February 24, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This day, February 24, marks one year since Russia's egregious invasion of Ukraine.

It has been utterly heartbreaking to watch, hear and learn of the brutal suffering of the people of Ukraine and the destruction of their nation, especially for the many Albertans who trace their ancestry directly or indirectly to family and friends in that country.

The Ukrainian people continue to be tested time and again by gunfire, airstrikes and attacks on homes, hospitals and civilian buildings, as well as the freezing temperatures of the deep winter. In spite of these pressures, the Ukrainian people remain steadfast in the defence of their country and the resistance to aggression from outside their borders. I am especially and deeply moved by the resilience of their faith in Jesus Christ. The Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, has inspired me and all Bishops by his apostolic leadership of and pastoral zeal for his suffering people.

United as the People of God, we continue to pray for a cessation of violence, the protection of innocent life and the dignity of the human person, and the security and safety of everyone embroiled in this conflict.

My brother Bishops and I stand in solidarity with His Excellency Bishop David Motiuk, of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton, the people of Ukraine, and with all Canadians of Ukrainian origin or descent.

I encourage the faithful and all people of good will to continue to pray for an end to the suffering of the Ukrainian people and their families, as well as for a rapid end to this war and a lasting peace among the peoples.

With Pope Francis, who has entrusted this situation to the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, we ask Our Lady, through her powerful intercession, to heal hearts so that anger, resentment, and division may be overcome and any further escalation of violence be avoided.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton