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Sisters from the Romanian congregation of St. Basil the Great bringing goods to a congregation in Ukraine on April 9.

by Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great

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May 3, 2022

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**Editor's note:** Sr. Ann Laszok, a sister of the [Order of St. Basil the Great](#) who is based in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, has been sharing dispatches with Global Sisters

*Report about her congregation's communities in Ukraine. The congregation has 164 sisters in the Ukraine provinces of Mukachevo, Kyiv, Lviv and a half-dozen other cities. We received permission to publish them so long as we do not use the names of sisters or individuals included in the emails. We thought it was important to share all we can about how the sisters in Ukraine and those they minister to are enduring this brutal war. Each of the dispatches begins with the salutation: "Glory to Jesus Christ" and "Dear Sisters" and closes with "United in Prayer." We will update this periodically. (Sr. Ann Laszok is the director of Religious Education for the Eparchy of St Josaphat in Parma, Pennsylvania.)*

## **Friday, April 29**

For two weeks, we have not sent you news about our sisters in Ukraine. Today, we received the news from one sister and share it with you. She writes that in general, our communities are relatively well. Yesterday, there were explosions in Zaporizhya. Thank goodness, our sisters are fine. Also yesterday, our Basilian sister from Romania, along with Rev. Father and a group of volunteers from Italy, brought four buses of humanitarian aid. The sisters from Ukraine are sincerely grateful for this help, for the sacrifice and dedication of the sister, father and volunteers.

Today, one of our sisters is going to Sandomierz, Poland, to visit her brother. Also today, our sisters transport sick children from Ukraine to Poland. In many of our communities in Ukraine, the Basilian Sisters shared the joy of the Resurrection with refugees through Easter meals, haivky, traveling together, and just being together. For a major part of refugees, this was the first time they celebrated Easter this way.

We thank God for everything!

## **Tuesday, April 13**

Today we have received a message from M. Danyila that the Sisters in Ukraine thank God for every given day and continue to pray for peace and victory for Ukraine. One of our Sisters from the Most Holy Trinity Province has returned from Poland. Our communities in Ukraine continue to receive refugees and contribute to helping those in need and our military through various ministries.

We also add a story from yesterday of one of our Sisters who work with refugees.

*"Here it is, our medicine," said a woman from Zaporizhyya as I passed her by. Those who were at the Liturgy yesterday (Palm Sunday) approached and thanked for the prayer. Some asked them to record their prayers on audio. When I returned from my ministry for refugees today I thought about all our Sisters in Ukraine and abroad, who with their help are medicine for each other and for others ...*

We can be and so many times we are the healing presence of God for others! Dear Sisters, let us continue to be a praying, healing and life-giving presence.

### **Friday, April 8**

The Sisters are sincerely grateful to the dear sisters from Romania, who once again delivered humanitarian aid to Mukachevo today. The Sisters, along with volunteers, brought food, hygiene items, blankets and more in three vans. These items will be transferred to eastern Ukraine for refugees, the military and the needy. The sisters do not know how the situation in Ukraine will develop further, as killings of civilians, destruction of entire towns, and humanitarian crises continue in many cities, but they continue to pray, believe, and ask the Lord for His mercy for Ukraine.

Let us pray together with the psalmist *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies. The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears."*  
(Ps. 18:2-6)

### **Thursday, April 7**

The sisters received medicine that day from the Basilian Sisters from Jesus, Lover of Humanity Province, Fox Chase, PA. The sisters in Ukraine are sincerely grateful to (name withheld) for her care and assistance in this matter. And special thanks to the dear sisters from Fox Chase and all those who contributed to this help.

### **Wednesday, April 6**

Mother Danyila has just written to us that yesterday and today were calm because our defenders are defending the cities from missile attacks. Also today, a truck with

humanitarian aid organized by the Basilian sisters from Romania and (name withheld) and and volunteers from the Arsenal of Peace Youth Missionary Service arrived in Ivano-Frankivsk. The sisters sincerely thank the people of good will and great heart for their help, which is very important and valuable. May the Blessed Virgin Mary cover the whole of Ukraine with her Holy Intercession.

