24/02/2025

ADDRESS of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Ukrainian Diplomatic Corps and the Local Ukrainian Community in Istanbul on the Third Anniversary of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine



Ιερώτατε Μητροπολίτα Ιωαννίνων κ. Μάξιμε,

Θεοφιλέστατε Επίσκοπε Αλικαρνασσού κ. Αδριανέ,

Εξοχότατοι Βουλευτές,

Beloved Consul General of Ukraine,

Your Excellencies,

Reverend Fathers,

Honourable members of the local Ukrainian community,

Beloved spiritual children in the Lord,

Three years have passed since the unjust and devastating invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. During this time, countless lives have been lost, homes destroyed, and entire communities displaced. Families remain separated, cities lie in ruins, and millions have been forced into exile. This war has left deep wounds—not only upon the land but also in the hearts of those who suffer.

As we gather in prayer in this Holy Temple, the spiritual home of the Ukrainian-speaking faithful in this City, we reaffirm the unwavering solidarity of the Mother Church of Constantinople with Ukraine. From the outset, we have condemned this aggression, supported Ukraine's sovereignty, and spoken against imperial ambitions that have no place in today's world. The Holy Great Church of Christ cannot remain indifferent when injustice prevails.

We pray for those who have perished, for the grieving, the wounded, and the displaced who long for home. We recall today's Gospel, reminding us that we serve Christ in serving the suffering, the exiled, and the imprisoned. God does not forget refugees who have lost their homes, families who have been torn apart, and those in captivity. We lift our hearts for children taken from their homes and prisoners of war. May the Lord give solace to their loved ones, sustain them, and bring about their safe return.

Ukraine has endured immense hardship, including the Holodomor, the artificial famine that led to millions of deaths. The people of these historical lands have suffered persecution and systematic attempts to erase their identity. Yet, through every trial, they have remained steadfast, preserving their faith, language, and culture. Today, Ukraine once again fights not only for its territorial integrity but for its very existence.

No force can extinguish the spirit of a people who refuse to be broken. No nation has the right to impose its will upon another, and no power can erase a people's history. Ukraine's sovereignty is not up for debate, nor can it be negotiated away under the guise of diplomacy.

As we continue to entreat our Lord to guide the leaders to find peace, we recognize that true peace cannot be dictated by force or external whims. This process must

include Ukraine as an equal participant, affirm its right to exist without fear, and bring healing to a land devastated by combat. We acknowledge the tireless efforts of President Zelenskyy for the defence and protection of Ukraine’s sovereignty and integrity.

The international community must not look away or be deceived by false narratives and disinformation. It must not allow oppression to persist or accept compromises that undermine fundamental rights. The future must be built on the firm ground of international law, self-determination, and mutual respect—not coercion and submission.

Today, according to the Orthodox Church’s calendar, we commemorate the Last Judgment. This day reminds us that our deeds matter—that we are accountable for how we respond to affliction, wrongdoing, and tyranny. The war in Ukraine is not merely a conflict between nations; it is a moral test for Europe and the entire world. It demands a choice between truth and deception, between justice and oppression. The decisions made today will shape history, determining whether integrity prevails, or cruelty and hate persist.

As we prepare for Holy and Great Lent, a season of reflection and spiritual renewal, we pray for a renewed commitment to truth, reconciliation, and peace. Just as Christ’s Resurrection follows His Passion, so too do we believe that Ukraine will rise again, that the darkness of war will not endure, and that the light of righteousness will shine anew.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate remains steadfast in its commitment to Ukraine and its pious people. While hoping for a swift end to the conflict, and the healing of the wounded, we will continue to speak the truth, advocate for justice, and stand beside those who suffer. We anticipate the day when Ukraine and all nations may live in peace, security, and liberty.

May the Lord bless Ukraine with strength and perseverance. May He comfort those who mourn, heal those afflicted, and bring freedom to the captives. May He guide all humanity toward a future where virtue prevails, truth is honoured, and harmony becomes a reality.

God bless you all!

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