

TRANSFORMATION OF UKRAINE:
Hope, Healing. Solidarity.

*Statement of the Fourth Congress of the Laity of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.
To all Christians, people of good will and public authorities of Ukraine*

With its military aggression against Ukraine, Russia has launched an attempt to gain its revenge by force, after its defeat to the West in the Cold War, to change the world order and establish the "right of force" in international relations.

The aggressor's imperial revenge ambitions plunged Ukraine into unprecedented bloodshed after the Second World War and posed a tough existential challenge: to survive, to preserve our right to live, to preserve the identity of the nation and of the state as subject of international relations. We are aware that in the crucible of this war, in which military and civilians are dying, families are suffering and being separated, cities, villages, infrastructure are being destroyed, the economy is collapsing, and the common man is crying out to Heaven for justice, an attempt is being made to rebuild the world, redraw borders and establish a new world order.

The seizure of Ukraine is of strategic geopolitical, historical and semantic importance to Russia. Therefore, the enemy is using all the methods it knows and throwing all available resources at achieving its goals. Bucha, Irpin, Izyum, ... have become terrible symbols of disdain for human life and dignity.

The political, military and religious leadership of Russia justifies their cruelty and violence by claiming that they are the only defender of good against evil, waging a "holy war" against Western civilization identified with Satanism. Thus, Moscow elevates its ambitions to establish a new world order to a metaphysical and religious level. For us, this means that the enemy, if left unchecked, will wage a genocidal war until Ukraine is completely destroyed.

Therefore, to preserve lives, freedom and dignity of Ukrainians, to preserve the identity of the people and the subjectivity of the state, each and every one of us must offer maximum sacrifice, solidarity and support to those who suffer from the war for the sake of victory.

Transformation

Ukraine's victory means restoration of territorial integrity, creation of a new security architecture on the European continent, bringing Russia to justice for its aggression, and, at the same time, transformation of social relations in Ukraine.

The transformation of Ukraine has different dimensions: personal, social, political, and international. The main criteria here are the creation of conditions for the affirmation of human freedom and dignity, the sacredness of the family, investments in science, education, culture, free development of business and the economy, and security guarantees - domestic, international, environmental, informational, and spiritual.

Good education is the key to Ukraine's future. We should not mindlessly import the post-modern concepts of leftist activists tired of relativism. The search for truth, goodness, and beauty and the transmission of spiritual treasures to the next generations require the hard work of parents and teachers. It is necessary to defend the teaching of Christian ethics at school and openness to God in university classrooms and research.

Therefore, Ukraine is facing an urgent need to direct the efforts of every citizen and the authorities at various levels to launch strategic changes in the country. The sacred duty of Christians in Ukraine, everyone who believes in our Lord Jesus Christ, is to do their best to ensure that these changes result in a human-centered government and a God-centered people.

The return to the life-giving principles that laid the foundations of Europe and the West, to the Athenian search for truth, goodness, and beauty; the Roman approach to understanding the power of law; the Jerusalem understanding that there is God the Creator, who has invested in the nature of us, His children, dignity and opened the hope of Eternal Life, is a civilizational challenge and a great task of our time.

Love of neighbor and solidarity

Healing the wounds of war is the beginning of strategic changes for the transformation of Ukraine. This requires the active participation of everyone, so that men and women, families and communities who have passed through the suffering of war feel solidarity and attention, prayerful and effective support. The wounds of war do not heal for a long time, so we must learn to live with them, not turning a blind eye to the pain of others and our own. By empathizing with the suffering of our neighbors, by contemplating the torments of the crucified Christ that He endured for our sake, by being ready to help another to carry the cross and by accepting their own cross, Christians can and should serve as an example and source of strength for the whole society. We will be a society of veterans, and therefore we are called to be a community of guardians of the good, radiating experience and courage without bitterness. Healing the wounds of war through love and solidarity with our neighbors is a moral imperative and a common task.

Solidarity, as an inherent trait of Ukrainians, has sometimes resulted in painful failures in the history of the nation. However, the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity, the substitution of logistics for the Armed Forces with the outbreak of war in 2014, and the parallel logistical and military support provided by the volunteer movement since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion are all vivid manifestations of solidarity in Ukraine's modern history.

The volunteers have embodied the example of sacrificial solidarity of the friends of the paralytic from the gospel story, who did everything to ensure that Jesus would heal their friend. Reorienting this experience of solidarity, prayerful and active support to all who need it, to paying attention to veterans, refugees and internally displaced persons is the task of practical implementation of the commandment to love our neighbor. We must learn to accept each other

with kindness; to reject hatred and indifference, that are especially prevalent in social media. We are different in our experiences and regional peculiarities. But what we have in common is much more important than what we differ in. Formation of a Unity-Government and a national Unity-Forum during the war could make a special contribution to strengthening the sense of solidarity. The unity of the nation is a prerequisite for victory.

