

# MISSION INTENTIONS

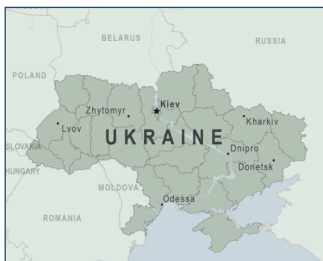
APRIL

2022-2023

We pray for the growth of peace and nonviolence, by decreasing the use of weapons by governments and individuals.

## Country Focus: Ukraine

Due to its war with Russia, we've been learning a lot about Ukraine during the last year. It became an independent nation in 1991, after the Soviet Union dissolved. Russia claimed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula in 2014 as its own territory, which Ukraine and the international community condemned. After years of frontline skirmishes, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, and the two countries have been at war ever since.



Www.CDC.gov

We've also learned about the role religion plays in the lives of Ukrainian people. Most Ukrainians practice some form of Christianity, and are members of either an Orthodox, Eastern, or Latin rite Church. Although historically there have been tensions between the different rites, all of them have condemned

Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Let us join Pope Francis in prayer this month that the war may come to an end and that Ukraine can once again enjoy peace.

## Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

In their 1993 document, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace," the then National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) remind us that the Catholic Church is called to be an instrument of peacemaking in the world:

*"...peacemaking [is] an essential dimension of our faith...Our biblical heritage and our body of tradition make the vocation of peacemaking mandatory. Authentic prayer, worship and sacramental life challenge us to conversion of our hearts and summon us to works of peace."*

## Saint Spotlight

## Saint Olga of Kyiv

You might have heard the saying, "Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future." This statement is certainly true for Saint Olga of Kyiv.

Born into nobility sometime in the 900's, Olga married Prince Igor of Kyiv, a son of the first royal family ruling over what would later become the country of Ukraine. Sadly, shortly after the birth of their first son, Prince Igor was killed, leaving Olga to rule until their son came of age.

Her first act as queen was to seek revenge against those who had murdered her husband. Her actions were so violent that it can be hard to believe she later became a saint.

However, about 10 years later, on a trip to



Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), Olga was introduced to Christianity and decided to convert from her pagan faith. Although originally there might have been political motivations behind her decision to be baptized, she became dedicated to her faith.

Upon returning home, Saint Olga began to serve the poor, build churches, and request that missionaries be sent to her land to help convert her people. While her son never became Christian, he did promise not to persecute them. Her grandson, Volodymyr, did convert and made Christianity the official religion of the kingdom. Saint Olga is regarded by many Ukrainians as a patron saint of their country. Her feast day is July 11.

## Formation for Life in Christ

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

Peace is an integral part of the Catholic social teaching theme of life and dignity of the human person. As you know, this theme tells us that all human life is sacred and worthy of dignity. One of the ways Catholics are called to protect life is to work for peace.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says, *“Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of power between adversaries”* (no. 2304). Earthly peace happens when societies prioritize the dignity of all persons in all areas of life: education, health care, justice and economic systems and government. *“Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity”* (CCC, no. 2304). When we truly love our neighbor as ourselves, as Jesus commanded, and live in harmony with one another, we have achieved peace.

Promoting peace is always a priority of the Church. Pope Francis has spoken on many occasions of the necessity of working for peace, and has upheld the relationship between peace and human dignity in his statements. In his message on the

Day of Peace in 2017, he stated, “I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as sacred gifts endowed with immense dignity. Especially in situations of conflict let us respect this, our ‘deepest dignity’, and make active nonviolence our way of life.”

The Catholic Church works for peace in many different ways. Catholic Charities USA helps those suffering from poverty and natural disasters. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops advocates for peace on a national and international level through its Office of Justice, Peace & Human Development.



In this month’s video, you will learn about Marina and her family, Ukrainian refugees now living in Moldova, and the help they’ve received from Caritas, a Catholic organization based in

Rome that serves those suffering from humanitarian crises all over the world. As you watch the video, think about how the Catholic Church is working to bring about peace to those affected by the war in Ukraine. What are some ways your local parish works for peace?

## Celebrating the Mystery

In his 2004 Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (“Stay with us, Lord”), St. John Paul II wrote that the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebration could be judged by how it affected our ability to imitate Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet (no. 28). After receiving the Eucharist, do we go out into the world and strive to make it a better place by caring for the poor and the marginalized? Do we work for peace and try to change those things in our society that are unjust? Or do we simply leave Mass and pick up our lives where we left off an hour before? If we are authentically receiving the Eucharist, we allow it to transform us so that we can go out into the world and share Christ’s love with others.

### Teaching Prayer: World Day of Peace

One of the best ways we can work for peace is by praying. Since 1967, the Holy Father has celebrated the World Day of Peace each year on January 1 by sharing a special message and encouraging Catholics to pray, learn and act to build peace. The Church has created many prayer resources to help Catholics in this effort. To learn more about how you can support the work of building peace through prayer, [click here](#)>>.

## Life and Hope Always Win...Marina’s Story [Click here](#)>>



- ✚ How are representatives of Caritas serving as missionary disciples by helping those affected by the war in Ukraine?
- ✚ How can you help work for peace in your own community? School? Family?

- ✚ After watching the video, why do you think it is important for Catholics to work for peace?