*We continue to share the stories of refugees ... "Veronica, thank you for being with us," said young mother Olya, whom I accompanied with her daughter from the police after they received temporary protection documents in Croatia. I hugged her and she opened her palms and continued: "Here is our family heirloom. That's all we could take with us." In her hands was an old icon of the Virgin with a child. Olya's husband died of coronavirus, and she is only 30+. A young widow with a teenage daughter and also a refugee ... Not surprisingly, she talks little and avoids others.*

*I never ask people what their nationality or religion is, whether they go to church or not. I'm pretty careful at this point. The icon of the Mother of God with the Child, wrapped in her palms, showed me the greatness of the fact that God builds personal relationships with man ....*

These lines come to mind: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:35-39)

## **Monday, April 4**

Mother Danyila notified us that night and day were restless because of frequent air alarms. Several cities were under rocket fire. One of our Basilian sisters has returned from Portugal. We continue to pray for God's mercy and conversion for Russia.

## **Saturday, April 2**

We received information that one of our Basilian sisters, together with her sister and her children, left today for Poland.

**Thursday, March 31**

Mother (name withheld) wrote to us that this day had passed peacefully. But in the evening the air-raid siren was sounding. Today two Basilian sisters left for Poland to transport humanitarian medical care for the military and refugees to Ukraine. The sisters spent the night with our sisters in Gorlice and will return tomorrow.



The elderly in Zaporizhia are grateful to the sisters for the food. (Courtesy of Sisters of St. Basil the Great.)

## Tuesday, March 29

*(Later dispatch that same day)* There were frequent air alarms during the night and day in the cities where our Sisters live. Today, one of our Sisters together with volunteers transported humanitarian aid from Poland to Ukraine. Once again, the Romanian sisters brought a large amount of humanitarian aid to Mukachevo (Ukraine). Many thanks to the dear sisters and people of good will for their sincere hearts. May the All-Merciful Lord bless them for all good that they are doing.

Here is another story from our Sister who works with refugees in Zagreb.

"I'm sitting and I'm afraid to move so as not to lose that feeling of God who is present in the story I just heard from (name withheld.) She is over 70. She now lives in Zagreb with her daughter and grandson. The Russian troops bombed their houses. They were sitting in the basement. They didn't just sit there, they prayed. As Valentina says, "I was saying all the prayers I could remember."

Today she learned that her son is alive. She said: "The Lord has brought me good news. My son is alive, he has been sitting in the basement all this time." The other day she learned that God had saved her grandson, who turned 25 today. He was also sitting in the basement. I look at this woman with pride. There is so much of the Living God in her .. She is the way of the cross of God ... She, as God, accepts, accepts and does not complain ...

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This 33rd day of the war in Ukraine passed in our communities in more or less peaceful mode. There were air raids during the day. The sisters continue to pray, serve, and trust God with our lives and the lives of the people we meet.

From today we will share with you the stories of Ukrainian refugees. This one that you will find below was sent to us by our Basilian Sister from the Most Holy Trinity Province who is in Zagreb (Croatia) and spiritually supports those people who have found refuge in this country.

"I started my life in the war and end it with the war." The 84-year-old woman who moved with her daughter from Kyiv to Zagreb, said these words on March 24. This woman shared her experiences with quiver, and her sister listened trembling ... Not knowing what to say, she just sat down next to her and hugged her. Cold and

trembling the woman grabbed her sister's hand ... The sister prayed for the woman embracing her in her arms."

We also pray, embracing all those who suffer, who are in danger, all those who need our prayer.

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### **Sunday, March 27**

Today we received a message from (name withheld) that today was more or less peaceful for all our communities. One of our Basilian sisters today left Ukraine for Slovakia to work with the children of Ukrainian refugees. The Sister will live in the community of our sisters in Bratislava in the Nunciature.

Another Sister who is currently in France through telephone conversations communicates with refugees in France and provides spiritual support, especially to mothers. We thank God for every day of our lives and we entrust all of us and our communities under the Protection of the Blessed Virgin.

### **Saturday, March 26**

On this 31st day of the war in Ukraine, we had the opportunity to meet with (name withheld) on the Zoom platform. She, like all Provincial Superiors, Vice-Provincial Superiors and Delegation Superiors of the Order participated in the meeting. This evening Lviv was fired at with rockets, so we could see that M. Danyila has joined us from the basement of the monastery. The sisters in Lviv could see the smoke and the blaze of the fire.

