
Monastery of the Order of Saint Paul in Mariupol seized by the Russians. The parish priest: "The city is in shambles"

The Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit monastery in Mariupol, where the Pauline Fathers lived and served, has been seized by the Russians and was transformed into the seat of the local administration of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic – established at the end of March. But only now has it emerged that its headquarters are located in the Catholic monastery. Father Pavlo Tomaszewski, Pauline priest at Our Lady of Czestochowa parish in Mariupol, broke the news with a [post](#) on Facebook, relayed by SIR news agency. "Christ is risen!", he wrote. "I received some sad news today. The occupiers of our monastery in Mariupol have established there the seat of the DPR administration (Donetsk People's Republic, ed.'s note) for the whole city! I ask you to pray for our beautiful city, for its defenders and for us, and for our city and our shrine to be delivered from the invaders!" **"On Saturday evening I received a message from Msgr. Jan Sobilo, auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Kharkiv and Zaporozhye", the priest told SIR.** "He informed me that the occupiers had transformed the monastery into the seat of the municipal council and sent me a photo." "I also learned that our monastery was ransacked on March 17," the priest continued. I was told about it by a man from our parish who had managed to flee Mariupol. They took everything there was, the chalices for the holy mass and all valuable objects." Sadly, the situation in the city is extremely critical and all communications have been cut off. It is thus virtually impossible to receive information. "I don't know what is happening today," confirmed Father Pavlo. "I will try to contact someone but it's difficult. There is no internet or mobile phone coverage in the city. I know that in some places there is electricity and running water. *But there it's a disaster. All this is very painful to me. It's very hard for me because they took our church and did whatever they could to make us leave. Now they disgraced it. This is very, very difficult to accept.*" **On March 5, along with a confrere of the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit (Paulines), the priest had managed to flee the city besieged by the Russians** together with a group of parishioners. They took shelter in the monastery of St. Nicholas Parish in Kamianets-Podilskyi. Reports from Ukrainian Catholic news agency 'Risu' suggest that a full-scale genocide of the Ukrainian people is unfolding in the city. It is estimated that over 10,000 people could die from diseases and from the unbearable conditions in Mariupol by the end of 2022. Ukrainian soldiers from Mariupol are trapped in the Azovstal steel plant since the end of April. Approximately 600 wounded persons are still in the underground areas of the Azovstal plant, stormed by the Russian troops, in precarious conditions, without medicine, water or food. Pope Francis has repeatedly called for opening humanitarian corridors and has also met a "delegation" of wives of Ukrainian soldiers in Rome. Meanwhile, the wife of the commander of the Azov regiment, Kateryna Prokopenko, has launched the [petition](#) 'Save Mariupol', urging an extraction procedure for the Ukrainian soldiers trapped in Azovstal, with almost 1.5 million signatures so far. "We call on the United Nations, the UN Secretary-General, and regional leaders around the world to begin an immediate 'extraction' procedure of the evacuation of civilians, all wounded, the bodies of the fallen and Ukrainian servicemen from blockaded Mariupol."

"We still have the opportunity to save people's lives.

We call for decisive action by the international community to: provide an urgent ceasefire with guarantees from both sides in Mariupol; organize immediate monitoring of compliance with the ceasefire by a third party; organize the maritime evacuation of civilians and Ukrainian servicemen to the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government or to the territory of a third intermediary state."

