
Ukraine. Msgr. Ryabukha (Donetsk): “War is causing daily bloodshed”

“The situation is tragic. Whether it makes the front pages or not, the war is causing bloodshed here every day. Just now one of my friends in the military wrote to say that two of members of our community died last night. It is the injustice of evil. The question that keeps coming up is: Lord, why is this happening? There is an urgent need to stop this war, and I believe it is in this light that the Holy Father has called on the whole world to gather together to ask God for the conversion of human hearts”. Msgr. **Maksym Ryabukha**, Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Archiepiscopal Exarchate of Donetsk, spoke to SIR from Zaporizhzhya. "In this first year of my episcopal ministry, I have travelled a lot," he said, "I have made every effort to visit all four regions of the Donetsk Exarchate that are accessible and under Ukrainian control, in order to meet, embrace and be with our people. In the last week, I have visited the Donetsk region, along the front line of the battlefield.” **Who has remained in these areas? And how do they live?** The vast majority of those who remained are elderly people. Many of them have tried to start a new life elsewhere. But especially for the elderly, it is often difficult to immerse themselves in new realities, and for this reason, one by one, they gradually return to their homes. They say: 'We would rather die here, at home, than be somewhere else and feel that we are a burden to others'. Some families have disabled members who find it difficult to move around and need someone to help them. In addition, and this is the part that moves me the most, there are people who have deliberately chosen to remain in order to be of service to others. I call them volunteers of the heart. **Do they manage to receive food, drinking water, medicines?** "The truth is that humanitarian aid has been decreasing lately. There are shortages of food, clothes and medicines. It is a challenge for us. Not least because the summer season is ending and the winter season is setting in very quickly: in the space of a week, it can go from 24 degrees during the day to minus 3 degrees at night. We try to do what we can. As a mutually supportive people, we try not to leave anyone alone. But unfortunately, there are inaccessible areas. There is no way to get there. So I have many questions: what is happening now in the occupied territories? There is the tragedy of the lack of access to drinking water. When I think of the occupied territories, I think of the situation in the 1930s, when millions of people were starving and the world stood by and did nothing. Even today, we know nothing about what is happening there. And that is a huge, tragedy. **Is there any news of the two Redemptorist Fathers who were captured?** Unfortunately, we have no news of their whereabouts. No information. It is impossible to establish communication. This, too, is a dramatic situation, and it is not only the Church that is experiencing it. Along with these two priests, many civilians have been captured by the Russians. We have no idea where they are or how to help them. I was told that for the simple reason that the Ukrainians don't imprison Russian civilians, there is an exchange system for military prisoners but not for civilians. **The world is in the grip of a globalised violence that, as you said earlier, takes us back in time. What has happened?** We have lost the gaze of God on the world. We have lost our sense of belonging to the one human family. When you shut yourself off from the world, everyone else becomes your enemy. It is necessary to recognise that we are the children of a God who is the Father of all. **What will be your prayer intention for October 27?** A lot of tragedies happen because nobody has the courage to take responsibility. Everything is discussed, but we are unable to be fathers of the world in which we live. It is important to acknowledge our inherent fatherhood towards the world. A father is the one who knows how to gather all his children around the table and knows how to direct their gaze towards possible solutions.

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