
Prayer for peace in Kyiv: "War is against God and has no excuse"

(From Kyiv) A protracted invocation for peace was recited last night in Kyiv's St Sophia Square, the religious heart of the country. The city of Kyiv, where the initiative took place, is constantly pierced by the sound of air-raid alarms, where power cuts are a frequent occurrence and the night is plunged into darkness. It is a city where the war has struck the most precious members of society, its children, where on Monday 8 July the Children's Hospital was hit by a rocket. A minute's silence. Songs and speeches. Catholic and Greek Catholic bishops, representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Seventh-day Adventists, Evangelicals, members of the Jewish and Islamic communities took turns praying on the podium. The initiative was animated by representatives of movements and associations that arrived in Kyiv together with the MEAN project (European Nonviolent Movement). With their presence, they want the Ukrainian people to know that they are not alone.



The prayers are read out in Italian and Ukrainian. In the prayers, a plea was made to the God of peace to "open human hearts to dialogue" and for "negotiation to prevail over weapons, understanding over misunderstanding, forgiveness over hurt, and love over hate." The event was broadcast live in 25 public squares across Italy, spanning the country's northern to southern regions, and was relayed via a live transmission to a mega screen situated in Kyiv's St. Sophia Square. In a live link-up from the town of Montecassino, **Dom Luca Fallica** emphasised that 11 July is the day marking the feast of St Benedict, the patron saint of Europe, "a messenger of peace, a builder of unity and a teacher of civilisation." Joining the religious leaders on the podium, **Cardinal Edoardo Menichelli** said: "I want all of us to take responsibility, to have the courage to be disciples of forgiveness and mercy, because peace is a prophecy given to each one of us. May war, destruction and death cease. O Lord, grant wisdom to those who govern the nations, so that they may contemplate peace as a precious gift, not only for Ukraine, but for the whole world."



"The war is not only directed against humanity and Ukraine" said Msgr. Visvaldas Kulbokas, Apostolic nuncio to Ukraine, who expressed strong support for the initiative. "It is simultaneously an affront to God. We have come together in prayer because prayer is our strength. However, it is incumbent upon humanity to play its part in the process of peace-building. This is why those who have arrived in Kyiv today are shouldering the burden of the war."

Their message is clear: 'when Ukraine is attacked, it is also us that you are attacking and assailing. It is to say with profound humility and courage that war is never justified.'

In the morning, the delegation visited Kyiv's Children's Hospital. "You have seen what war does to children," said the Nuncio. "The language of peace is to say NO. No to war. No to aggression. May our prayer be courageous and filled with hope."



Lucio Turra, representing the National Presidency of Catholic Action, **remembered all those who are suffering from the injustices caused by the war in different parts of Ukraine:** the displaced, those who have fled their homes, young people and soldiers at the front, lonely elderly people, volunteers and all people of good will. Ukrainian Scouts took the floor to share their stories of the impact of the large-scale Russian aggression on their lives and their service to the country's youth. **Elena Possia**, from the Focolare Movement in Belgium, read a prayer written by President Margaret Karram: "PEACE in the heart of every person, especially in the hearts of those who govern nations; PEACE between different peoples, ethnic groups, nations; especially, with the faith that moves mountains, we pray that 'the fire' of war may cease and that dialogue 'that seeks ways to peace' may triumph". At the end of the ceremony, all those present held hands and formed a large circle in the town square, symbolically extending the embrace of peace across the city facing air raid alarms and power cuts.

