

Parish of Bangor, Member of Ards Pastoral Community

Parish Priest: Very Rev Joseph Gunn St Comgall's Presbytery, 27 Brunswick Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT20 3DS
T: (028) 9146-5522 E: bangor@downandconnor.org W: www.bangorparish.com Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9.30pm to 1pm.

FIFTH SUNDAY of LENT, 2/3 April 2022

EASTER SERVICES

[all services only in St Comgall's Church, Brunswick Rd unless otherwise specified]

HOLY WEEK

Penitential Services

- **Monday 11th April - 7pm** St Comgall's Church, Bangor
- **Tuesday 12th April - 7pm** St Patrick's Church, Newtownards
- **Wednesday 13th April - 6pm** St Patrick's Church, Ballygalget Rd, Ballygalget
- **Wednesday 13th April - 7pm** St Patrick's Church, Ballyphilip, Portaferry



HOLY THURSDAY 14th April

at **7.30pm** - The Mass of the Lord's Supper

GOOD FRIDAY 15th April

at **3.00pm** – Stations of the Cross
at **7.30pm** – The Passion Liturgy



EASTER SATURDAY 16th April

at **9.00pm** – Easter Vigil

EASTER SUNDAY 17th April

at **9.00am** – St Comgall's Church, Donaghadee

at **10.00am** and **12noon** – St Comgall's Church [Brunswick Road]



BANGOR PRAISH PODCAST

You can listen to the Parish Podcasts by clicking on the audio files on the website or by searching for "Parish of Bangor Podcast" in the apple or google podcast

Apps. Then subscribe to our channel so that you will receive all the latest podcasts straight to your device.

Your prayers are requested for Recently Deceased: Mark Lavin

Anniversaries:

Luciano Taiwo, Yegide Taiwo, Victoria Taiwo, Matthew Taiwo, Gerry Beck, Joan Jennings, Alona McAuley, Cathy McStravick, Eugene Hughes, Alice Donaghy.

Bethany Bereavement Support Group
we are here to support and listen.
Confidential. **075 1085 2157**

PRAYING WITH THE ICONS
under **The Four Saints** found in 'Parish Today'

FULL COPY OF THE SUNDAY MISSALETTE CAN BE FOUND ON THE PARISH WEBSITE UNDER "NEWS"

St Vincent de Paul
Helpline 077 0367 9384

BAPTISM REGISTRATION

Evenings only until further notice at 6pm.
Wednesdays and Thursdays.
Please register online SIDE BAR under
'Sacramental Preparation'

Pastoral Community - SYNODAL WAY

An event is being held in the **Parish Centre in Newtownards** on
Wednesday 6 April 2022
from **7pm-9pm**.

The main objective is to obtain feedback from our wider Parish Community regarding the way forward following on from the Question Cards which Parishes were asked to distribute and complete recently. Places are limited and can be booked by contacting the Parish Office in Newtownards on 028 91812137.

This is a 9 Page Bulletin so please scroll down!

Mass is Live Streamed and can be accessed via the Parish Website

www.bangorparish.com

SUNDAY MASS TIMES THIS WEEKEND

ST COMGALL'S CHURCH, DONAGHADEE

Sunday 3rd April @ 9.00am

ST COMGALL'S CHURCH BRUNSWICK ROAD

Saturday vigil 2nd April @ 6.30pm

Sunday 3rd April @ 10am & 12noon

5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

NO REGISTRATION NEEDED

Please note that the Covid sanitising regulations have not changed and will continue to be strictly observed.

DAILY MASS NEXT WEEK – 4TH April – 6TH April

Morning Mass: Monday to Friday at 9.30am

[Brunswick Rd ONLY]

During Lent there will be Evening Mass:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 7.30pm

[may be changed at short notice due to a funeral]

We have a number of Masses including funerals recorded.

These can be accessed when you click on the link below:

www.churchservices.tv/bangor

Solemn Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has resumed from **Monday 7th March 2022** and on every Monday thereafter. Adoration will last from after Morning Mass until 4.00pm with the intention of prolonging it later until 9.00pm as heretofore subject to there being sufficient adorers on the rota.

