UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYCH

Prot. N. 14/273

Ukraine is on Pilgrimage—Thank you for Walking With Us

To Catholic Bishops Conferences, priests, religious and the faithful of the Church
To All Christians and People of good will that stand in solidarity with Ukraine

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Over the last six months many of you have closely followed events in Ukraine—dramatic, sometimes tragic, but ultimately life-giving. After a century of genocidal experiences and decades of rampant corruption and crushing social injustice, the Ukrainian nation has been on an extended, inspired pilgrimage from fear and fraud to dignity and integrity.

Through frigid winter months millions of people filled the squares of our cities and also your cities to manifest their desire for a better life. All Ukrainian Churches and religious organizations stood together. For months with one voice they insisted that the president and government respect their citizens, that violence is not the answer, that dividing society and the country is immoral, and that dialogue is the only legitimate manner to resolve the political and social crisis. We are grateful for this prophetic unity to all our brothers and sisters in faith, to Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and especially the Orthodox Churches of Ukraine.

The Churches were united, as were people of different ethnic backgrounds, languages, and social classes. In the last weeks the unprecedented consolidation and overwhelming consensus in the country was expressed in the presidential elections. Petro Poroshenko was elected in one round with 55% of the vote in a field of 21 candidates. 85% voted for candidates that support a democratic and European option for the country. Today the overwhelming majority of citizens—Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians, Poles, Jews, Tatars, Armenians, Georgians, and other ethnic and religious groups—stand united against the terrorist violence and overt military aggression from abroad. They are horrified by the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the eastern part of the country inspired and supported by foreign Special Forces. This is the biggest challenge facing Ukraine and Europe today.

P.O. Box. 210, Kyiv, 02002, Ukraine tel/fax: +38 (044) 541-11-14 E-mail: Ver_Arch@ugcc.org.ua

During these months of pilgrimage from fear to dignity your moral and spiritual solidarity has been crucial for citizens of Ukraine and for our Churches. On behalf of our clergy and the faithful we would like to thank you for your abiding prayer and various works of charity that you conducted. We have addressed a singular expression of gratitude to His Holiness Pope Francis who has supported with prayer and exhortation the yearning for peace and justice in Ukraine.

What happened in Ukraine has been truly miraculous. Transforming grace poured down upon the people of our country. The pure sacrifice of new Ukrainian martyrs, the fervent supplication of millions of people on the Maidans, and the prayer of the global community of Catholics, Christians of different denominations, and people of good will of different faiths brought forth an abundance of transfiguring blessings. Today, Ukraine is a different country; it is a renewed society. Your contribution to this rebirth is vital.

We are profoundly grateful for you efforts to inform your communities about the true nature of developments in our country, countering the disinformation directed against Ukraine and its Churches, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in particular. In recent days we see how this campaign has been escalated by certain political and spiritual authorities at the highest level that share an aggressive tone and modality of dissimilation.

The dignity that Ukrainians yearn for is not first and foremost material. They seek a God-given dignity, a respect for their very being. Their right for self-determination, territorial integrity, cultural and especially ecclesial tradition has been violated brutally in the past and is demeaned today.

In the face of systemic corruption, governmental repression, and intolerable social conditions millions of Ukrainians demonstrated peacefully, forging an ever-stronger inter-ethnic, inter-confessional, and inter-cultural solidarity. Ukraine is home to scores of peoples and religions that stand together. It is a revived civil society defending its country and the common good. Together Ukrainian citizens are saying no to tyranny, lawlessness, violence and irresponsibility—personal and social, internal and external, domestic and international.

We ask you to continue your prayer for peace in Ukraine, for peace and reconciliation built on justice. As Christians we believe that every person that demonstrates solidarity with the suffering will be blessed and will receive abundant graces from God.

The Lord bestows dignity by blessing; your benediction of Ukraine is transformative. Your blessings help transfigure a people on pilgrimage.

On behalf of the members of the
Permanent Synod of Bishops of the
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
Meeting in Kyiv, 4–6 June 2014

Святослав

+SVIATOSLAV
Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych