



Valentyna Pavszyukova

To Ukraine with Love: 60 Tons of Aid!

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the people of the Diocese of La Crosse in the month of March, Valentyna Pavszyukova's Chalice of Mercy mission was able to deliver to Ukraine 48 pallets of humanitarian aid collected at parish and Catholic school sites around the diocese. We are talking about more than 60 tons of supplies!

Valentyna herself flew to Warsaw, Poland, at the end of March to accompany the first shipment. She was able to cross the border into Ukraine and monitor the transfer of the goods to trucks destined for the areas of need.

While other organizations have struggled to get humanitarian aid into the war-torn nation, Valentyna has a highly effective network of contacts and volunteers in the civilian, medical and military communities. In fact, many of these have taken part in pilgrimages she has led to Medjugorje, where they have undergone profound conversions. Ukraine is their home and they know the roads and which routes are most secure.

Besides the many tons of humanitarian goods donated by the faithful of the diocese, the first shipment included medical supplies worth more than two million dollars donated by the Mayo Clinic, whose representatives were moved by Valentyna's personal witness and plea on behalf of the suffering people of

her homeland. As these arrived at a hospital in Zaporizhzhia, a major city in southeastern Ukraine where Valentyna was born and raised, the medical personnel wept with joy. They knew countless lives would be saved, countless broken bodies mended, thanks to these supplies.

It made me recall a scene at McDonnell High School in Chippewa Falls, where the parish and school donations had been hauled and stacked on pallets to be loaded onto 3 semitrailer trucks. A group of volunteers was counting and boxing hundreds of emergency first aid kits purchased with donated funds. One item in each kit was a tourniquet. Valentyna explained that these would literally mean the difference between living or bleeding to death for many wounded soldiers and civilians.

Every penny collected by Chalice of Mercy goes to this relief effort, to pay the high cost of shipping (the most urgent supplies by air, others by sea), or to obtain things that need to be purchased, such as a surgical laser instrument desperately needed by the doctors in Ukraine. While we have paused the collection of humanitarian supplies, the need for such financial help very much continues (visit www.chaliceofmercy.org to donate).

The volunteers who have assisted in this effort of love have been amazing, from parishioners to Catholic school teachers, to students, to clergy, to parish secretaries and staff. It is worth noting that nine deacons of the diocese

have been instrumental in this effort. The word "deacon" means "servant," and these men have shown why.

Then there is Valentyna Pavszyukova herself, who in these busy weeks has treated sleep and food like luxuries she can mostly do without. Thankfully she has dear friends who make sure she eats something. Her heart burns for the people of her homeland who have been so cruelly attacked and decimated, but who have shown the courage of a lion.

It is not only in the Diocese of La Crosse that the mission of Chalice of Mercy is loved and esteemed. Valentyna has partnered in recent years with doctors and nurses from Madrid, Spain, for several medical missions to the poor of Ukraine. These same professionals mounted their own relief effort, and truckloads of medical supplies from Madrid have also crossed the border into Ukraine.

In fact, Valentyna recently received a letter asking her to fly to Madrid on May 10, where she will be awarded a Merit Cross for the relief efforts of Chalice of Mercy. This will be presented to her by the International Association for Security and Civil Protection. But the only thing she cares about is that this may open more doors for helping her people.

If you would like to help her people, too, visit www.chaliceofmercy.org.

Chris Ruff - Ministries & Social Concerns

