



Right Reverend Kenneth Nowakowski

**RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE
EI SALVADOR'S SAINT ÓSCAR ROMERO AND
UKRAINE'S PATRIARCH SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK**

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your gracious invitation to give this Romero Lecture.

Since my appointment as the Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of the Holy Family of London in early 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic was taking hold of the global community, and especially since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, I find myself regularly receiving invitations to speak on a broad range of topics. In spite of my initial hesitations and doubts, I decided early on that I must speak, no matter how busy I may be or how full my schedule may seem, that, indeed, I have no right to be silent, that those who are suffering can speak through me, those who are afflicted can call out using my voice. I have realised that one of the important aspects of my vocation is to speak to those whose hearts need to be stirred. I keep in mind Archbishop Romero's words 'To pray and wait for God to do something is not holiness, it is laziness'. And so, I thank you for this opportunity to speak and for your open hearts.

If we wish to examine the resilience of the people and the Church in 1970s El Salvador, in the face of massive repression and killings, alongside the resilience of the people and Church in Ukraine today in the face of bombings and a deadly invasion it leads me to offer this evening a reflection on two remarkable churchmen. One, as you will know, is already recognized as a saint in the Catholic Church, Archbishop Óscar Romero, a champion of the poor and marginalised in his country of El Salvador. The other is a present-day church leader, His Beatitude Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk, whose leadership of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church since 2011 has largely been marked by foreign invasion, occupation, and a brutal war of neo imperial, neocolonial aggression. I imagine that Saint Oscar would be rather embarrassed to be a focus of attention, and I know that His Beatitude would not be particularly thrilled to know that I am drawing a comparison between him and a canonised saint. Both, I believe, understood/understand, that their effectiveness as church leaders would depend on their ability to stand close to their suffering people and share their distress, to reveal Christ to them and lead them to Christ. That is, ultimately, the criteria by which we all are judged – called as we are to be disciples of Christ, revealing to the world our Heavenly Father's goodness and love, as Jesus did, and inviting others to follow Him.

1. CALLED TO LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

When speaking of **Bishop Oscar Romero**, especially to the present audience, I feel that we are dealing with someone who does not need to be introduced. However, in order to give him the honour and respect he deserves, let me provide a few biographical notes that illustrate how Oscar was prepared throughout his life to witness Christ.

Oscar Romero was born in 1917 and grew up in a country controlled by a small number of wealthy families in a system that favoured oligarchs. This system allowed the wealthy to grow in affluence and live their lives in what could be considered a parallel universe. The only thing in common between the wealthy and the general population of El Salvador is the geographical location. While growing up and coming of age, Romero found himself in a country where a military dictatorship replaced the oligarchy system. The ordinary Salvadorian did not fare much better under this new system.

Oscar was one of eight children, and his father Santos worked in the local telegraph/post office delivering mail and telegrams. However, Oscar's father set him on the path to become a carpenter. The underlying understanding of the day was that education did not provide an income, but a trade would be useful. Romero's path toward his ordained ministry vocation grew from his time both in a minor seminary and eventually to his seminary training and education in Rome. While studying theology at the Gregorian Pontifical University, World War II was raging in Europe and during these turbulent times, he was ordained a priest (April 1942).

In 1943, at the age of 26, still working on his doctorate in Rome, he was called by his bishop to return home. Travelling home meant crossing the Atlantic Ocean by ship, with a stopover in Cuba. As he was travelling from fascist Italy, while in Cuba he was arrested by Cuban authorities and detained in internment camps for several months, during which time he became ill. With the assistance of the Redemptorist Fathers he was transferred to a hospital where he recovered his health and eventually made it home to El Salvador.

During St. Oscar's 25-year pastoral ministry in San Miguel he was active in establishing not only parish-based groups of apostolic life, but also established an Alcoholics Anonymous group. He was recognised by the local bishops as a good role model for priestly formation, and so was appointed rector of the inter-diocesan seminary.