Diocese Directories on sale from Sacristy - £4

The Society of St Vincent de Paul offers practical and confidential help to those in need throughout the North Down Area. We know it can be hard to ask for help but please, if you need help call us on **our Helpline: 077 0367 9384**.

To help us to help others you can make direct payments to Conferences Bank Account.
St Comgall's, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No is 25302098.
Most Holy Redeemer Ballyholme, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No. 06885061.

Donations can also be made to SVP Giving Page at www.svp-ni.co.uk. If you are a UK income tax payer please consider Gift Aiding your donation, which will enhance your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. Gift Aid forms are available on the Parish website, or on request, via SVP Helpline number, as above.

The Society wishes to thank you for your tremendous response to our Annual Appeal, on the theme of "Impossible Choices" Through your generosity St Comgall's Conference were able to assist over 150 families in the month of December, and Most Holy Redeemer Conference Ballyholme provided assistance to 108 families and individuals over the same period To include those donations enhanced by Gift Aid, the Appeal raised over £10,000. We thank you on behalf of the Society, and on behalf of those we assisted.

The Society is always on the lookout for new Members, and if you are interested and can spare a few hours per week please speak to a Conference Member, or leave your name and contact number on the Helpline and we will return to you promptly. You will be warmly welcomed and full training will be given.

***We can now accept donations of Good quality furniture –
please call our Helpline or speak to a member of the Society.***

Storehouse North Down - Storehouse continues to help St Vincent De Paul provide non-perishable food for those in need. Storehouse welcomes donations of foodstuff at their premises, 12 Balloo Avenue, Bangor on Mondays and Thursdays between 10.00am to 3.00 pm. Cash donations are also very acceptable.

5TH SUNDAY IN LENT – 2 & 3 April 2022

Lord Jesus, you have said, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' I come to you in faith and trust, in love and hope. Let me know your closeness to me and your care for me and for all who are dear to me.
My intention: Hear my prayer (*mention intention*); grant what I ask, and may I always trust that in all that happens in life, you will be close to me as my friend, guide and saviour. And so, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Penitential Act: I confess to the almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

PRAYERS AT HOLY COMMUNION

Spiritual Holy Communion Prayer

My Jesus, I believe that you are present
in the most Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things and
I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you have already come,
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.
composed by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

ANIMA CHRISTI

Prayer to the Most Holy Redeemer

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, embolden me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
From the evil enemy defend me.
At the hour of my death call me
and bid me to come to you,
that with your Saints I may praise you
for age upon age. Amen

CALENDAR OF SAINTS DAYS

MARCH / APRIL 2022

Friday 1st April

Saint Celsus, Bishop

GOOD FRIDAY 15th April

Day of Fast and Abstinence

Saturday 2nd April

Saint Francis of Paola, Hermit

HOLY SATURDAY 16th April

Sunday 3rd April

5th SUNDAY OF LENT

EASTER SUNDAY 17th April

Thursday 7th April

Saint John Baptist de la Salle, Priest

EASTER MONDAY 18th April

Sunday 10th April

PALM SUNDAY – PASSION OF THE LORD

EASTER TUESDAY 19th April

HOLY THURSDAY 14th April

EASTER WEDNESDAY 20th April

Prayer Online: Come and join us at... www.soulparemission.com Who are we? We are a new interactive prayer website created by Jacinta Crockford DipTH, Spiritual Director living in Down and Connor. What's on offer? A variety of PDF meditations on Mother Teresa, St John Paul II, Ignatius Spirituality to name but a few. Lots of content to Dive into! There you will find - Podcasts on Faith, Friendship & Knowledge; Rosaries, Prayers and Marian Consecration. Come and join us and be part of the prayer movement online!

Saturday at 4.30pm: Live recitation of the Most Holy Rosary. **Saturday at 8.30pm** I will be leading prayer with Eucharistic Adoration on the Catholic Internet TV – Shalom World.org Just click on the following link to access this time of prayer. www.swprayer.org Please be assured that I will be including all the parishioners and their families during this live Eucharistic Adoration.

Knock Shrine - Daily Masses continue to be broadcast on the Knock Shrine website and Facebook page at 12 Noon and 7.30pm, with Rosary at 7pm. Sunday Mass is broadcast at 12 noon, Rosary at 2.30pm and Mass at 3pm. For further details, please see www.knockshrine.ie

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION CLASSES

For all children not attending Catholic Schools.



