U.S. Ukrainian bishops said they were "especially … grateful to the seven Cardinals of the Catholic Church in the US -- Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston, and Cardinal Joseph William Tobin of Newark -- who have graciously agreed to serve as patrons" of the new fund.

The Metropolia fund, representing the four eparchies of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the U.S., was established in January 2022 as Russia's troop buildup on Ukraine's borders signaled an invasion.

Advertisement

All contributions to the fund -- which totaled more than $7.5 million from some 6,400 donors, with $7.2 million so far distributed -- were dedicated to humanitarian projects operated by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church or by trusted nonprofits partnering with the UGCC.

Donations were applied to five focus areas of support: internally displaced persons and refugees (now totaling 3.7 million and 6.5 million, respectively, according to the United Nation's Displacement Tracking Matrix and the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Refugees); medication and first aid; church ministry; emergency food assistance; and supply chain and logistics.

The aid provided by the fund included over 13,000 hemostatic bandages and gauze, 11,000 tourniquets, 200 traumatic head injury kits, three anesthesia machines, and the creation of a fully stocked operating room, as well as more than 27,000 food kits and the feeding of more than 100,000 individuals.

The fund had no administrative costs, as Archeparchy of Philadelphia staff and volunteers donated their time to processing contributions.

"The donations, whether from individuals or families, students in Catholic and public schools, parishes or dioceses across the nation, fraternal organizations and companies, have been transformative," the bishops wrote in their report. "Dear friends, you have walked alongside priests ministering near the frontlines and supported the network of parishes of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. ... You brought comfort, compassion, and restored hope."

The new fund has already been seeded by major contributions from the Archdiocese of Boston and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, which had donated $500,000 and $529,056, respectively, to a Long Term Aid Fund that was subordinate to the Metropolia Fund.

That $1,029,056, to be redirected to the Healing the Wounds of the War in Ukraine Fund, will along with new contributions help provide urgently needed assistance in addressing the often unseen wounds of war.

The World Health Organization has estimated that as many as 9.6 million Ukrainians may experience mental health conditions as a result of Russia's war.

The invasion, which continues attacks initiated in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the backing of military separatists in Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk provinces, has been declared a genocide in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights. Ukraine has reported more than 125,834 war crimes committed by Russia to date in Ukraine since February 2022.

In March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for the unlawful deportation and transfer of at least 19,546 children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

"The solidarity demonstrated by people of goodwill with the brave people of Ukraine, who are defending their freedom with courage and resilience, is a source of authentic hope that God's truth will prevail," said the U.S. Ukrainian Catholic bishops in their report.

This story appears in the **War in Ukraine** feature series. View the full series.