From 1967 he was called to serve the Catholic Church in El Salvador as the Secretary of the Bishops Conference. He held this position until his episcopal ordination in 1970 as auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of San Salvador. In 1974 he became bishop of Santiago de Maria and finally in February of 1977 was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador. As he gradually became a champion of the people and an outspoken critic of the injustices they endured, he came to be seen by the powerful as a threat. His prophetic voice needed to be silenced. And so, he was assassinated while celebrating Holy Mass in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital on March 24, 1980, in the prime of his life at the age of 62. He was proclaimed a saint of the Universal Church on October 14, 2018.

Moving to **His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk**, it seems important to provide some historical background. The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church was forced into the underground after all its bishops, under the leadership of Metropolitan Archbishop Josyf Slipyj, were arrested by the Soviet Authorities on April 11, 1945, and the Church was officially declared liquidated at the pseudo-Synod of Lviv, in March 1946. Amid the mass arrests of clergy, religious and faithful, those wishing to avoid persecution were forcibly integrated into the Russian Orthodox Church. The clandestine Church (the so-called "Silent Church") survived in secrecy, remaining loyal to communion with the Bishop of Rome.

When after 18-years of imprisonment and forced labour in Soviet concentration camps, at the age of 74 Confessor of Faith Metropolitan-Archbishop Josyf Slipyj was released to the Apostolic See by Khryshchev in 1963, he not only took an active part in the Second Vatican Council, but established the central office of the head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in exile in Rome. He remained active till his death on September 7, 1984. Although granted the title of Major Archbishop in 1965, as head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church worldwide, he was popularly acclaimed Patriarch, in accordance with Eastern Christian tradition, and commemorated as such in the liturgy, even though Rome refused to recognize the title.

His Beatitude Myroslav-Ivan Lubachivsky, Patriarch Josyf's immediate successor, continued to reside in Rome until returning to Lviv, Ukraine, in 1991, thus officially ending the exile of the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. My personal history as a young priest was associated with this period. I would travel back and forth between Lviv and Rome, where a chancery office continued to function. It was during one of these visits to Rome, in late September or early October of 1994, while working out of our Rome office that I first met a recently ordained priest, Fr. Sviatoslav Shevchuk. That was 30 years ago.

His Beatitude Sviatoslav has a remarkable biography. He was born in 1970 in the town of Stryj in Western Ukraine, the same year that St. Oscar was ordained an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of San Salvador. His father worked on the railway and his mother was a music teacher. Like many of our faithful in the Soviet Union he lived a public life, while fostering a secret life of faith, hidden from the Soviet authorities. In the case of the Shevchuk family, maintaining ones' spiritual life as a Ukrainian Greek-Catholic meant attending secret celebrations of the Divine Liturgy (Eucharistic service), and receiving the sacraments of the Church (Baptism, Chrismation, Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, etc.) from clandestine priests. One way the Shevchuk family along with thousands of other Ukrainian Greek-Catholics living in the USSR were able to maintain their connection with the Holy See, and their Ukrainian Catholic spiritual legacy was through listening to the Divine Liturgy, that was broadcast every week via shortwave through the Vatican Radio.

The Soviet Authorities tried to block the strong Vatican radio signal but had limited success. His Beatitude Sviatoslav often recounts how on Sundays the family would dress in their best clothing and gather around their radio in the kitchen and participate as best as they could in the Divine Liturgy, joined in prayer with so many others. Indeed his parents were very much a part of the clandestine Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. The young Sviatoslav's earliest religious formation stems from this period.

