

Friday, 26 June 2020

# APPEAL OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV

To the faithful of the UGCC and people of good will in Ukraine  
and throughout the world  
in response to the flooding in Western Ukraine

Your Graces and Excellencies, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Brothers and Sisters in monastic and religious life Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



One of the elements which gives us and all that surrounds us life, and provides comfort in our homes, in these past days in areas of Western Ukraine has been transformed into a veritable disaster that is being characterized as the worst flood over the past century. Over 300 inhabited towns and villages are under water. Key transportation arteries have been ruined, railways and bridges have been damaged, thousands of buildings are without power. But the greatest disaster – human casualties. And so, at the opening of this appeal I express my sincere condolences and assurances of my prayers for those who lost their loved ones.

If the coronavirus pandemic restricted us to our own residences, this flooding has deprived thousands of people of that protection. Inclement weather has devastated harvests, destroyed planted fields and private gardens. People have lost their means for existence. Tens of thousands of hectares of land are covered with water and mud. People are being evacuated from their residences in large numbers in an effort to safeguard their lives. Hospitals have been inundated including facilities providing treatment to those infected by the coronavirus.

The effects of this flood in the present economic crisis, compounded by the pandemic, carry the threat of real social trouble on a national scale. If quick and decisive action is not taken, then before the winter we may find ourselves facing a humanitarian catastrophe.

In this pastoral appeal I reach out to all who have suffered from the flood, who experienced fear for their lives, pain and a sense of helplessness, especially to those who even now find themselves in the midst of this turbulent event, with the words of Jesus Christ: "Fear not!" Your Church, which constantly prays to the merciful God, is with you in this difficult time, and seeks to embrace you with her warmth, concern, and care. I wish to assure you, that she is and will be your voice and protector before the mighty of this world, and will carry the truth about your distress and despair to the global public and to the world Christian community.

Every calamity that people experience in their lives is an opportunity to show Christian solidarity and social service, so that those who are suffering might receive assistance as soon as possible. Therefore, I call upon our church institutions: eparchies, religious communities, and especially our network of the charitable foundation "Caritas," to organize rescue for those who cry for help. I appeal to all communities of our Church in Ukraine and throughout the world, in the spirit of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel, to support those who are now deprived of their home and have come face-to-face with misfortune.

I direct my request to the world community and to international humanitarian organizations: be open to respond to the needs of those who have become victims of the disaster that has afflicted regions in Western Ukraine.

As we look at the consequences of this catastrophe, we must at the same time reflect on what brought it about. Pope Francis says: "God always forgives, we men forgive sometimes, but nature never forgives." The cause of this disaster that we are experiencing is this predatory attitude of humans towards the environment. Climate change on a global scale and uncontrolled destruction of Carpathian forests forced nature to raise its menacing voice, before which we cannot remain silent.

In this period of Peter's fast, taking into account the present dramatic situation, I call on you to rethink your attitude towards your surrounding environment, a rethinking which should include being conscious of the danger of ecological sin, and repentance before the fact of God the Creator, in order that we may learn to care responsibly for our common God-given home and increase nature's inheritance.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Those who have suffered from this calamity need our prayers and sympathy. I sincerely ask that this Sunday at Divine Liturgy we pray for all the victims of the flood and for those rescue workers who are dealing with its consequences.

May our Lord, who is with us always, in the joys and hardships of our life, help us overcome this trial with the dignity of God's children. May the protection of the His Most Pure Mother, glorified in so many churches of our hospitable Carpathians, cover all who have become hostage to this aquatic calamity. Appealing to the Lord to send generous gifts upon those, who will help the victims, I pray that He might be merciful to all of us.

**+ SVIATOSLAV**