28/03/2022

TOAST by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew during the Luncheon at the Belweder Palace (Monday, March 28, 2022)

Your Excellency Andrzej Duda, President of Poland,

Madam Agata Kornhauser-Duda, First Lady of Poland,

Venerable and distinguished guests,

It is a special privilege to be invited by Your Excellency to visit your beautiful and historical nation in order to witness first-hand the impressive and inspiring process that you have generously initiated for the sake of receiving and consoling millions of refugees from Ukraine.

You have given faith and hope to numerous people that continue to flee the invasion of their sovereign land by a neighboring aggressor, who has mercilessly

pitted brother against brother, Christian against Christian, and citizen against citizen.

We are grateful to you, Your Excellency, for the personal invitation to stand here with you in solidarity and support, along with all your people – starting from the First Lady and incorporating every civil and religious organization, as well as every volunteer individual and benevolent institution. You have – in an unprecedented and unbelievable convergence of charity and care – literally embraced all those who are today standing at your border and knocking on your door.

We have repeatedly stated that we are personally grateful and humbled – indeed, the entire world looks with admiration and appreciation – at the compassion and goodwill of your magnificent and magnanimous nation toward those who were forced to leave the comfort and safety of their homes in Ukraine.

Your Excellency, the people of Poland understand very well what it means to suffer from war. But above and beyond this, the citizens of Poland respect the God-given gift of freedom – freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and freedom of life.

For this reason, without any conditions and without any questions, your nation has opened its borders and its heart to extend patronage to women and children, as well as to the elderly people and to the unaccompanied minors. In so doing – in the middle of this unimaginable and unjustifiable crisis – Poland stands out as a model of decency and philanthropy.

For all these benefits – both known and unknown, both seen and unseen, both solicited and spontaneous – we express our wholehearted gratitude and congratulations.

And we pray – in fact, we would dare to add that we assure you – that God will never turn His face from His children in this land because “you have welcomed the stranger” (as we read in the Letter to the Romans) and “you have loved your neighbor as yourselves” (as we are reminded by Christ Himself in the Gospels).

Your Excellency, we are convinced that the warmth and hospitality that you have bestowed on us today certainly gives us a glimpse into what you have – selflessly and sacrificially – provided to countless people from Ukraine.

And for that we will always be indebted to you and your people.

Thank you and God bless you.