

## Letter from the Prior Provincial Polish Province of the Carmelite Order

March 11, 2022

Dear Brothers

For more than a dozen days the whole world has been directing its eyes to Ukraine, the country which is defending itself after the aggression of the Russian army. We are also tracking, with anxiety, the development of the situation, especially in Sasiadowice and Volodymyr Volynskyj, where the Brothers from our Polish province work. Thank you for your attention to and concern about our Brothers and the people with whom they collaborate. The response has been so great that we are not able to respond immediately to all emails.

At present, the war is mainly confined to the eastern areas of Ukraine. Our convents are situated in the western part of the country near the Polish frontier. These days it is a relatively calm part of the country. Marianna Strepka, one of our parishioners who has been living in Poland for over six years now, describes the situation this way:

*“On the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> of February the inhabitants of Sasiadowice and the whole Ukraine were woken up by a whistle. From the radio and the television, a terrible message could be heard – the war has just begun! Not everyone immediately believed it. People thought they were merely exercises. However, the reality turned out to be completely different from the usual military exercises. Nobody imagined that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century they would hear explosions and watch tanks passing on the streets. It was a terrible morning for every inhabitant - disbelief, shock, and fear. Men between 18 and 60 were called up to military service. Only the mothers with their children and the grandparents remained at home. Some people ran away from the war. It is a tragedy for every single family. People do not know if they will see their relatives again. But they pray and believe that God is with them. The situation with supplies is deteriorating and some products are beginning to vanish from some stores.”*

We are also very grateful for the financial help which is coming from our whole Order. We realize that Ukraine will require long-term help. That is why we have created a help fund for residents of the Ukraine. A team was also established, which will coordinate and organize the aid under the leadership of the provincial bursar. At this point, the first humanitarian transport is in preparation.

Help is needed not only in Ukraine. There are approximately 1,000,000 refugees on the territory of Poland. The Carmelite Sisters from the Congregation of the Institute of Our Lady of Mount Carmel are also involved in helping the Ukrainians. Sister Agnieszka Skup, the Delegate of the Polish delegation says:

*Our house in Wola Gulowska initially hosted three people from Kharkov and Kiev. They were taken from the border and found a place to rest in our house. They left and went further when they gained strength. A family from the village Brody near Lviv has been staying with us for a week now, six people: a mother with two-year-old daughter, three sons of the age of 5, 11 and 15 and a grandmother. We are trying to find them some home in the town nearby, so that this family could live independently, and the children could attend the school and classes organized by volunteers for them.*

All our convents are open and ready to welcome the refugees from the Ukraine.

*Wieslaw*

Prior Provincial

Polish Province of the Carmelite Order