While still a teenager, Sviatoslav began medical training. He himself explains this choice: "It (medicine) was an integral part of human life and existence, which attracted me..." (UGCC official website). He also felt that as a member of the clandestine Church who hoped to become a Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest, it was important to have a profession that would allow him to be close to people. While studying medicine, he enrolled in an underground seminary to prepare himself for the priesthood. His determination to become a priest was only strengthened during his two years of compulsory military service in the Soviet army as a paramedic.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, he was invited by Most Reverend Andriy Sapelyak, the Ukrainian Catholic Bishop for Argentina, to study philosophy at the Don Bosco Centre for Philosophical and Theological Studies in Buenos Aires. In this period he mastered the Spanish language. Upon returning to Ukraine he continued his theological and seminary formation at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Greek Catholic Seminary of the Archeparchy (Archdiocese) of Lviv. After ordination in 1994 he was sent to Rome to continue his studies at the St. Thomas Aquinas Pontifical

University, the Angelicum, as it is more popularly called. In 1999 he received a doctorate in Theological Anthropology and Moral Theology of the Byzantine Theological Tradition. It was during his time in Rome that he became fluent in Italian as well as in English. During his studies in Rome, he also provided pastoral care to Ukrainian Greek Catholics in Athens and it was there that he also learned Greek. With a gift for languages, apart from his native Ukrainian, over the years he mastered English, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Latin, Greek, French and Church Slavonic.

Like St. Oscar, having returned to Lviv Fr. Sviatoslav was assigned to Holy Spirit Seminary and was appointed its Rector in 2007, a position he held until his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of the Eparchy (Diocese) of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God in Buenos Aires for Ukrainian Catholics in Argentina.

After the resignation of Bishop Mykhailo Mykytsei in the spring of 2010, Bishop Sviatoslav was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy, as according to Argentine regulations a bishop of a diocese must be an Argentine citizen, while he had Ukrainian citizenship. It was during his time as bishop in Argentina he met and became very well acquainted with Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, the future Pope Francis.

Due to medical difficulties associated with his deteriorating eyesight, eventually leading to total blindness, His Beatitude Patriarch Lubomyr Husar resigned from his office on February 10, 2011, and during the Electoral Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishops attended by 40 bishops world-wide, Bishop Sviatoslav, was elected to be Head and Father of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church at the age of 41. This election was confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI on March 25, 2011, and his enthronement took place two days later in Kyiv. Currently at the age of 54, he has been serving as head of the UGCC for 13 years.

Looking at the similarities in the lives of these two remarkable religious leaders, both St. Oscar and His Beatitude Sviatoslav were born into active and religious families. In both cases, although separated by decades and living in different hemispheres, the political forces of the day either attempted to suppress or manipulate the Church for its own purposes. Religion was far more than going to church occasionally on Sundays or feast days. The practice of one's religious beliefs could and often did place you in opposition to the governing body of the country. Both men faced these challenges without compromise. Even when imprisoned in Cuba on his way back to his home country from Rome, he did not turn away from his beliefs or his vocation even though it meant the loss of personal freedom in a hostile environment. Growing up under a militantly atheistic regime, Sviatoslav sought ways to prepare himself to be close to those in need of pastoral care, entering medical school in the hope that this would allow him to be present to the ill and dying as a future clandestine priest.

Perhaps for different reasons Romero and Shevchuk found themselves initially advancing in secular careers. Romero because the common thought of the day was a higher education did not provide financial security, but a trade would guarantee employment. So, the young Oscar began an apprenticeship as a carpenter. Shevchuk sought a career in the medical field to have access to people who would need spiritual care. In both cases they developed an appreciation for the working person at a very young age.

In both cases higher education in Rome granted them the background for their roles in seminary formation, and in their work in support of the Bishops' Conference in Romero's case, and moderator of the Curia and private secretary for the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Shevchuk's case, ultimately gaining the experience and trust that would lead to their nominations as bishops. They

both understood both the inner workings of the Church while fostering an ability to work with and guide ordinary people in a life of faith.

2. GIVING HOPE TO THOSE WHO SUFFER

From early 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt in the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, as the Church throughout the world, including the UK, adapted parish-community life to established safety protocols, seeking to ensure access to the sacramental life of the Church amid the health challenges. In the midst of social isolation, the Church sought to provide hope to the poor, the elderly, the marginalised.