1ST PENANCE & HOLY COMMUNION

Classes to be held in the Parish Centre on Sunday mornings at 9:15am.

Please register by contacting the parish office by email stating the Child's(rens) Name(s), Primary School, Year Group and Age.

CONFIRMATION 2022 - Confirmation Classes continue in the Parish Centre every Sunday morning @10.30am-11.45am.

Please register by email to the parish office Email: bangor@downandconnor.org

DRUMALIS CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

"Walking Together Towards Easter"
Residential Easter Triduum at Drumalis, Larne (14-17 April 2022) led by Fr Perry Gildea CM and Drumalis Team. An opportunity to reflect and participate in the Liturgy of Holy Week – the Triduum will commence with registration from 5 pm on Holy Thursday and end on Easter Sunday morning with Mass followed by breakfast. Cost: £295 per person. For further details or to book a place, please contact Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am – 5 pm) – 028 28272196/28276455 or email drumalis@btconnect.com

See poster on Bangor Parish website under 'Bulletin Notices' or 'News'

TRÓCAIRE thank you for your help. You can donate in the following ways:

1. Online at www.trocaire.org.
2. By phone: 0800 912 1200 (NI)
3. By post to Trócaire, 10 King Street, Belfast, BT1 6AD (NI).

Donations to Ukraine will go to support our partner, Caritas Poland, who are working on the border. Poland has received 400,000 refugees from Ukraine over the past week and volunteers from Caritas Poland are providing food, blankets, hygiene kits and other essentials to people at the border as they arrive. We are already working in partnership with Caritas Poland and have supported their response in Yemen. We are now also extending financial support to their work on the Polish/Ukrainian border to support those arriving from Ukraine.

We will continue to engage with Caritas Europa to identify how Trócaire can best support the local Caritas organisations in their response.

Please note, however, that the Trocaire Lent boxes cannot be used to collect money for Ukraine and donations made to Ukraine will not be matched by UK Aid Match as the scheme is specifically tied to our Lent campaign.

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust Carer Support Service Are you an unpaid carer who cares for a family member or friend?

You are invited to come along to the Carer Support Service Carer Hub in Bangor.

When: 1st Wednesday of every month

Where: North Down Community Wellbeing Hub, Main Street

Time: 10.30 – 1pm

No need to book, just call in at any time during the morning for carer information advice and guidance. Join us for tea/coffee and scones, we would love to meet you.



The Friends of St. Columbanus in Ireland are hosting an online (ZOOM) Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace in Europe on **Sunday 3rd April 2022 at 6.00pm** (GMT), 7.00pm (CET). ALL ARE WELCOME.

The Service will be introduced by Bishop Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down & Connor with contributions from Very Rev Canon Joseph Gunn, Luxeuil and Italy; being concluded by Canon Simon Doogan, Ballyholme, Bangor, Co. Down. The Service will be led by Angie Escara, Columban Lay Missionary.

We are inviting all Friends of Columbanus across the countries of the Columban Way to participate. We are inviting members of your local Association and Friends to participate. This call to reflection and prayer is in response to the current situation we are living across Europe. We are experiencing a fractured Europe after more than 80 years of peace.

Following in the footsteps of St. Columbanus whom Robert Schumann spoke of, as the patron saint of all who aspire to a united Europe we are called not to stand idly by. As Friends of Columbanus across the nine countries that make up the Columban Way we have been empowered to carry forward his legacy.

The link for the service is: Topic: Ecumenical Service for Peace in Europe
Time: Apr 3, 2022 06:00 PM Dublin

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82336585903?pwd=YnJXUStsZDhhNmZMTFpEN3EwdnNRZz09>

Meeting ID: 823 3658 5903

Passcode: 357902

LENTEN PIONEER PLEDGE

Many people choose to abstain from alcohol during Lent. Why not take this opportunity to perhaps help yourself or someone you know with an alcohol or drug problem by offering your sacrifice for freedom from addiction? Please consider taking the short- term Lenten Pledge and make a difference to someone's life and say the following daily prayer. **PRAYER:** "I promise in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary to abstain from all alcoholic drink during Lent."

