

5 International Peace Conference

In 2018 – 2019, an International conference took place in France and Ukraine consisting of 4 seminars focused on "What peace plan is possible between Russia and Ukraine?". Scientists, religious and public figures from Ukraine, Russia and the European Union participated in it at various stages. The main purpose of the conference was to explore ways of overcoming tensions between Ukraine and Russia and to understand how interstate and intercultural ties between Ukraine and Russia could be further developed.

Representatives of the Dominicans participated in the conference as part of the Ukrainian delegation and the Dominican Institute of Religious Sciences of St. Thomas Aquinas in Kiev hosted one of the seminars of the conference.

SOME TESTIMONIES DURING THE REHABILITATION IN FASTIV

Masha (10): "Everyone was worried that they would hit us (during the shelling). Vitalka, my little brother, was very afraid that they would hit us".

Andrey (14): "Then, even when they stopped shooting, they hid away, it was very scary".

Anya (8): "When I was about 5 years old, for 2 years we constantly had to go down and sit in the basement for long periods".

Sergey (15): "Many left there (from the combat zone) for 1-2 months. Some came back, some didn't. We didn't have the opportunity to leave, we have a house there. It's difficult to leave your home."

Victoria (15): "What do I dream about?... that the war will end as soon as possible and that I may get a good education".

Anastasiya (15): "Being with the people in the Centre is like being with friends. Honestly, the way they talk to us, it is as if we have always been friends! The atmosphere is not strained, we are not forced to do anything. Certainly we are lucky to be here."

Svitlana (chaperone who came with the children): "The children are being rehabilitated and a spark of life, of joy appears in their lives. They share it, they talk about it and something joyful remains in them. Where they live everything is in ruins ... There are families so poor that they do not even have electricity. Here they get so infected with this positive energy and they tell their parents about it. This is something new for them."

Natalia (chaperone who came with the children): "They leave here (from the St. Martin Center) completely different. As they leave, it is as if they are different people from those who arrived"



Appeal to the Dominican Family for solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine who are promoting peace and reconciliation and especially the rehabilitation of children traumatised by the war

To show solidarity, Dominicans worldwide are urged to take the following actions:

1. To organise at least one Prayer Vigil and Solemn Eucharist for peace in Ukraine and solidarity with victims of the war.
2. To incorporate this focus on peace in Ukraine into our ordinary Advent preaching and to diffuse this as far as possible through the media of your entity.
3. To inform the local Ukraine Embassy about the Dominican Family's focus on solidarity with the struggle for peace and reconciliation in Ukraine, and invite them to participate.
4. To invite and encourage all artists within the Order (painters, photographers, poets, musicians, ...) to contribute towards the process of peace, safety, rehabilitation and empowerment at the local and global levels by producing a work of art.
5. To make a financial contribution to the St. Martin de Porres Center in Fastiv, to support and strengthen the promotion and defence of the rights of socially disadvantaged children by the Dominican Family in Ukraine.



HOW TO SEND CONTRIBUTIONS?

Financial Contributions

Account Name : Polska Prowincja Zakonu Kaznodziejskiego O.O. Dominikanów

Account Numbers :

03 1600 1374 1849 2174 0000 0033 [PLN]
73 1600 1374 1849 2174 0000 0034 [USD]
52 1600 1374 1849 2174 0000 0024 [EUR]

Bank : BNP Paribas S.A.

Address : ul. Kasprzaka 10/16, 01-211 Warszawa, Poland

Swift (BIC) Code : PPABPLPK

Purpose : House of St. Martin de Porres in Fastiv – Dominican Month for Peace

Works of Art

Write to the General Curia
Promoter for Justice and Peace
un@curia.op.org

General Information

fr Petro Balog OP
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SOLIDARITY WITH DOMINICANS IN UKRAINE

DOMINICAN MONTH FOR PEACE

29 NOVEMBER 2020

1 JANUARY 2021



The Dominican Month for Peace is an annual event of the Dominican Family initiated by the Master of the Order after the 2016 Jubilee celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Order of Preachers which called for a renewal of its preaching. In the spirit of St Dominic, **it aims to show solidarity with Dominicans promoting peace** in a world torn apart by many forms of violence and war. After focusing on Colombia in 2017, the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018 and India in 2019, the **Dominican Month for Peace** turns this year to Europe and **calls for solidarity with the Dominicans in Ukraine.**

WAR, REPRESSION AND DISPLACEMENT IN UKRAINE

Since April 2014, in the aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and protests by Russian-backed separatist groups, fighting in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of East Ukraine (collectively called the "Donbass") has been ongoing. Hundreds of cities and settlements have been captured by Russian-led troops.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, between March 2014 and October 31, 2019, approximately 13,000 – 13,200 people (including at least 3,345 civilians) were killed in this fighting. The number of wounded is estimated at 29,000 – 31,000, including approximately 7,000 – 9,000 civilians.

In the territories occupied by Russian-led troops, there has been killing and repression on ethnic and religious grounds, and thousands of homes and even entire settlements have been destroyed, causing a massive wave of internal displacement. More than one and a half million civilians in Donetsk and Luhansk regions have been forced to migrate to other regions.

VIOLATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



The children living in the war zone are particularly affected. For over five years, they have been deprived of an adequate education since the schools lack necessary equipment. They are also deprived of basic cultural needs such as

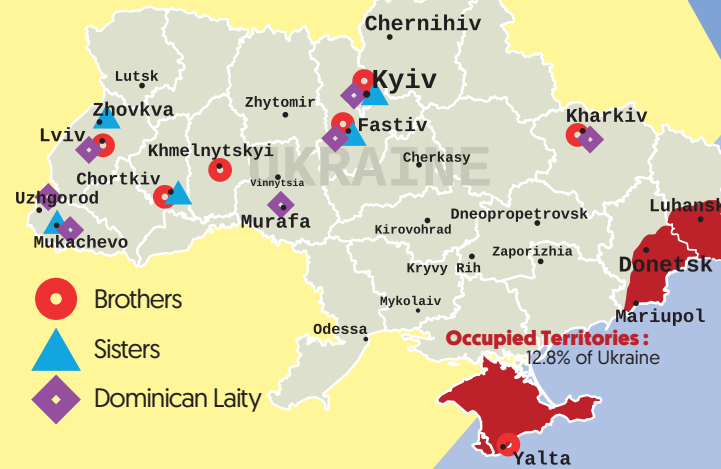
sports facilities, libraries or cinemas, many of which have been destroyed during the fighting.

Also, since so many terrible and violent events have dominated their lives during the occupation and the hostilities, many children, especially younger ones, have never experienced peace. There is therefore a great need for these children, like their parents, to encounter the Gospel to find hope and answers to the many questions posed by this tragic situation. This need for evangelisation requires contact and communication with pastoral workers, whether they be priests, religious or simply faithful and caring people.



WORK FOR PEACE OF THE DOMINICAN FAMILY IN UKRAINE

The Dominican Family in Ukraine comprises 25 friars in 7 communities, 18 sisters from 4 congregations in 5 communities, 82 laity in 7 cities, and 6 groups of Youth in the places of ministry of the friars. After being suppressed during the Communist era, the Order was refounded in Ukraine in the early 1990s.



In the current context of conflict, the ministry of peace-building of the Dominican Family is focused on five areas:

1 Rehabilitation of children living in the war zone

In Fastiv, where communities of the Dominican friars and sisters are located, the St. Martin de Porres Center has been functioning since 2005. It is currently supported by a team of about 25 Dominican friars, sisters, laity, and other volunteers. Since its inception, its main goal has been to care for socially disadvantaged children: orphans, street children, sick children and children from disadvantaged families.

With the start of hostilities in Eastern Ukraine, the Center has opened its doors to children whose childhood has been poisoned by war: the daily experience of gunfire and explosions, the hatred and hostility of adults, the death of loved ones and friends, the loss of homes. In cooperation with the Christian Rescue Service (an initiative of lay Catholics in Kiev), since 2016, the St. Martin Center has adopted 31 groups of 7-8 children each, regardless of religion, from the combat zone. For 8-9 days, they are offered a space to relax with entertainment in a safe environment, to receive treatment and rehabilitation, as well as spiritual accompaniment and instruction. Each child is treated by a professional psychologist specialized in post-traumatic stress disorders in children. This experience enables these children to have a taste of a peaceful life (often for the first time) and many return to their families with a more positive and hopeful outlook and, hence, greater resilience.



2 Capacitating Christian community leaders to be facilitators of reconciliation in their local communities or settlements

Since September 2019, a Social Leadership School has been established at the Institute of Religious Sciences of St. Thomas Aquinas, located in the convent of the Dominican friars in Kiev. In collaboration with the Christian Rescue Service, the main purpose of this program is to develop active and responsible Christian leaders. Open to people of all denominations, the courses (covering broad themes of Catholic Social Teachings) prepare the participants to be promoters of peaceful coexistence and facilitators of reconciliation among different nationalities and religious denominations in their local communities.



Currently, about 30 people from different regions of Ukraine study at the School of Social Leadership. A significant number of them are community leaders of settlements in the area of military conflict who return with skills in peace-building.

3 Training lay military chaplains to be facilitators of reconciliation in the war zone

In June, 2019, the Military Ordinary of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, Bishop Stanislav Shyrokoradiuk, instituted a ministry of lay chaplaincy to accompany soldiers in the war zone. He appointed the Christian Rescue Service as responsible for the recruitment of those wishing to become lay chaplains, and the Dominican Institute of Religious Sciences of St. Thomas Aquinas as responsible for their theological education.

Subsequently, in September 2019, a 3-year catechetical course, "Tree of Life", was launched at the Institute, in which these lay chaplains are enrolled. In addition to the study of the theological disciplines, such as Biblical Studies, the course program pays considerable attention to topics needed to deal with trauma and to facilitate reconciliation in the war zone, such as nonviolent communication, ethics of communication and human psychology.



4 Ministry in the war zone

Since 2016, the Christian Rescue Service has established mission centers in 5 war-affected settlements: Mariupol, Avdiivka, Maryinka, Starobilsk and Bakhmut. In these centers, chaplains actively serve the soldiers along with children, lonely elderly people and people with special needs who live in the war zone. Dominicans are actively involved in this ministry of evangelization by visiting the war zone, celebrating Holy Masses, and accompanying and preaching the Word of God to the local population.