I remember feeling very much alone as did so many bishops who were isolating. I recall how helpless the clergy felt when it came to in person ministry because they had such restrictions and protocols to follow. People isolating in small apartments were trapped in abusive situations with nowhere to go and no one to turn to. His Beatitude recognised this and began a series of regular on-line meetings with the bishops and brought in experts in the health field to help advise bishops to negotiate the restrictions they found in their own countries.

His Beatitude continued to coordinate pastoral work through annual meetings of the Synod of Bishops (online in 2020 and 2021) and other initiatives. A key document was published at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic: “ONLY ONE THING WILL REMAIN YOURS – THAT WHICH YOU HAVE GIVEN TO THE POOR” (Pastoral Letter of the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church of 2020). And looking forward to the pastoral priorities of the new decade, the following year the Synod of Bishops published the pastoral letter: “THE HOPE TO WHICH THE LORD CALLS US” (2021). This letter remains a reference point for the life of the Church. Among the key points of the Pastoral Letter are:

The Path to Curing Wounds and Healing Traumas. Christ showed us what the Kingdom is by an example that is understandable for everyone — he showed mercy and offered healing. We cannot think about the future of our Church if we do not think about the need to heal the injuries that have left deep wounds on human souls, on families, and on the whole of society, which needs a healing touch. The path to healing, intertwined with road marks of repentance, opens up horizons for authentic missionary outreach.

Closeness and Practical Attention to the Poor and Marginalised. Paradoxically, we achieve healing when we open ourselves in compassionate and merciful love to our neighbours, seeking to let them experience God’s healing presence and life-giving love. In serving one’s neighbour out of love, I “discover my own life,” that is, I return to the deepest truth about myself, as a beloved child of God, created out of love and called to love. What characterises Christian love is its concrete nature: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to welcome the traveller into one’s home, to visit the sick and imprisoned, etc. The Holy Spirit calls us to step outside our own comfort zone, break away from ourselves, and open up more and more to our neighbours. The pandemic made us realise how great a gift it is for us, Christians, to come together, as the first disciples of Christ, to pray “in the same place” (Acts 2:1), to break the Eucharistic bread and to invoke the Holy Spirit together as a community. And I can bear witness to the incredible generosity of the British people when refugees from Ukraine came to the UK in the thousands.

It should be noted that this Pastoral Letter was issued in 2021, four months before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As so much of the letter is relevant to the situation that has arisen since then, our bishops are acutely aware how the Holy Spirit has guided our Church in our pastoral ministry. The need for healing of wounds and trauma, the focus on the Christian Family, attention to the poor and marginalised — these are areas that have been brought to the fore over the

past two years, especially with the influx of refugees, internally within Ukraine, and across the globe. At a time when many Catholic parishes are being closed, we have been opening new parishes and missions, at least in some parts of the globe, including the UK, Western Europe and North America, as new arrivals seek spiritual support and accompaniment (not only Greek-Catholics but Orthodox as well!). What the future holds is uncertain, but our Church, under the leadership of His Beatitude Sviatoslav, is committed to journeying together with our people in accordance with our Gospel calling to provide hope to those who suffer.

3. SPEAKING OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE

I had been asked to speak about the resilience of these two church leaders, and I've been trying to determine what the term "resilience" actually means. When thinking of resilience, we imagine a tree growing in the middle of a desert – with roots so deep that no drought can overcome it. I've checked many English translations of the Bible and have yet to find the word "resilience" in the Sacred Scriptures. We do find terms such as PERSEVERANCE (e.g. Eph. 6:18: reference to the persistence of prayer) or, more frequently, ENDURANCE (e.g. Lk. 21:19, Rom. 5:3-4; Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36). It could be said that resilience adds an aroma of hope to our dogged perseverance in the face of institutionalised injustice and religious persecution.