The Lough Derg Pilgrim Path on the lough shore is now open daily. The full route is a 12km loop, with a shorter 8km option, and several information boards highlight features of particular interest. Leaflets are available at the Visitors Centre. For bookings and further information email info@loughderg.org or telephone 0(0353) 71 9861518.

Facilitation Skills Training: Theory and Practice

New Course at Drumalis led by Laurie Randall and Sean O'Baoill over six days (May – Oct 2022)

Would you like to increase your understanding, skill and confidence in group facilitation? This course gives you an opportunity to explore the theory and practice of facilitation – with space to consider how the learning can be applied in a faith context. On successful completion of the course you will gain an Open College Network qualification at level three. If you are interested in finding out more, please email maura@drumalis.co.uk

We are delighted that the **2022 Church of Ireland Theological Lecture at Queen's University**, Belfast, will be given by renowned scholar, theologian, author and communicator, Professor Alister McGrath. Professor McGrath is the current Andreos Idreous Professor of Science and Religion in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, and the title of his address is 'Theology: Why it matters to the academy and the churches'.

The lecture will take place on **4th April 2022 at 6pm** in the Isdell Courtyard at Riddell Hall, 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, with reducing covid restrictions permitting, tea & coffee on arrival from 5.15pm.

More information can be found on our website

<https://thehubbelfast.org/2022/02/22/tickets-available-for-theological-lecture-at-queens-2022/>

Of you can do directly to reserving seats here

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/theology-why-it-matters-to-the-academy-and-the-churches-tickets-261838825977>

We would love to see you there, and please feel free to share the invitation or publicity found on any of our social media channels (simply search for 'The Hub Belfast') with others.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/629759561452493>

Bangor group of Alcoholics Anonymous has restarted our Open Meetings. Open Meetings are, as the name suggests, open to everyone and anyone who wishes to know more about alcoholism, how it effects the individual and how they can recover. Bangor AA Open Meetings, The last Friday of the month, every month. Doors open at 8pm for an 8.30pm start. **Bangor Community HUB**, Hamilton Road, Bangor. BT20 4LF.

GREETINGS FROM DROMANTINE RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

NEW WORKSHOPS 2022 - BOOKINGS NOW OPEN

HELLO YOU

Finding the joy, purpose and happiness you deserve
Saturday, 9 April (9.30am - 4.30pm)

NO VISIBLE SCAR

Comfort for those bereaved during the pandemic
Friday, 20 May (5pm) - Sunday, 22 May (2pm)

ALONE TOGETHER

Finding our way back to connection
Saturday, 18 June (9.30am - 4.30pm)

THE LONG GOODBYE

Practical advice for caregivers of people living with dementia
Friday, 19 August (5pm) - Sunday, 21 August (2pm)

WHEN IT IS DARKEST

Understanding suicide
Saturday, 24 September (9.30am - 4.30pm)

CHURCH ABUSE: A UNIQUE BETRAYAL

A call to listen, a call to action, a call to change
Friday, 4 November (5pm) - Sunday, 6 November (2pm)

Workshop Facilitator: Father Hugh Lagan SMA

Fr Lagan is a priest with the Society of African Missions and a chartered clinical psychologist. He has led retreats, workshops and trainings internationally on psychological and spiritual well-being, positive change, trauma, mental health and resilience.

Please contact Jacinta or Louisa to reserve your place: TEL: 028 (048 from ROI) 3082 1964
EMAIL: admin@dromantineconference.com

OFFICIAL GUIDE OF COLUMBAN WAY IN ITALY

The Italian members of the European Association of the Way of St Columba are pleased to announce the release in bookshops from 3 March 2022 of the official guidebook of the Way of St Columba published by Terre di Mezzo Editore, by the authors Caterina Barbuscia and Valeria Beretta with the collaboration of the Associations of the Friends of San Colombano per l'Europa of San Colombano al Lambro, the Friends of San Colombano of Bobbio and the Friends of the Cammino di San Colombano of Vaprio d'Adda who act as points of reference and support along the entire route. It was a great work of synergy between the three associations and the 62 municipalities, the two regions and the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio, crossed by the route, and other public and private bodies. 330 kilometres on foot or by bicycle from the Swiss border to Bobbio. The route of the Cammino di San Colombano winds its way along 18 stages, from Villa di Chiavenna, along the Sentiero del Viandante to Lecco and Milan, where the final 8 stages begin, leading to the last abbey founded by Saint Colombano in Bobbio. This is the last stretch, on Italian territory, of a European Cultural Itinerary of over 5,000 km that crosses another 7 countries and follows in the footsteps of a man who helped build Europe. *An additional stage from Bobbio to Colli leads to the cave of San Michele.*

