

To Ukraine, with Love

Please Help this People Ravaged by War



With Russia's cruel invasion of Ukraine, many devastating images from news reports fill our minds. But there is also a recent image that stirs hope. It is a photo of one of the Ukrainian priests who works with Valentyna Pavsyukova, founder of Chalice of Mercy, holding a bag of rosaries made by the children of Casa Hogar, our diocesan orphanage in Peru. They would be carried by Fr. Andrew to Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines of combat with Russia, who would receive them with deep gratitude. What a beautiful gesture of love and prayer from orphan children across the world!

Thanks to people's generosity, Chalice of Mercy is able to share much besides rosaries with the devastated people of Ukraine, but the rosaries point to the foundation of everything done by Valentyna and her mission to Ukraine – prayer and trust in God.

For those unfamiliar with Valentyna Pavsyukova, she came to the U.S. from Ukraine in 2002 at the age of 18, having been chosen from a U.S. Government Green Card Lottery in which she had been entered by her mother, who saw it as a path to a better life. Valentyna came to live with a Ukrainian couple in Medford, WI. Knowing barely a word of English, she experienced a time of great hardship and loneliness, made worse by the fact that she had grown up with virtually no religious formation due to the lingering effects of religious suppression in Ukraine, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. But Valentyna remembered one prayer taught to her by her beloved grandmother – the Our Father. Waking up one morning with a great heaviness in her heart, she prayed it and asked, "O God, help me, heal me, because I cannot do this on my own anymore."

In that moment Valentyna was flooded with God's grace and assurance, and it marked a turning point in her life. Working as a hairdresser (she had earned a cosmetology license in Ukraine), she met a Catholic woman who agreed to take her to Mass. Valentyna knew nothing of the Mass, but at the moment of the consecration she was seized by a powerful awareness and remembers thinking, "I don't know anything, but I know that this is true. Right there in front of me on the altar is the Body of Christ."



Valentyna with Bishop Callahan and Chalice of Mercy Board Member Fr. Daniel Thelen

With the support of a circle of Catholic friends, Valentyna grew in her faith and was received into the Church in 2007. She burned with the desire to give herself completely to God as a missionary and considered Africa. But, "suddenly I thought of my own people in Ukraine. How could I forget them?"

That would be the beginning of the Chalice of Mercy mission to Ukraine, and more of the story can be learned by visiting the website www.chaliceofmercy.org. Valentyna and her mission have undertaken many beautiful initiatives, especially in providing medical missions and in leading more than 1500 Ukrainian doctors on life-changing pilgrimages in which they encounter God and His Mercy. Many who had practiced abortion (sadly commonplace in Ukraine) have renounced it and become champions of human life and dignity.

That brings us to today, when human life and dignity have been cruelly ravaged by Vladimir Putin and his Russian invasion. *Chalice of Mercy is at this moment collecting funds to purchase and ship medical supplies to treat wounded soldiers and civilians, as well as warm undergarments and other clothing for the Ukrainian soldiers defending their homeland in freezing temperatures, often without full uniforms. These supplies will be collected in Poland and transported across the border into Ukraine. Learn how you can help by visiting www.chaliceofmercy.org/donation. These funds are very needed! And remember above all to pray for Valentyna, pray for the work of Chalice of Mercy, and pray and fast this Lent for her native Ukraine!*