



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYČ**

*To His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk
Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč*

“How precious is thy steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings” (Ps 36[35]:7).

As believers we take refuge under the protective “wings” of the Lord, because, yes, we are bearers of divine grace, but we are like earthen vessels (cf. 2 Cor 4:7). In some circumstances, our human condition is rendered more fragile because of difficult historical circumstances, which mark the life of the People of God, of the community that our Lord Jesus Christ acquired with his Blood.

In these days, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church is commemorating the sorrowful events of March 1946. Seventy years ago, the ideological and political context, as well as ideas opposed to the very existence of your Church, led to the organization of a pseudo-Synod at Lviv, causing decades of suffering for the pastors and faithful.

In recalling these events, we bow our head with profound gratitude before those that, in the course of time and at the price of tribulations and even of martyrdom, witnessed to the faith, lived with dedication in their Church and in indefectible union with the Successor of Peter. At the same time, with eyes illumined by the same faith, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, placing in Him, and not in human justice, our every hope. He is the true source of our confidence for the present and for the future; we are certain of being called to proclaim the Gospel also in the midst of any suffering or difficulty.

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you should suffer

for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed ... but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence..." (1 Pet 3:13-15).

Making the Apostle Peter's words my own, I express my profound gratitude for your fidelity and I encourage you to be tireless witnesses of this hope, which makes more luminous our existence and that of all brothers and sisters around us. I also renew my solidarity to the pastors and faithful for what they do in this difficult time, marked by the tribulations of the war, to alleviate the suffering of the population and to seek ways of peace for the dear land of Ukraine.

Our courage and our joy are in the Lord. It is to Him that I turn, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the martyrs of your Church, so that divine consolation may illumine the faces of your communities in Ukraine and in other parts of the world. At the same time, I wholeheartedly impart to you, to the Bishops, to the priests, to the consecrated and to the faithful of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church a special Apostolic Blessing, as a sign of my constant affection and remembrance.