[https://www.terre.it/prodotto/il-cammino-di-san-](https://www.terre.it/prodotto/il-cammino-di-san-colombano/?utm_source=google&utm_campaign=Google%20shopping&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=229726&qclid=EAiaIQobChMIk9aI5_aQ9gIVAeN3Ch3S2ACrEAYASABEgJXhvD_BwE)

[colombano/?utm_source=google&utm_campaign=Google%20shopping&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=229726&qclid=EAiaIQobChMIk9aI5_aQ9gIVAeN3Ch3S2ACrEAYASABEgJXhvD_BwE](https://www.terre.it/prodotto/il-cammino-di-san-colombano/?utm_source=google&utm_campaign=Google%20shopping&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=229726&qclid=EAiaIQobChMIk9aI5_aQ9gIVAeN3Ch3S2ACrEAYASABEgJXhvD_BwE)

Accord is recruiting interested people to assist in the provision of Marriage Preparation Programmes.

Application forms are available by

contacting info@accordni.com

Selections will take place in June of this year with training commencing in September.

This year Accord is celebrating 60 years supporting couples and families.

Please contact us for any support you may need www.accordni.com

CANA 1,2,3 – Retreat for Couples: Rediscover the meaning and fun in your marriage, your family life, and your commitment to each other. Experience the 7 thematic days of the CANA Week over three weekends through April, May & June. Including Talks, Testimonies and most importantly of all, Time to share with each other as a couple and with other couples. Contact details: Brian & Lisa Harmon 041 6851563, 086 8386725 or 0879080023 info@canairland.org. www.canairland.org.

The loss of a partner through death, separation or divorce is devastating. **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE** is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on three Saturdays (April 30, May 28 and June 25.) Booking essential. To find out more, contact Phil: 02890 207645 or Marie 07896119669.

AID TO THE CHURCH

<https://www.acnireland.org/n-donate>

SUBSCRIBE TO THE MIRROR

Young refugee helping others

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE WAR, THE ARCHDIOCESE OF IVANO-FRANKIVSK, IN WEST UKRAINE, HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN WELCOMING FLEEING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, MOST OF WHOM ARE COMING FROM MAJOR CITIES SUCH AS KIEV, KHARKHIV, ZAPORIZHZHIA, DNIPRO AND ODESSA. By Maria Lozano (Volodymyr Lukashevskyi, Viktoria Havaleshko, Pavlo Hedzyk)



Sofia and Viktoria. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

From the very beginning of the war, **the Archdiocese of Ivano-Frankivsk, in West Ukraine, has been involved in welcoming fleeing women and children**, most of whom are coming from major cities such as Kiev, Kharkhiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Odessa.

Sofia and Viktoria. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

Sofia, just 14 years old, is one of these refugees. Together with her mother she has fled the war that descended like a plague on her

life and, especially, on the once peaceful town of Brovary in the region of Kiev.

Young people of her age already have a great deal to contend with, looking for meaning in their lives, already thinking of their education and of a future profession, perhaps even falling in love for the first time, but **for Sofia everything is now very different.**



Ever since they arrived in Saint Basil high school, Sofia and her mother have been trying simply to cope with their new life. **This school in Ivano-Frankivsk, a city of some 300,000 in West Ukraine, is one of the places where the Greek Catholic archdiocese has been housing the newly arrived refugees.** Sofia's father stayed behind in Brovary. Despite the danger, he feels a little more at peace knowing that his family is safe.