This task implies a shift in the way we think, prioritizing the life, freedom and dignity of the human being, his or her family and the community in which they live, their well-being and development opportunities, and making the state and political and economic processes instrumental to the pursuit of the common good. Such a fundamental change in thinking implies not only a change in the anthropological vision in personal and social life, but also the formation of a new social contract - an unwritten general consensus on the formation of social relations and public policies.

Human dignity

The transformation of Ukraine presupposes the affirmation of the God-given dignity of man, the natural and inalienable source of his rights, as the cornerstone of the new social contract. This means that in their relations with each other, Ukrainian citizens assume a moral obligation to respect the fundamental basis of dignity - the human freedom and image of God in each and every one of them, and to protect them at the national and international levels.

The key success indicator of such governmental approaches will be the quality of life of citizens, thanks to the proper service work of public institutions - health care, justice, education, etc. - free of social paternalism. The transition from slavery to freedom takes time. Moses led his people for forty years to enter the Promised Land. The nostalgia for the paternalism of the "social" welfare state, where officials will take care of us, must be overcome. We, and not anyone else, are responsible for our own future. The future of the country depends on our actions.

It means that the responsibility of both society and the state is to establish a common vision of a person as a mature and independent person who is able to take responsibility for himself, his family and the state. The existing public policies that undermine human autonomy and freedom, degrade human dignity and cause addictions of various kinds - corruption, excessive bureaucracy, gambling, distribution of soft drugs, prostitution, etc. - must be eradicated from our lives.

One of the fundamental guarantees for the protection and affirmation of human dignity is religious freedom. It is essential that the authorities do not establish a state church, let alone the existence of quasi-religious organizations that deny the God-given freedom and dignity of man, or that serve or "sanctify" hateful ideology such as Bolshevism, Nazism, and Russism.

It is important that human dignity and rights become an integral part of the educational process, that Ukrainian citizens learn from their school benches that human dignity and life are

inviolable from conception to natural death. It is important that they learn about the cornerstone of neighborly relations, social relations and mutually beneficial principles of the state's attitude toward man and citizens toward their state.

Subsidiarity

For the practical implementation of this principle, it is important to continue the reform of decentralization and local self-government so that the maximum amount of powers is concentrated at the ground level. Individual freedom, creativity, initiative and entrepreneurship should be given space for development, and local government functions should begin where the initiative of individuals or public efforts exhaust their capacities and competencies. Consequently, the functions of the state came into play, focusing on the formation of policies that ensure the development and security of the larger social organism: the educational and scientific system, culture, health care, international relations, security and defense.

Individual freedom, creativity and entrepreneurship have always been powerful factors that have created local and national identity, manifested in works of art, architectural masterpieces, economic and even cuisine traditions.

The principle of subsidiarity has always made people feel that they can be free masters of their own destiny on their own land. Such a master feels grateful to God for the natural wealth he can freely and creatively transform into a resource for the well-being of his family, community, and the common good.

The Ukrainian family

The transformation of Ukraine also requires the creation of a favorable framework for overcoming the demographic crisis. The role of the government to create the conditions under which Ukrainian families will feel confident in having their third and subsequent children is crucial. The family is born out of the marital union of love between one man and one woman, open to the birth and upbringing of children, which Jesus Christ raised to the dignity of a Sacrament. The family is a key element of the life of the nation and the state, where new members of society are born, in which they are taught to love and embrace solidarity, adopt the culture and traditions of the nation, become citizens of their state and learn to be responsible for themselves and their neighbors, and for common advancement.

Taking care for the family and demographic development implies ending disgraceful practices that legalize murder of the unborn, surrogacy, introduce gender ideology, open up the possibility of gender reassignment, or distort the concept of marriage by equating same-sex relationships with it, as well as ending policies that expel people and entire families from Ukraine in search of work and a better life. Creating social and economic standards that will stop brain and labor outflows abroad, where such standards already exist, and opening up a

chance for those who have already left, is the primary task of the state and its institutions, as only they can provide this.

The emigration of a significant number of Ukrainians is our common concern and national challenge. The state and the civil society must work tirelessly to create the necessary conditions and urge those who have emigrated to return home. A land without people cannot revive. Only the homeland, where there are graves of ancestors, churches built by them, and spiritual and material culture created, can be the only place where we will feel at home on this Earth. A "family home" sustains and supports a person and his or her family, while a foreign country alienates us from ourselves.

A pro-family policy requires a radical revision of the government's social policy. Given the urgent need for a fundamental change in demographic trends, the state's social policy should be reoriented towards comprehensive family support, with special attention to the needs of large families and families that have been ruthlessly affected by war. In order to practically solve these problems, it is necessary to establish a national executive body that will be responsible for the elaboration of a comprehensive pro-family public policy. In order to develop a comprehensive pro-family policy, partnership cooperation between the state and the church is an imperative.

