



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Australian bishops back local Advent appeal for Ukrainian people

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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The country's bishops are encouraging Catholics to respond to the call from the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Australia to provide financial support to people in the war-torn nation as winter arrives.

Bishop Mykola Bychok CSsR gave an update on the situation in Ukraine during the plenary meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference earlier this month. He thanked the bishops for praying – and inviting their communities to pray – for Ukraine, and asked them to renew those prayers.

He also requested that bishops hold a special collection to “support refugees and people in Ukraine during this winter, which will be the most challenging for our country for decades of independence”.

The bishops gave strong support to that proposal, and are encouraging dioceses, eparchies, parishes, schools and other ministries to facilitate a special collection during Advent for Ukraine.

“Mindful of the busyness of this pre-Christmas period, communities are invited to find a day, a weekend or some other moment or moments to focus on the people of Ukraine,” said Bishops Conference president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB.

“It should also be a time to again place the Prayer for Peace in Ukraine that the Bishops Conference composed in February in our minds and in our hearts.”

Archbishop Costelloe said the bishops are also individually considering Bishop Bychok's invitation for a delegation of Australian bishops to travel to Ukraine in an act of solidarity with the people there, including the Catholic faithful.

“Although it is nigh on impossible for us to capture the magnitude of what is unfolding in Ukraine, Bishop Mykola helped paint the desperate picture to augment what we are seeing on our TVs,” he said.

“While financial contributions can and will help, it has been made clear to us that a group of bishops spending time on the ground would be a powerful sign of our closeness to the plight of the Ukrainian people.”

In his address to the bishops, Bishop Bychok described the devastation being caused in Ukraine – through loss of life, internal and international displacement, widespread property destruction or damage and other consequences of war.

He thanked Caritas Australia, Catholic Mission and Aid to the Church in Need, as well as dioceses and religious communities, for raising funds to provide humanitarian support.

He also acknowledged the Australian Government's allocation of humanitarian visas for people fleeing the war.

All donations raised during the Advent appeal will support the work of *Mudra Sprava* (Wise Action), a Patriarchal Charitable Foundation in Ukraine. The organisation has three focus areas: Evacuation of people from frontline territories; Food packages for people in need; Shelters for internally displaced persons.

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