

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear sisters, brothers, friends, and benefactors.

Only a few hours separate us from that sorrowful morning that irrevocably changed Ukrainians and the world. I wish to use these final hours to recall the events that marked the beginning of our collective pain and our shared resilience.

On February 24, 2022, at 03:40 AM Kyiv time, the first several-kilometer-long columns of Russian military hardware crossed the state border of Ukraine from multiple directions: North, East, and South. At 04:50 AM, the Russian dictator announced the start of a so-called "special military operation." By 05:00 AM, the first missile strikes and explosions shook peaceful cities. At 06:45 AM, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recorded his first video message to the nation, announcing the imposition of martial law. Ukraine awoke to the sound of sirens, the roar of explosions, and a state of total uncertainty.

Western intelligence estimated the invasion forces at 175,000 to 190,000 personnel. That night, 3,000 tanks and over 7,000 armored combat vehicles entered Ukraine. People in border villages found themselves under occupation almost instantly. Heavy military columns rolled arrogantly past their homes, shaking the very windows and doors of our dwellings. Yet, despite the paralysis of fear, Ukrainians found the extraordinary strength to go out and face the armed enemy, resisting with their mere presence, their words, and an unyielding longing for freedom.

Today, as you drink your morning coffee, try for a moment to enter the experience of millions of Ukrainians at that morning 2022. Imagine this brief yet devastating sentence: "Wake up, the war has begun." It is so short, yet it instantly shatters one's entire life perspective. In a single moment, you realize that your notebook—filled with plans for months ahead, missions, or retreats—no longer holds meaning. From that point on, you live in small steps: from one sip of coffee to the next, from minute to minute. And even if we try to smile outwardly, the horror of the presence of evil remains starkly evident to us.

It is impossible to be prepared for such news. It reached me at 05:30 AM in front of the mirror in my cell, where I was routinely preparing for the start of a new day. Some were awakened by sirens, others by explosions... I confess, this news radically transformed my prayer: every word became not just attentive, but a plea. Ultimately, our days and nights in those first weeks turned into a ceaseless prayer that continues to this day.

We believe that the Lord is with us in the darkness of this night of war. He is beside our defenders in the mud and dampness of the trenches; He is in the phantom pains of those who have lost limbs; He is in the suffering of those living with the loss of their loved ones; He is beside our prisoners who endure unspeakable torture. In these times, we discover a new image of God: the One who does not explain the Cross, but hangs upon it Himself.

Every one of my brothers and sisters has their own story of the morning of February 24. This memory, like stigmata, will be carried through the years by millions of Ukrainians.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine is now in its fourth year. This marks 1,461 days of a grueling struggle for the right to be a sovereign, independent state—for the right to be Ukrainians and masters of our own home.

Today, at 03:40 AM, Holy Liturgies are being celebrated in many of our churches for a just peace and victory. We remember with honor and gratitude the hundreds of thousands who have given their lives for our freedom. And we are sincerely grateful to each of you who stands with us, prays daily, and helps us to endure.

The Reality in Which We Live

The truth is that four years of war are exhausting. This winter, with fierce frosts reaching -28 degrees, has been a true trial for our defenders and for millions of Ukrainians. Due to Russian strikes on power plants, people have once again lost light and heat.

In recent weeks, the enemy has been attacking the capital and other cities every day. According to statistics, up to 600,000 residents have left Kyiv during this short period alone. In the capital, people remained without electricity for several days, and in some places, for weeks. The situation is just as critical in the South and North of Ukraine, particularly in Chernihiv, where our brothers and sisters serve. In the West, the lack of electricity currently reaches 17 hours a day.

The Price of Freedom in Figures

Among the 60 major armed conflicts of modern times, the war in Ukraine is the bloodiest in terms of the number of victims. Behind these numbers are living destinies: More than 150,000 Ukrainian military personnel and civilians have died since 2022 (including about 1,000 children)

More than half a million people have gone missing—among them are our relatives and acquaintances.

Several hundred thousand have been wounded and maimed by the war. Up to 8,000 military personnel and up to 16,000 civilians are in Russian captivity, where they are subjected to torture, and sometimes death. More than 20,000 children were kidnapped and illegally deported to the Russian Federation.

These figures are not just statistics; they are a testament to the incredible price of our independence. Your support at all levels remains critical for the survival of millions of people. We realize that this war may last for years. Its cause is not the propaganda myths about "NATO's approach" or the "protection of Russian speakers." The goal of the aggressor is the complete destruction of Ukraine as such: our identity, culture, agency, statehood, and religious freedom.

Our Resistance

Today, there are more than 700,000 occupying troops on our territory. Daily destruction, drone strikes, and terrorist attacks (the latest of which shook Lviv just a few days ago) indicate that the war will continue as long as Russia has the resources to fight. We understand: if we stop defending ourselves, we will simply cease to exist, and the fate of Europe will be at risk.

Therefore, we continue to resist, fighting for our freedom and for yours. We believe that the time will come when the war ends and a just peace, which every Ukrainian sincerely desires, will prevail.

We thank each of you who, throughout these four years of full-scale war, has tirelessly stood shoulder to shoulder with us: through prayer, sincere compassion, and tangible aid. Your solidarity during this difficult time is a source of great support for us. Your remembrance of us, prayer is a necessary condition for the arrival of peace. We thank God for all of you and entrust ourselves to your prayers.

Sr. Alfonsa (Iryna) Karapata,

Provincial superior of MSsR

Lviv, 24/02/2026