

## His Beatitude Shevchuk: "Human lives depend upon the truth you are reporting. Lies kill. Truth saves"

"Truth is the first casualty of war. A big war is unfortunately invariably accompanied by a big lie." "Human lives depend upon the truth you are reporting. Lies kill. Truth saves. I can testify to this." These were the words of H.B. **Sviatoslav Schevchuk**, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, during a visit to SIR's newsroom in Rome. The Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church expressed his gratitude to the journalists for their "seriousness and objectivity." He then exhorted: "do not yield to ideological manipulation. What is happening in Ukraine is fraught with ideology. Well-paid and well-prepared disinformation. Not everyone is capable of a serious analysis of what is happening. Today's journalism is a shallow kind of journalism that is not concerned with digging into the truth of situations and facts. They repeat hearsay stories or respond to what is commonly believed. Dig deeper. Very few are capable of doing this. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."



"The front line stopped 20 kilometres from my home," he said. "Seeing the bombs and missiles fall and helicopters flying through our skies was almost like Jeremiah who saw the destruction of Jerusalem and wept. I was on the list of those who were supposed to be executed. It's a miracle I'm still alive." When the Russians started to withdraw from Kiev, the city, and especially the suburbs, were covered with corpses and devastation. "I went to visit one of the mass graves that had been discovered", the Archbishop recalled, "I approached it and saw the faces of those people, their hands tied, the signs of torture. I started to pray. Then I felt that the ground I was standing on was unsteady and I realised that other corpses were buried under my feet. A question arose within me: O Lord, why am I alive while they are dead? In my meetings with the Holy Father and with the heads of various departments of the Roman Curia these days, I always said: better a living dog than a dead lion. We clearly still have a mission to fulfil in this life." Shevchuk recorded a video-message since the first day of the Russian attack, which he broadcasts in several languages. "I realised that I had to speak to the heart of this people," he explained. "I thus drew from the entire body of my theological studies. Do not hate. Do not let yourselves be overcome by these feelings. I called for anger to be transformed into virtue, into courage and constructive strength. The entire Gospel speaks to us in a different tone."



"We all decided to stay. No one left, not the bishops, not the priests, not the monks. And we will continue for as long as we can", assured the Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics. "We also remained in the occupied areas. There is a monastery of the Basilian fathers in Kherson that was turned into a shelter for the local population." When asked about the true possibilities for dialogue and peace between Russia and Ukraine, His Beatitude said: "Every war ends with an agreement. "If no agreement is reached, then the war is bound to last forever." "So far - he said - most of the peace proposals coming from them are proposals of a colonial form of pacification. The Ukrainian State is not recognised as having the right to exist, and without the recognition of an existing party to negotiate with, everything falls apart." The analysis is not optimistic. "There is no sign of sincere openness to peace. These are declarations. The Holy Father has been very wise in calling on Putin to stop and on Zelensky to remain open to any serious peace proposal. We are keenly seeking such seriousness." **Shevchuk also spoke about Europe.** "Gas supplies have been partly reduced and everyone is worried. People wonder how they will get through the winter, they are concerned about rising fuel prices, rising energy bills. For us living in Ukraine, it hurts us to listen to this because while Europe is debating whether or not to lower temperatures in their homes by 2 degrees, we are paying for this with our own lives." The war has exposed the fact that "European prosperity is caused by Russia's cheap gas and cheap oil. Mutual profit has hitherto been the foundation of peace. However, all this has collapsed." His Beatitude then warned Europe: "if the European project is reduced to an economic project it will fail". He added: "I have no recipes to give. My question is: if human life is worth less than the price of gas and oil, what kind of Europe are we?".

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