At this meeting we had the opportunity to hear about how our Order was living this month of war. We had the opportunity to hear about the selfless ministry of two sisters in Zaporizhyya, four in Kyiv, and one in Poltava. Sisters from Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, and even faraway Australia spoke about the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in these countries and about their ministry to those affected by the war.



It was important to hear the testimony of the Sisters from the United States of America about how other religious congregations, and even ordinary people, offer their help, donate to help those in need. From this meeting it could be concluded that the Basilian sisters pray a lot, zealously and incessantly. We are united in this prayer as one community united by faith.

### **Friday, March 25**

Today is a special day. Together with Pope Francis and His Beatitude Sviatoslav, in unity with the whole world, the sisters in Ukraine consecrated Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We thank God that all our sisters in Ukraine are relatively safe and have a possibility to pray and serve people. We believe and hope that the Blessed Virgin Mary will ask us for peace and freedom, and for Russia to convert. The Basilian Sisters in Rome were present at this consecration prayer in the Basilica of St. Petra.

### **Thursday, March 24**

For the second day in a row in Lviv, sirens do not sound. However, fighting is taking place in many cities. The elderly in Zaporizhia and the military who are guarding the city are grateful to the sisters for the food. We send photos from Zaporizhya. May the Lord be our joy and peace in these difficult times.

### **Wednesday, March 23**

#### **(Evening email)**

M (name withheld) notified us that that today and night in Lviv passed quietly.

The baby food and diapers brought by the sisters from Romania were handed over to the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv today. The sisters from Kyiv in the Croatian Province also told us that they were fine. The sisters from Zaporizhia shared that they housed Mariupol residents, fed groups of passing soldiers, transported refugees, and distributed aid.

The sisters pray for those who are suffering from the war and its consequences. Prayer is our circle of love by which we embrace Ukraine: our sisters, soldiers, volunteers, doctors, all those in danger, refugees ... we can continue this list. Prayer

is the power of the Holy Spirit that overcomes all evil and empowers us to act. We continue to pray and act.

### **(Morning email)**

Mother (name withheld) has just informed us that there are very frequent air strikes all over the country, and in some cities they are constant.

The sisters pray, serve, and receive refugees. Sr. (name withheld) touchingly described one of the stories of therefugees from Mariupol. People survived the horrors of war ... (the story is in Ukrainian but you might try to translate it with Google translate.) [Facebook](#)

In our monasteries in the central and eastern part of Ukraine it is relatively quiet. We gave them the aid that the Sisters and caring people shared with us.

May the Lord protect and guard us all.

And we also continue our prayers and humanitarian deeds.

### **Monday, March 21**

The war in Ukraine continues. It is already the 26th day. Today during the day, air alarms were often heard in all cities of Ukraine. The sisters continue their ministry in the monasteries and thank God for each day.

### **Saturday, March 19**

This evening, Mother informed us that in Lviv and in many cities of Ukraine there were now very frequent air alarms, several times a day and at night. Today, the sisters from Romania once again brought several buses of humanitarian aid for refugees and those in need. We express our sincere gratitude to the sisters in Romania and all the sisters who put a lot of effort and time into collecting and transporting this help to Ukraine. May the Lord bless the sisters abundantly. The sisters in Ukraine pray and thank God for them and for all people of goodwill.

And it is important for all of us, dear sisters, to persevere in prayer, in service in accordance with the circumstances in which we find ourselves and in hope and trust

in God.

## Friday, March 18

*(**Editor's note:** These are excerpts from a notice sent by Sr. Ann Laszok, which is posted in full on the congregation's [website](#).)*

On the morning of March 18, the quiet street of Sant Alessio, where the Generalate of the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great is located [in Rome] was blocked by a convoy from the Dutch Foreign Ministry. Mr. Wopke Hoekstra, who is the Dutch Foreign Minister, had decided unexpectedly to visit the sisters to personally hear about their vision of the current situation and about their service in Ukraine and abroad in connection with the war. ...



Wopke Hoekstra, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of the Netherlands, visited the Generalate of the Order of St. Basil the Great in Rome on March 18 to hear firsthand about how the congregation's sisters in Ukraine are helping refugees. (Courtesy of Sisters of St. Basil the Great)

At this meeting, the Basilian Sisters had the opportunity to talk about the sisters' ministry during the war in Ukraine. After all, since the first days of the war, the sisters had been helping refugees and needy victims in the war zone, participating in various volunteer organizations, cooperating with support organizations, hospitals, and directly accepting refugees into the monasteries, helping to organize their lives, transportation and other necessities.