The international Catholic pastoral charity Aid to the Church in Need International (ACN) has been supporting numerous projects in the diocese for many years now, and **provided immediate emergency aid of 30,000 Euros in response to the war.**

Sofia and Viktoria receiving a food package. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

The classrooms in Saint Basil high school have been turned into dormitories for up to a hundred people. Sofia is very grateful. "At least here we have a roof over our heads, warmth, good food, clothing, toiletries and, above all, peace", she comments. **Now she is trying to do as much as she can to help others.** Her mother, Viktoria, has also



volunteered to help those in most need. **"There is no fear anymore, only the desire to help"**, she says.

The archdiocese is taking up food collections in all the parishes. Some of this is for the refugees in Ivano-Frankivsk, the rest is sent to people in the east of the country. **The refugees also have access to free medical care, thanks to the doctors at the nearby Saint Luke Hospital.**

Once the war is over, **there is only one thing that Sofia and Viktoria want, and that is to go back home**, although they are far from sure if their house in Brovary will even survive the war. Situated around 7 km from Kiev, **it was hit by rockets in the first few days of the war, leaving seven people dead and around 17 injured.**

"I worry most about my home, and my school", says Sophia. **"Will everything still be the same when I get back home? I don't know, but I hope peace will come soon"**, she adds. Of one thing she is sure: when everything gets back to normal again, **the first thing she will do will be to meet with her friends and hug her father, who is the one she misses most of all.**

ACN is also supporting priests and religious in the Diocese of Ivano-Frankivsk in their pastoral and charitable work among the people. Last year, ACN funded 21 ongoing projects in the diocese and since the outbreak of the war it has also been supporting over 600 priests and religious.

Ukrainian Bishops Trust in the Mother of God

BISHOPS IN UKRAINE ARE SETTING THEIR HOPE ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONSECRATION OF POPE FRANCIS. By Tobias Lehner

Pilgrim image of Fátima sent to Lviv. (Credit: © Mariusz Krawiec /

Família Cristã)

Four weeks after the beginning of the war many believers in Ukraine are setting great hope on the latest initiative of Pope Francis, the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Speaking to the international foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odessa said: "Along with the whole world, we are praying with great hope, and we are asking for prayer. We believe in the help of Mary, the Mother of God."

Procession for peace in Ukraine in a Carmelite parish in Hvizdava



village, Zhytomyr region. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

"MY GOD, SO MANY PEOPLE ARE DYING EVERY DAY"

Bishop Szyrokoradiuk reported that although Odessa had been spared the worst of the fighting during the first four weeks of the war, he was anxious that the city was currently under fire and that there were frequent air raid warnings. "We are constantly afraid of an attack from the sea," he said.

Odessa lies on the Black Sea not far from Crimea, where many Russian warships are stationed. The bishop lamented that thoughts about his parishes and the people in the region caused him constant "fear and pain". "My God, so many people are dying every day."

Despite the surge in fighting, Catholic communities in Odessa and other parts of the country have prepared for the consecration with novenas and devotions. As in Kharkov in eastern Ukraine. In a video message from there, Bishop Pavlo Honcharuk reported: "I would like to share with you my joy over the initiative of Pope Francis to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Since the beginning of the war, Kharkov has been among the most fiercely contested areas of the country. Bishop Honcharuk recently documented for ACN the destruction of private apartments. A missile also hit the roof of the bishop's house.

CONSECRATION IS "A SIGN OF GOD'S VICTORY"

Bishop Honcharuk went on to say that in the middle of the suffering and destruction, the consecration was "a sign of God's victory, of love, of goodness and of life". "Like other dioceses in Ukraine, our diocese has begun to prepare novenas to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and we are now getting ready for such a beautiful event." In his message to ACN Bishop Honcharuk asked people to pray the Rosary for Mary's intercession. "May God bless you all!"

Pope Francis will carry out the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at 17:00 on 25 March in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. He has also called upon bishops around the world to join him in this act.

In carrying out the consecration Pope Francis is responding to requests from the Bishops' Conference of Ukraine and from many believers around the world. The consecration has its roots in the Marian apparitions in 1917 in Fatima, Portugal.

Popes have on many occasions consecrated the whole of humanity to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, notably in 1984 when Pope John Paul II was joined by the world's bishops. For the upcoming consecration on 25 March the Vatican has published its own consecration prayer. A copy of the image from Fatima will soon be sent to Ukraine and solemnly received there.