Economic development

Tax and judicial reforms that will restore trust in the government in the economic sphere are essential to create a favorable climate for business and investment. Freedom of entrepreneurship, confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary, adequate wages as a reflection of the dignity of human labor, and investment in knowledge and innovation are the keys to economic growth and the common good.

Changing the attitude of citizens and state institutions towards entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship as creators of the common good is one of the top priorities to encourage domestic and foreign investment in Ukraine's economy. This requires that fiscal and law enforcement agencies stop the shameful practices of unfair pressure and persecution, so that the government is treated as a tool for development and the perception of it as alien or colonial becomes a distant past. In turn, businesses should understand that a properly and timely paid tax without any optimization tricks is a fair tool for building up a country.

At the same time, we must always remember that the economic process and the material goods it generates exist solely for the sake of decent human life, development and security of the society.

Personal transformation

To make the transformation of interpersonal and social relations and the principles of public policy a reality, it must begin with personal transformation. This process is possible only when human dignity and the sacredness of the family are perceived by everyone as a gift from God, and the protection and affirmation of this gift is understood as a moral obligation, task and responsibility before God.

War is always a testing ground for weapons (we see this in the example of drones, robots, artificial intelligence), tactics, and strategy; at the same time, it is a testing ground for ideas, values, and ideals. From the very beginning, Moscow's aggression against Ukraine went beyond the battlefield, encroaching on all aspects of Ukrainian society. In fact, our firmness in faith and of all we rely on in our daily lives is being tested. Each and every one of us is faced with deep questions about God, mercy, justice, and the punishment of the aggressor. This prompts us to rethink and reaffirm our faith, and to seek for hope in it, so that we can emerge from the crucible of this war strengthened and transformed. To do this, we need spiritual weapons, new "spiritual drones" to see the whole picture of the world and Ukraine's situation from above. This spiritual weapon is the ability to see the social needs, the wounds of individuals at the place of work, study, in a village or city, in a parish or in the middle of the squares and streets; it is the ability to embrace widows, orphans, the injured, families with veterans whose memory is kept on the battlefield... Our Christianity should shift to the practical dimension as much as possible. Every Christian in his or her parish, community, place of work or study should become a witness of Christ and of merciful love, in order to reveal God to man and offer him or her hope by "quiet tireless work."

The Christian virtue of hope manifests itself when, from a human point of view, it seems that there is almost no chance for victory, as the enemy seems more powerful than us. Nevertheless, David's victory over Goliath is always a sign of hope for those who stand for good and resist against evil. Hope engenders readiness for action, for inner psychological and outer social mobilization. Hope is not a lulling reverie or a temptation to wait out troubling times somewhere quiet. Hope is an impetus for achievement, a motivation to join the common effort.

Here the Church can and should play a special role by strengthening and, where necessary, establishing new forms of communication with her flock and all people of good will. The transformation of the clergy as an example for the laity is of utmost importance.

Only after we realize ourselves as bearers of moral values and subjects of strategic transformational changes on the path toward the transformation of Ukraine, we pray to our Lord Jesus Christ to open our minds and hearts to personal conversion and to give us the strength to find the necessary tools for our goals.

Victory. Just peace. Lasting security architecture.

In order for the transformation and development of Ukraine to become a reality, in order for us to have hope for the construction of a God-inspired social and state order, this process must begin here and now.

At the same time, we are aware that for the full realization of this goal, victory in the war against the diabolical revanchism of the Russian Empire is indispensable. Striving for victory, we understand that the power of authoritarian dictatorial regimes can be resisted and defeated only through the international solidarity of the civilized world.

Victory implies both the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the imposition of just punishment on the aggressor, because unpunished evil is revived and threatens again. This has happened in recent history as well. The unpunished evil of Bolshevism and the godless communist ideology that came from Russia was reincarnated in the terror of the "Russian world." Only a just punishment of the aggressor can lead the continent and the entire world to a just peace.

We are convinced that in order to establish a lasting peace, depriving the aggressor of its military power is a prerequisite. This can only be achieved by imposing effective international sectoral sanctions against the aggressor, while also ending any cooperation that would potentially open the door to the re-perpetration of evil. In the prophet Isaiah we read: "And the work of justice will be peace, and the fruit of righteousness will be peace and security for ever" (Isaiah 32:17).

Assistance to the enslaved peoples of the Russian Federation in the realization of their right to self-determination is one of the key elements that will open the chance and hope for building a new and effective security architecture and a just and lasting peace on the continent and in the world.

By aspiring to the European Union, Ukraine reaffirms its belonging to the European civilization. We were snatched from there by the "Russian world" and held captive for over three hundred years. However, now that we have been liberated, we should not mindlessly rush to meet all the fashionable trends just because they come from the West. We cannot hide in the West or behind the West. Our destiny and vocation is to walk through the storm to the light, to be at the forefront of the struggle for eternal values. Personal transformation often comes about through pain and hardship, but the Splendor of Truth invites us to the victory ahead.

So help us, O God, in the Holy Trinity, One!