



Diocese of Rockford

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Office of the Bishop

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To the faithful of the Diocese of Rockford

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart that we see Russia launch airstrikes and shelling on various cities in Ukraine, causing death and destruction. Ukraine has already endured eight years of conflict when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 and took over Crimea. Now war has spread. Thousands more could be killed. To date 500,000 Ukrainians have fled the fighting into neighboring European countries. Millions more could become refugees.

In this painful and anxious time, I echo the appeal for an end to the invasion by Russia, and for peace in Ukraine made by Pope Francis on February 23rd to those “with political responsibility to examine their consciences seriously before God, who is the God of peace and not of war, who is the Father of all, not just of some, who wants us to be brothers and not enemies.” We join with the Holy Father in praying that “all the parties involved refrain from any action that would cause even more suffering to the people, destabilizing coexistence between nations and bringing international law into disrepute.”

Pope Francis has declared Ash Wednesday to be a “Day of Fasting for Peace.” I ask that all Catholics in the Diocese of Rockford join with the Holy Father on Wednesday, March 2nd, offering our prayers, charity, and fasting for the forgiveness of sins but most especially for the people of Ukraine who are so greatly threatened and suffering. And throughout this holy season of Lent, may we continue to pray with special intent for all our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine along with all those who suffer from violence and instability.

In view of the developing humanitarian crisis, I urge the faithful to support the vital work of humanitarian organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, the Collection for the Church in Eastern Europe and Caritas Ukraine to provide emergency assistance to our suffering brothers and sisters in Ukraine.

I join with Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who stated, “May our prayers, joined with those of people around the world, help guide those waging war to end the meaningless suffering and restore peace. Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford