



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF HOLODOMOR**

*To my Venerable Brothers
Cardinal Lubomyr Husar
Major Archbishop of Lviv for Ukrainians
and Cardinal Marian Jaworski
Archbishop of Lviv for Latins*

1. Apart from being a duty, remembering the drama people have lived through proves especially helpful in awakening in the young generations the commitment in all circumstances to be alert sentinels of respect for the dignity of every human person. And the prayers of suffrage prompted by this remembrance are a balm for believers that soothes their pain, as well as an effective entreaty to the God of the living to give eternal repose to all who were unjustly deprived of the gift of existence. Lastly, dutiful remembrance of the past acquires a value that reaches beyond a Nation's boundaries to other peoples who have been victims of equally dire events and can give solace in common knowledge.

These are the sentiments that the 70th anniversary of the consequences of the *Holodomor* tragedy awakens in my heart: millions of people suffered an atrocious death due to the nefarious success of an ideology that caused suffering and bereavement in many parts of the world throughout the 20th century. It is for this reason, Venerable Brothers, that I want to be present in spirit at the celebrations to commemorate the countless victims of the great famine instigated in Ukraine by the Communist regime. It was an inhuman scheme put into effect in cold blood by those in power at the time.

2. Thinking back over those sad events, I ask you, Venerable Brothers, to convey my solidarity and prayerful thoughts to your Country's Authorities and to your fellow citizens who are especially dear to me. The celebrations, planned to reinforce a proper patriotic love by commemorating the

sacrifice of the Country's sons and daughters, are not antagonistic to other nations but are intended to revive in each soul a sense of the dignity of every person, to whatever people he or she may belong.

The trenchant words of my Predecessor, Pope Pius XI of venerable memory, spring to mind. Referring to the policies of the Soviet leaders of the time, he made a clear distinction between Government leaders and subjects. While he exonerated the latter, he openly denounced the responsibilities of the system that "ignores the real origin, nature and true purpose of the State... and denies the rights, dignity and freedom of the human person" (Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris* [18 March 1937], II: AAS 29 [1937], n. 77).

How can we forget, in this regard, the destruction of so many families, the grief of countless orphans, the confusion of the whole of society? While I feel close to all who suffered the consequences of that tragic drama in 1933, I would like to reassert the need to recall those events, to repeat together once more: "Never again!". Awareness of past aberrations is behind the constant incentive to build a more human future, countering every ideology that profanes the life, dignity and just aspirations of the person.

3. Today the experience of the tragedy must guide the feelings and actions of the Ukrainian people towards prospects of concord and cooperation. Unfortunately, the Communist ideology also served to deepen divisions in the social and religious contexts. It is essential to work to bring about sincere and effective peace; in this way it will be possible to pay a proper tribute to the victims who belonged to the entire Ukrainian family.

The Christian sentiment of suffrage for those who died as a result of an insane and murderous design must be combined with the desire to build a society in which the common good, natural law, justice for all and the rights of peoples will be constant guides for an effective renewal of the hearts and minds of all who have the honour to belong to the Ukrainian Nation. The memory of past events will thus become a source of inspiration for both present and future generations.

4. During my unforgettable Visit to your Country two years ago, in mentioning the period of mourning that Ukraine lived through 70 years ago I recalled "the terrible years of the Soviet dictatorship and the dreadful famine of the beginning of the 1930s, when your Country, 'the granary of Europe', was no longer able to feed its own children, who died by the millions" ([*Address to Representatives of the Worlds of Politics, Culture, Science, Industry and Business*](#), Presidential Palace, 23 June 2001, n. 3; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, [ORE], 27 June, p. 4).

It is to be hoped that with the help of God's grace the lessons of history may enable people to find valid motives for reciprocal understanding, with a view to constructive cooperation in order to build together a Country that can develop harmoniously and peacefully at every level.

The achievement of this noble aim depends primarily on the Ukrainians, who are entrusted with the preservation of the Eastern and Western Christian heritage and the responsibility of achieving an original synthesis between culture and civilization. This is the specific contribution that Ukraine is called to make to the construction of that "common European house" in which every people will be able to find true acceptance, together with respect for its own identity and values.

5. Venerable Brothers, on this very solemn occasion how can we fail to remember the Gospel seed sown by Sts Cyril and Methodius? How can we not think gratefully of the witness of St Vladimir and of Mother St Olga, through whom God gave your people the grace of Baptism and of new life in Christ? Hearts enlightened by the Gospel understand better how to love the homeland in order to make an effective contribution to its progress on the path of culture and civilization. Family membership must be accompanied by a generous and gratuitous exchange of the gifts inherited as a legacy from previous generations, so as to build a society that is open to the encounter with other peoples and traditions.

I hope that the Ukrainian people will be able to look back at the events of history with reconciled hearts, and I entrust all who are still suffering from the consequences of those painful events to the interior consolation of the All Holy Mother of God. I reinforce these sentiments with a special Apostolic Blessing, which I impart to you, Venerable Brothers, and to all who are entrusted to your pastoral care as I invoke upon everyone an abundant outpouring of heavenly favours.

From the Vatican, 23 November 2003, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

JOHN PAUL II