Two biblical texts can help us set the tone:

Colossians 1:9-11 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Romans 5:3-5 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Looking further, in the very middle of the list of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Is. 11:2-3) we find STRENGTH or MIGHT, a virtue that allows us to do what's right, especially in the face of adversity. Speaking of virtues, two of the four Cardinal Virtues are related to resilience: JUSTICE and FORTITUDE. Indeed, both Romero and Shevchuk have been called by historical events and circumstances to show fortitude in advocating for justice and speaking out against injustice.

When speaking of resilience, we must also speak of COURAGE, of CONFIDENCE, and of FEARLESSNESS. So many verses in the Bible encourage us to "take courage" or "take heart" or "be of good cheer" (e.g. Ps 27:14; Jn. 16:33), while in the New Testament we are constantly reminded: "Fear not!" – "Do not be afraid!" – "Do not fear!": Mark 6:50 "For they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

On March 24th 1980, with Archbishop Romero's assassination widely foreseen, many tried (and failed) to dissuade him from celebrating the publicised requiem mass that evening. His words, presaging his death, ring out today "A bishop may die but the Church of God which is the people will never die".

In the case of His Beatitude Sviatoslav, I can say now that like El Salvador's military death squads the Russian invaders had a list of people who were to be eliminated during the fall of Kyiv, which

they expected would happen in a few days, and that His Beatitude was on that list. He had an opportunity to leave the capital, but in a similar stance to St Oscar, he chose to stay, albeit at an undisclosed location. I should also note that Russian forces managed to reach within 11 km. of our seminary to the East of the city (in the village of Kniazhytsi), but thankfully, Russian arrogance and bravado exceeded its military logistics capabilities, and ultimately the Russian forces were compelled to retreat.

One of the most consistent things that His Beatitude has been doing since the first days of the invasion, is speaking out against the invasion and against the horrors inflicted by Russian forces on the civilian population. This is a constant effort, with letters, telephone calls, meetings, public messages, etc. Sometimes His Beatitude would speak in his own name, but usually, it would be on behalf of his brother bishops in Ukraine and, indeed, throughout the world.

In the summer of 2022, as it wasn't prudent for all the bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from across the globe to gather in Ukraine that first year of the full-scale invasion, we gathered close to the Ukrainian border on the Polish side, in the city of Przemysl (Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, July 7-15). It was an emotional encounter, not just with His Beatitude, but with all the bishops from Ukraine who had endured months of aerial attacks and remained under constant threat. Personal stories shared during the Synod included a moving and tearful personal witness from His Beatitude, who described praying over a mass grave in Bucha, only one of many locations where Russia's war crimes and atrocities against the civilian population have been documented.

Generally, the annual Synod sends out letters of greetings to a variety of church and civil leaders. As in 2020 and 2021 the Bishops were unable to gather due to pandemic restrictions, meetings were held online and pastoral letters were issued to the faithful, but no greetings were sent out. This is what His Beatitude wrote in 2022 on behalf of his brother bishops:

The fact that we have gathered in neighbouring Poland and not in Ukraine speaks to the particular moment in history that Ukraine and its people are experiencing today. The joy of coming together for the first time in three years is tempered by the reality of war. On February 24, the eight-year assault of the Russian Federation against Ukraine entered a new phase—one of open warfare and invasion, cynically called “a special operation” by Russia's leadership. This new assault on Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity is, in fact, an assault on fundamental human values that we all share. Many cities and towns in Ukraine have witnessed horrific and brutal war crimes, the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure—residential homes, hospitals, schools, churches, museums, theatres, bridges, etc. We have seen the displacement of more than 16 million people, including the more than 5 million who crossed into countries of Central and Western Europe seeking shelter and help. In the city of Mariupol alone, according to official data, more than 22,000 civilians have been killed, or 5% of the population, although the real numbers are probably much higher. Russia has also seized approximately 300,000 Ukrainian children, and this by its own admission. Numerous Ukrainian citizens, forcibly transferred to Russia, are subjected to abuse and torture (some to death) in so-called filtration camps, only to be sent to the furthest regions of the Russian Federation.

