

The children of Kharkiv Cathedral: a place to be reborn by playing



[So we thought we would organize something to occupy their free time. So on Sunday at 3 p.m. we decided to hold a meeting." About 20 children took part in this first meeting. Sister Martha took care of the children while Father Onufrio and Father Michael conversed with their parents. "It was a family moment. The children played. Yesterday, Wednesday, May 25, there was a second meeting. We will continue."](#)



[In Ukraine, 238 children have been killed and 433 injured since the beginning of Russia's large-scale invasion. This was reported by the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office, pointing out that the largest number of casualties are in the regions of Donetsk, Kiev, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, and that this is not a final tally because there is no data from the places where the battles are taking place. The shelling of Ukrainian towns and villages by Russian armed forces, the note adds, has damaged 1,848 educational institutions, 173 of which were completely destroyed. Also since the start of the Russian invasion on February 24, 1,918 children have disappeared, according to the Ukrainian Parliament's Commissioner for Human Rights, who has received complaints from relatives: "most of them are](#)

[children from Donetsk regions, including Mariupol, Kiev and Kharkiv."](#)



The consequences of war on children's psyche are also unavoidable. That is why Kharkiv Cathedral has decided to open its doors especially to them as well. "With these meetings," Bishop Vasyliy explains, "we want first of all to free children from stress. Children have psychological difficulties and this affects their growth. They have problems with sleep and other similar illnesses are manifesting themselves. That is why we want to occupy them with something that interests and at the same time distracts from the war. No doubt we will also introduce religious elements. That will happen as well, but it will take some more time." Therefore, the community has decided to open its arms to the little ones. It is they who, above all, are in need of consolation. "First of all," says Msgr. Tuchapets, "they are afraid of the bombings. They react in different ways. They are often frightened when they hear the slightest noise. Therefore, they need psychological rehabilitation. Now we are trying to organize games with them to interest and distract them. In time, as I said before, we will also bring in spiritual elements to help them. We will also pray for the children." But what message can the Church give to children in wartime? "People," the bishop answers, "live every day and almost no one thinks about God. Our main message, no doubt, is that no matter what situation we are in, we must trust in the Lord. Everything is in His hands. We must trust not only in ourselves, not only in human capabilities, because they are limited. The Lord is the One who can protect us, who can heal us and who can help us."

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