

Kiev's Godless Suburbs

SURROUNDED by a towering jungle of apartment blocks, the small wooden building near the centre of Kiev appears humble and insignificant.

Yet it has played a vital role in bringing the Church back to a metropolis where communism tried to extinguish God's presence for more than 70 years. More than 300,000 people live in this area of the Ukrainian capital, but until this tiny church of the Parish of the Assumption was built two years ago, not one church existed here.



Monsignor Stanislaw Shyrokoradjuk Auxiliary Bishop of Kiev, told ACN: "This is the post Soviet problem – cities without God."



The small church (left) in the Parish of the Assumption dwarfed by towering apartment blocks

Photo: A.Polec

..and then the roof fell in...

IN the centre of Kherson, in south Ukraine, the old Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart was seized and much of it turned into cinemas. The holes for the projectors are still visible in the walls.

Earlier in 2005, the main body of the church was handed back in a terrible condition. The day after ACN visited, the roof fell in. During the summer of 2005 there was a temporary altar outside, where nearly 400 Catholics gathered in the open to celebrate Mass whatever the weather.

You have helped begin to rebuild the church with \$47,000 after the parish priest, Fr Artur Nagraba, turned to ACN for assistance in this dire situation. "Please be part of the grace of God at work here," he said, "for you too can be assured of God's grace and his blessings."

Many of his faithful are from families who were

Now, with the support of ACN's benefactors, construction work is underway to fulfil ambitious plans for a massive 1,300 capacity church, complete with a catechetical centre for all eight of the city's parishes, to serve a burgeoning congregation.

On your behalf we have promised more than \$78,000 to help restore the light of Christ to this city, so long darkened by the oppressive shadow of communism.



Kherson's faithful worship at this outdoor altar. Can you help them to build a new church?

deported to Siberia or Kazakhstan and suffered terribly: Tamara now helps the Sisters, but she was persecuted after she was caught teaching children the rosary in secret in a forest; now her grandson is a seminarian – one of well over 1,000 in Ukraine today.

From the communist camp to their new seminary

"THE Holy Spirit Seminary is a sign of hope, a sign of security that people will have spiritual leaders in the future, who will uphold the tradition and faith of our forefathers."



Br Nazar Tsyumak and Br Roman Nazaruk

Br Nazar Tsyumak had just returned from studying abroad in time to witness the consecration of the new seminary in Lviv.

And now Br Nazar will complete his studies for the priesthood here in his own country. Although his experience overseas was important, he was overjoyed to be back in Lviv, amongst his own people.

The future of the Catholic Church in Ukraine lies in the hands of these young men, who are so devoted to serving God and their people. Thanks to you, Aid to the Church in Need is able to support every single seminarian in Ukraine with grants.

The seminarians used to live, study and pray in an old Communist camp. Eight or nine of them shared dilapidated rooms that were freezing cold



Walking in the footsteps of Christ: the seminarians process through the streets of Lviv

in the winter. At the consecration Mass for the Holy Spirit Seminary, the voices of 200 young seminarians rang out in a magnificent song of praise to God.

These men are the Church's future – "they are the hope of the people," said Br Roman Nazaruk.



Holy Spirit Seminary, Lviv

AT the consecration Mass, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar paid tribute to the solidarity and support of ACN's benefactors, saying: "We want to thank the Lord for all his graces: that this dream of ours, this seminary, has become reality.

"But we know that divine providence works through circumstances and people, and I want to thank all the people who have contributed so we could have this happy moment of blessing the seminary."

However, the seminary still needs more funding to fulfil the dream of Ukraine's Catholic leaders. Heating is needed for the bitter winters; the new theology faculty is still incomplete; and two monastic houses are yet to be built on the site.



RESPONSE FORM

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BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Sr/Rev:.....

Address:

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I/We enclose \$..... to support the Church in Ukraine.

I enclose a cheque/money order payable to Aid to the Church in Need

OR please debit my Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard:



Expiry date:/.....

Signature:

To commemorate the first anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death, Aid to the Church in Need is offering its benefactors, a papal rosary, blessed by John Paul the Great with any donation to help the work of the Church in Ukraine. The Vatican Rosary beads were given a general blessing by Pope John Paul II in the Audience Hall in Rome before his death in April 2005.