As Pastors of an afflicted people and of many faithful throughout the world who have roots in Ukraine, we profoundly share not only the sorrow, that every Ukrainian is experiencing at this moment, but also the determination to resist and confront the evil that has befallen us. We have had no illusions about Russia's intentions towards Ukraine and have been warning the world of the pending escalation with little effect. And now Russia has removed its mask and revealed to the whole world what we have understood for decades, if not centuries—that in Russia's imperialistic vision there is simply no room for the existence of Ukraine as an independent state, nor for Ukrainians as a distinct European people. The ideological underpinning of this war, the so-called “Russian world” (Russkiy mir), as many appalled Orthodox theologians have noted, is a dangerous syncretism of

Christianity and ultranationalism, coupled with a Manichean-dualistic worldview, a perverted expectation and premeditated provocation of a conflict between good (understood as Russia) and evil (“the rotten West”), more in the spirit of the Islamic state than of Christianity. Ukraine is at the forefront of this global confrontation. Certainly, as Christian leaders, we are ever mindful of the conversion and spiritual warfare to which all fallen humanity is called by the Gospel. However, the prospect of even a partial Russian victory has global repercussions, political and spiritual, even for the future and well-being of Russia itself. Evil must not prevail. Yet, at this moment it is unclear, given the intense campaign of pro-war propaganda within Russia, whether its people are ready for the moral reckoning necessary for healing and reconciliation.

This is just one example of many public addresses, statements and reports that His Beatitude has issued over the past three years, along with many private high level encounters held both in Ukraine and abroad, even as the world diverts its attention, focuses on other conflicts, or simply grows bored with hearing about the war in Ukraine.

Earlier this year, the regional Synod in Ukraine issued “The Message of the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine on War and Just Peace in the Context of New Ideologies” (February 14, 2024), signed by His Beatitude and translated into multiple Western languages. The second paragraph of the document’s Introduction fits perfectly with our reflection:

2. First and foremost, we need to realise that winning the fight against such an insidious enemy requires perseverance. Such perseverance has nothing in common with indifference to or distancing from the experience of the country and the people. On the contrary, perseverance is always associated with activity, with a sacrificial love that is ready to serve over a long period: “And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas. 1:4). A short-term explosion of feelings or enthusiasm cannot be sustained for a long distance. Rather, this requires enduring effort...

This year the entire Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Synod of Bishops gathered in Ukraine at the Marian pilgrimage site of Zarvanytsia (July 1-12, 2024). In Synodal letters of greetings, His Beatitude once again wrote of the plight of his country:

As we write to you from Ukraine, we are surrounded by the suffering of a people and nation that have been under partial Russian occupation since 2014, and in a full-scale war of aggression since February 2022. We bear witness to the ongoing tragedies experienced by so many people, especially the civilian population, due to relentless missile and drone attacks on a daily basis. With the loss of so many sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters serving in the Ukrainian armed forces, virtually every bishop and pastor in Ukraine is called to share in the personal pain and loss of so many souls, as we seek to comfort and prayerfully accompany bereaved family members. And yet, the faith and courage of our people remain strong, as they defend freedom and human life. We look with pride on the countless examples of valour and generosity that remind us of the selfless sacrifices made 80 years ago during World War II, when forces were gathered to repel and defeat tyranny on the march. Then too, the task seemed impossible, the obstacles unsurmountable, the enemy undefeatable. We are sustained by our faith in the loving God of history and the support of men and women of good will across the globe.