Minister Hoekstra stressed that he was impressed by the resistance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the entire Ukrainian nation to the aggressor, as well as the service of the Basilian Sisters, and assured them of the support of the Netherlands for Ukraine during this difficult time.

### **Thursday, March 17**

This day in our communities was more or less calm. Only early in the morning there was an air alarm.

One of our sisters safely returned from Spain back to Lviv.

Sisters in Ukraine continue to pray, work and rely on God's mercy.

### **Wednesday, March 16**

Mother Provincial notified us that today was a turbulent night and day for Zaporizhyya and Kyiv. There were explosions. In the area where our sisters live in Zaporizhyya, it was calm. The sisters help refugees and arrange for those in need to move to western Ukraine. Also, two sisters in Kyiv help the Basilian Fathers in their work with refugees, visit hospitals and pray with people.

Today we would like to thank in a special way the provincial superior of Romania who together with her sisters brought to Ukraine another truckload of humanitarian aid. May the all-merciful Lord repay you a hundredfold for your generous and open heart to the needs of others.

And we continue to pray and trust in the Lord because "the Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?"



A woman with a child evacuates from a residential building damaged by Russian shelling in Kyiv, Ukraine, March 16. (CNS/State Emergency Service of Ukraine handout via Reuters)

## **Tuesday, March 15**

Mother [name withheld] has written that this day was more or less calm in our communities, however, air raids were heard several times throughout Ukraine. In Kyiv, enemy shells destroyed several high-rise buildings, and there are casualties. Our sisters in Kyiv wrote that they were fine. We ask the Lord for a good night for the whole country. May the Lord protect us all.

## **Monday, March 14**

The war continues in Ukraine. Tonight was a turbulent night in all our communities. From 3 o'clock in the morning until 7:30, the air alarms sounded.

In the monasteries, the sisters continue to help refugees, prepare food for the military, weave nets, and sew the necessary things.

One of the sisters from Ukraine happily got to the sisters in Philadelphia.

The sisters pray and place all their hope in the Lord, our Guardian.

Let us also pray ... let us lift together our hearts to the Lord and may God's will be done in the life of each of us, because the Lord is good.



A baby looks out of a bus going to Poland, as people flee the ongoing Russian invasion, outside the main train station in Lviv, Ukraine, March 14. (CNS/Reuters/Kai Pfaffenbach)

### **Sunday, March 13**

Today was a turbulent day for our sisters in Ukraine, especially in Yavoriv. (Last year, we celebrated the 400th anniversary of our monastery in Yavoriv.) Before 3:30 a.m., an air alarm sounded in almost all the cities and lasted until 6:30 a.m. At about 6 o'clock, explosions were heard in the Yavoriv military range and in Ivano-Frankivsk. It is about 50 kilometers from Lviv to Yavoriv, but the sisters in Lviv also heard the explosion, and the sisters in Yavoriv could hear and see it.

A large number of people were injured. Many of the wounded came to the monastery today to ask the sisters for prayer, as the hospital is nearby (the building of our ancient monastery next door).

The situation in Yavoriv remains alarming, so we sincerely ask for prayer.

### **Friday, March 11**

Financial help and goods are being sent to Ukraine.

Our sisters have been sorting and packing received goods daily. Daily trucks come to cart them to the airport for delivery to Ukraine. Thank you for supporting Ukraine with your donations. Financial help has also been sent thanks to your generosity.

God bless you and keep praying for peace.



Goods sorted and packed for communities in Ukraine from the motherhouse of St. Basil the Great in Philadelphia (Courtesy of Sisters of St. Basil the Great)



People in Kyiv, Ukraine, walk past the remains of a missile at a bus terminal March 4, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues. (CNS/Reuters/Valentyn Ogirenko)

## **Tuesday, March 8**

Today, our general superior personally came to Ukraine (from Rome) and together with sisters from Romania brought to Mukachevo products, medicines and other necessary things. [*Editor's note: Later emails indicated that these supplies were distributed also to other convents in the country in need.*] In her message, the provincial superior thanked Mother and all the sisters from Romania for their kind and courageous hearts. Today was a peaceful day for most of the communities. Though in Kyiv sirens sounded several times.

