News



Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia speaks of hope and resilience in Ukraine amid Russia's ongoing war during his March 6, 2025, keynote address at the University of Notre Dame's 2025 Ukrainian Studies Conference in Indiana. The event was a collaboration between Notre Dame's Nanovic Institute (part of the Keough School of Global Affairs) and Ukrainian Catholic University, of which Gudziak is president. (Courtesy of University of Notre Dame/OSV News/Matt Cashore)

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Through its trust in God, even amid the horror of war, "Ukraine can give America hope to not be afraid" of living out the call of the Gospel, said Metropolitan Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia.

The archbishop shared his thoughts March 6 during "A Conversation on Cultivating Hope in Ukraine," the opening plenary session of the University of Notre Dame's inaugural Ukrainian Studies Conference.

The March 6-8 gathering, titled "Revolutions of Hope: Resilience and Recovery in Ukraine," was a collaboration of the university's Nanovic Institute (part of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs) and Ukrainian Catholic University, of which Gudziak is president. The conference marked the inauguration of the Ukrainian Studies Hub at Notre Dame.

Presenters and dignitaries participating in the conference included Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S.; Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana; Holy Cross Fr. Robert Dowd, president of Notre Dame; Taras Dobkom, rector of Ukrainian Catholic University; and an array of experts in Ukrainian history, politics, art, culture, media and business.

Joining Gudziak onstage for the March 6 plenary was Rory Finnin, professor of Ukrainian studies at Cambridge University.

Ukrainians battling Russian aggression — which continues attacks launched in 2014, and which has been declared a genocide in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights — are exemplifying the four principles of Catholic social teaching, said Gudziak, referencing the church's social doctrine.

By defending human life from Russian attacks — which have predominantly targeted civilians — Ukrainians uphold the principle of human dignity, he said.

"It's God-given dignity, not because of a constitution or economic ... status," Gudziak said. "It's holy. It's sacred. Nobody can violate it."

The principle of solidarity is evident in, among other actions, Ukraine's rapid, large-scale absorption of those internally displaced by Russia's full-scale invasion, he said.

"There's now at least 4 million ... internally displaced persons," he said. "Where are the refugee camps? Where are the big settlements? ... They've been hosted by families, by institutions, by the government, by institutions; by cities, towns and villages. The poor are helping the absolutely destitute."

Subsidiarity, the third principle of Catholic social teaching, has been evident in the proactive response of Ukrainian forces in the early days of Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion, when "little, hastily assembled civil defense units" countered Russian forces, "taking responsibility" for the safety of their families, communities and nation, the archbishop said.

All of those efforts, he said, tend toward the fourth principle of Catholic social teaching: the common good.

Gudziak said that Catholic social teaching had been at the heart of Ukraine's 2013-2014 Maidan Revolution, also known as the Revolution of Dignity, during which Ukrainians — which had gained its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991— decisively pivoted away from Moscow toward Europe.

As then-Fr. Gudziak and rector of Ukrainian Catholic University, he himself had been a resident in Ukraine during the Maidan.

The archbishop said that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "unbeknownst to himself … is a student in Catholic social teaching."

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The intuitive grasp of Catholic social teaching manifested in Ukraine translates into "concrete agency," Gudziak said — and in turn prompts "a little bit of solidarity" as "a bully," in this case Russia, is attacking with the aid of its allies.

"Ukrainians are not asking for your or my pity," he stressed. "We'll get the work done. But they're fighting Russia, which is supported by China. All those armaments now have Chinese components in them. They (Ukrainians) have been rained upon with Iranian drones. North Korea has sent 20,000-30,000 soldiers."

Ukraine "is making the stand," he said, "because there's great hope God's truth will prevail."

That hope — or "nadiya," in Ukrainian — has persisted in the face of grave atrocities and profound anguish, Gudziak said, recalling experiences from his September 2024 pastoral tour of Ukraine, which spanned some 1,560 across the nation and placed him at points within 30 miles of the front line.

Ukrainians "have great hope" and "go forward," even as "the rockets are falling," the archbishop said.

He pointed to Pope Francis' bull of indiction for the Jubilee Year 2025, which opens with Romans 5:5: "Hope does not disappoint."

Gudziak quoted Romans 1:-5, adding, "We are going to see … the glory of God. We know we're baptized into Christ. We're part of his body, we're nourished by his body. … He calls us brothers and sisters … and by virtue of that, we're children of the Father."

He retraced the Scripture passage's description of how hope can be born from affliction, which first develops endurance and then proven character.

While "not every soldier praying on the front" will necessarily be "a regular Sunday communicant after the war," there is nonetheless a deep faith in the value of human life and "a reflection on our death," which — when borne sacrificially for the good of others — reaffirms human dignity, Gudziak said.

Such courage is contagious, and can inspire those in the U.S., he said.

The archbishop noted that he had "walked the halls of Washington a lot in the last few weeks" and had found "a lot of scared people," including "talented diplomats" and officials "who don't know what's going to happen tomorrow."

"I hope that today, Ukraine can give America hope to not be afraid," Gudziak said. "Say what you have to say. Say what is true. Witness. Make a stand for the

immigrants, for the poor, for the unjustly fired."

He added that while "it's easy to get crushed by fear ... when we hope to see God (and) ... know that is what we are called to, we look at things in a different way."