Since 2022 there is a remarkable collection of personal reflections, words of encouragement, hope, support. The phrase His Beatitude Sviatoslav often repeats is: “Ukraine is standing. Ukraine is fighting. Ukraine is praying!”, which is now the title of a book of his daily reflections since the full-scale invasion, published in June of this year. These reflections were posted daily throughout the first year of the war (a total of 366 video messages!). As an example, let me quote from His Beatitude’s message on February 21, 2023 (the 363rd Day of the War):

Today we want to thank the Lord God for the fact that we are alive. We give thanks for the courage and resilience of Ukrainians because today the entire Ukrainian people stood up to defend their Motherland. Today we want the whole world to hear us, that Ukraine is standing! Ukraine is fighting! Ukraine is praying!

After the first anniversary of the full-scale invasion, His Beatitude Sviatoslav has continued to provide hope and encouragement to his clergy, flock and the people of Ukraine with weekly messages. On a personal level, I find myself being drawn into His Beatitude's messages of hope, and I know many faithful who are sustained by something simple as a few thoughts from a spiritual father and leader who keeps encouraging his children in the face of trials and adversity.

Reference: HIS BEATITUDE'S PERSONAL MESSAGES OF HOPE. These can be found on his YouTube channel, which is maintained through ZhyveTV:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSL18EyjdU2h6PdF4Cqvo0ma1nb1GI9bh>

CLOSING REMARKS

In closing, I would like to quote something that St. Oscar wrote on October 30, 1977: "Blessed are the liberators who put their strength not in weapons, not in kidnaping, not in violence, nor in money, but rather know that liberation must come from God; it will be the wonderful coming together of the liberating power of God and the Christian effort of human beings." (Through the year with Oscar Romero, Daily Meditations, 2006).

The global pandemic brought people to fear one other, isolating not only neighbours but countries. We had to find innovative ways to be present as Church and as faith leaders to our communities, providing hope to those who were forced into isolation. The Covid-19 pandemic rekindled a longing for community, a spiritual hunger to be missionary disciples together, gathered around the celebration of the Eucharist, reaching out together to those in need. That is liberation that comes from God!

And what St. Oscar wrote continues to be applicable to what Ukrainians are seeking—liberation from the injustices being perpetrated against them by a foreign invader who seeks their elimination from the family of nations. This is not something new for Ukrainians. It is the current incarnation of a centuries-old struggle. Through his words of hope and encouragement, through his calls to remain faithful in prayer, His Beatitude Sviatoslav has been a strong voice of resilience and courage, as one with his people. He reaches out to millions and touches the hearts of those who need healing. That too is liberation that comes from God!

The global impact of the horrible and cruel war that continues to rage in Ukraine is less apparent to the world community, but it affects all of us, financially, spiritually, and morally. I remember participating in a meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vatican as part of a small delegation of six Ukrainian Catholic bishops led by His Beatitude Sviatoslav shortly after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the initial invasion of the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Already Europe was facing one of the worst humanitarian crises since the end of World War II. His Holiness remarked that we are already experiencing World War III but the world does not recognise it yet. That was 10 years ago... and we continue to hope in the God of liberation! As His Beatitude Sviatoslav reminds us: "Ukraine is standing. Ukraine is fighting. Ukraine is praying!" But we also need your prayers, your understanding and your support.

Thank you, Fr Adrian Porter and the Edinburgh Jesuit Centre, for inviting me to speak here this evening. My thanks also go to the several co-patrons of the lecture – the Archbishop Romero Trust, SCIAF, Justice and Peace Scotland, Pax Christi Scotland and Independent Catholic News. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the fraternal solidarity of Archbishops Leo Cushley and William Nolan and the Episcopal Conference of Scotland. Finally, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Jesuit Fund for Social Justice which provided valuable support for the eparchy's pastoral programmes as we sought to respond to the needs of Ukrainian recently-displaced people arriving in Britain.

Through the prayers of St. Oscar may God bless us and bring His liberation and peace with justice to Ukraine, granting His resilience and courage to all who are being persecuted for their faith and their solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and all who suffer injustice throughout the world.