The number of refugees in our monasteries has increased. Most of them at this point live in Berehy — 30 people, except sisters. Also today, a sister from the Croatian (Osijek) Province moved from Kyiv to our monastery in Bryukhovychi with her mother. Two sisters from Ukraine went to our sisters in Poland. All the sisters in the monasteries continue to serve and pray. And we also continue to pray and to help in



all the ways available to us.

### **Additional dispatch**

*(Editor's note: This email was forwarded as a request from the church in Ukraine.)*

Dear friends, brothers and sisters from all parts of our world. We turn to you at this dark moment for all of us, when dark clouds of explosions obscure the sun over our capital. Tonight, the elite special forces of the Russian Federation, together with Chechen troops, will attack one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in the world, the spiritual capital of Eastern Europe — the city of Kyiv. Street brigades are already underway in Kyiv, and the capital is defended by everyone who can wield a gun, even pensioners, students and schoolchildren.

### Advertisement

The next night and tomorrow are critical, all that is at stake is everything the entire civilized world has believed in and built so far. With tears in our eyes, we ask you, no matter what time zone you are in, to spend all this time fasting and praying to God. Pray to the Lord to protect us from the hordes of madmen who want to mock God's faith and truth.

Please send this message to all your friends, family and friends in Europe, Asia, America and all over the world!

Prayer is stronger than the strongest enemy!

With love and hope in the Lord.

Your brothers and sisters from Ukraine.

### **Monday, March 7**

We have received information that in all our monasteries in Ukraine today was calm. In these difficult times of war, the Lord gives sisters special opportunities to proclaim the word of God to people who live in their monasteries for a short or longer time. One of our sisters in Lviv prepares a girl (10 years old) from a refugee family for the sacrament of baptism.

One of our sisters is traveling by train from Kyiv to Lviv together with her mother.

Mother Superior wrote: "Thank God for the people and the circumstances He sends us every day. We see in this God's great Providence and God's immeasurable Love for every person."

### **Friday, March 4**

We have just received a message from [name withheld], who writes that sisters in all our monasteries are well today.

After the fire at Zaporizhya Nuclear Power Plant, crowds of people began to leave the city. Today, sisters from Zaporizhya helped in transporting a group of people to western Ukraine. In particular, the wives of priests with children. The sisters continue to pray and serve the needy in Zaporizhya.

Also today in Lviv, the sisters purchased food and basic necessities for orphans who were evacuated from combat areas and are now in orphanages in Lviv.

Also today, one of our sisters visited the orphanage where 42 small children (from 0 to 6) were brought. So far, she has visited the staff of the house and other children who already live there because the children who came from combat areas are in quarantine.

This night, two of our sisters are leaving for Kyiv to help the victims of the war.

All monasteries are actively involved in helping refugees and our military. Some make dumplings, some bake cookies, some weave nets, some volunteer, and EVERYONE prays and worships the Lord.

We also received information that our sisters in Przemyśl received women with children from Ukraine to the monastery.

Dear sisters, let us keep watch and pray so that the kingdom of God, like a mustard seed, may sprout everywhere, especially where hatred, despair and death try to overpower kindness.



Sisters from the Romanian congregation of St. Basil the Great bringing goods to the congregation in Mukachevo on March 29. (Courtesy of Sisters of St. Basil the Great.)



Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great in the provincial house in Lviv, Ukraine, participate in a first aid training session Feb. 26. (Courtesy of Sisters of St. Basil the Great)

**Saturday, Feb. 26 (Editor's note: Russia invaded Ukraine Thursday, Feb. 24)**

I am sure that also today all of us are intensively praying for our sisters and all people in Ukraine. They need our prayers and support. We have received information from [omitted] that all sisters are well. Also, we have contacted several times our sisters from Croatia-Osijek Province and less than an hour ago they reported that they are fine. Those two sisters who were travelling to Lviv and have spent their last night in Khmelnytsk safely have arrived to Lviv. In Poltava, Zaporizhya and all other communities our sisters are well. Today, two sisters left Zaporizhya with women and children and now are traveling. Also, today in the provincial house in Lviv, the sisters were learning a first aid training. Sisters are having all-day and all-night adoration.

Dear sisters, we invite you to continue our praying embrace and this night. Ukraine during those days was asking the world to protect their sky. Let us protect it by our prayers.

By staying united in the circle of love we will protect those who are in danger.

This story appears in the **War in Ukraine** feature series. [View the full series.](#)