To receive the Vatican Rosary beads please tick this box. ☐



Pope John Paul II had a great love for the Byzantine Rite Catholic Church and travelled to Ukraine in June 2001 to bless the site of the new seminary in Lviv. Fr Werenfried van Straaten, our late founder was also there. This beautiful photo shows the Holy Father giving his old friend Fr Werenfried a lift in the Popemobile on route to the seminary site. Photo ©: L'Osservatore Romano

A06/31/2/10

Yuzhne: an underground faith

“YOU need to have faith to walk these corridors,” said Bishop Vasyl Ivasyuk of Odessa-Krym, as we walked along the underground corridor to the parish ‘church’ in Yuzhne.



Yuzhne’s faithful pack into the tiny underground room that serves as their church

More than 50 people were squeezed into a tiny room beneath an old Soviet block of flats – young families with children, in a sweltering room – praying before God and singing hymns.

The ‘Corridor of Faith’ leading to the underground church in Yuzhne

Asking for ACN’s help to build a proper church for his people, the parish priest, Fr Vasyl Kolodchyhn, said: “The people have room in their hearts for God, but we have no room to celebrate his love.”

Thanks to your generosity, ACN has already promised \$30,000 to help Fr Kolodchyhn begin to construct his church, but still more is needed to help provide a building worthy of celebrating Christ’s love.

BROTHER Avhustyn is a monk at the Basilian Monastery of St Volodymyr in Kherson.

It is a monastery made out of old industrial shipping containers, which the monks have welded together. Though the temperature is almost unbearable in the summer and freezing cold in the winter, the place bustles with the inventive energy and faith of these devout Ukrainian Catholics.



Ukraine’s ‘mother of catechism’

SEVENTY years of atheist communism have left a great vacuum in theological learning in Ukraine. Ignorance and indifference towards the Faith have crippled the country’s theological development.

Even today, theology is not a recognised degree subject. There is ceaseless wrangling over the teaching of Christian ethics in schools.

Education and catechesis is vital for the people to begin to understand the depth and richness of their faith.

Sister Luiza Ciupa, a long-standing friend of ACN, has devoted her life to helping Ukrainians learn more about the Faith. Her work at the Catechetical Institute in Lviv set a chain of formation in motion that is now reaching three quarters of a million children throughout the country.



Sr Luiza



Young people like these have benefited from Sr Luiza’s work

“What can we do to bring up young people in the spirit of Christianity?” she asked. “That is our goal.”

It is a goal that bridges confessional differences. “What we are doing is above confessional divides,” said Sister Luiza. “It has been welcomed and blessed by Orthodox and Byzantine Rite Catholic bishops. Christian morals are so necessary in a post-Soviet society.”

You are helping her to fill the void in catechetical teaching.

And now students from the Ukrainian Catholic University are following in Sister Luiza’s footsteps by spreading God’s word through catechetical programmes in eastern Ukraine. These young volunteers find communities where they can help the Church and share their faith with the people. For many this is the only way they can learn about the Faith.

Can you help Sister Luiza’s mission of evangelisation continue?



Aid to the Church in Need

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Edited by John Pontifex (2006)

Ukraine - Out of darkness, into Christ’s light

“There was a time when our Church was a catacomb Church, when we almost did not exist. Aid to the Church in Need was with us in our darkest hours.”

- Mgr Iwan Dacko

Bell tower under construction at Vynnychyk, near Lviv

WHEN the Iron Curtain was drawn across Ukraine, it threatened to crush the very lifeblood out of the Church. Religious property was desecrated, confiscated or destroyed. The faithful were exiled or martyred. Atheist communism tried to drive God’s existence out of the country – hundreds of thousands of Byzantine Rite Catholics were transported to Siberia, suffering in the Gulag prison camps, while others laid down their lives for their faith.

Yet the Church lived on, in clandestine Masses held in caves, forests or cellars. And in 1991, the faithful emerged into the light once more, as communism collapsed and the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite was reborn.

The Church is still recovering from its tortured history and faces great challenges today.

Ukraine is struggling to escape its Soviet legacy and remains a border land of suffering and division - a fault line where traditions of East and West meet and often clash.

During 2004’s presidential elections, Ukraine was torn between turning West to new opportunity or East to further control under Russia. One million Ukrainians

filled Kiev’s frozen streets to protest over a rigged pro-Russian victory. The election was ruled void and the pro-European Viktor Yushchenko won the re-run. Many Ukrainians’ hopes of escaping the long shadow of Moscow were rejuvenated by this Orange Revolution.

And now the shoots of faith, nourished by the blood of the martyrs, are finally beginning to spring forth after the punishing winter of totalitarian oppression. Nurtured by your solidarity, love and prayers, Ukraine’s Catholics have conveyed their deepest gratitude to the benefactors of ACN. Please help us to offer the continuing support they so urgently need to grow and flourish in the fertile soil of this devout land.