

St. Stephen Protomartyr Ukrainian Church

VIEWS FROM THE PEWS | March 29/20

An Update from Charity Director

Greetings from Mary Chudyk, your St Stephen's Charity Director. I received a few wonderful stories early in the New Year of how our donations were spent last year and I would like to share with you work that is being done by the Ukrainian Sisters of St. Joseph of Saskatoon. This Eastern Rite order of nuns was founded in 1896 in the Village of Tsebliv, Ukraine by Rev. Father Prelate Cyril Siletzky (1835-1918). Its primary apostolate was to perform works of Christian charity organizing schools, caring for orphans, the sick and the aged, teaching catechism, and supporting the priests in their work. The first two Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Saskatoon in March 1961, and immediately began preparing themselves for the task of operating the Eparchy's new nursing home, which was well into its planning stage. Other Sisters soon joined them, and collectively they earned the legal rights of ownership to St. Joseph's Home.

In this year 2019, I visited Ukraine during the months in January, March, July, September and November. Usually in the winter season the road are covered with snow or ice, which impedes travel. However, I always make sure that St. Nicholas sent by you, the good people from Canada, would visit our dearest children. And it is still *the children's fondest dream is — the end of the war.*

Once again we visited orphanages in conflict-affected areas, refugee families, poor and needy, who face difficulties because of the war. The frequent shelling, limited access to healthcare, loss of their livelihoods and the limited access to basic services that are part of our day-to-day life greatly afflict them. The traumatising of children — the deep wounds in their pure hearts — is the most terrible crime. They are continue to live in this no man's land, fall sleep to the sound of gunfire, and use their cellars and basements as bomb shelters. Frequently they experience food shortages and the lack of basic item, like running water, heat, or power. Unfortunately, the misery of this war will remain as a terrifying scar in the consciousness of this little innocents lives.

Therefore, our aim is to reach these most vulnerable little ones, badly traumatized. Because of your generosity, we have supported children access education by deliver to them learning and teaching kits, the articles of clothing, footwear, groceries, goodies and other much-needed relief aid. It is a humbling experience to have contact with this precious little ones and it is nothing short of a divine privilege. I always mention about *you*, who *are the hands of Jesus* reaching out to them.

They send you their sincerest "THANK YOU".

God Bless you all!

Sr. Sophia

Sr. Sophia visited several places bringing food supplies, clothing, footwear and helped with large purchases such as a water heater. Her travels took her to:

1. MARIUPOL – on the north coast of the Sea of Azov and shares a common border with Russia. Sonechko orphanage – communist-era government facility provides shelter for 18-2 very poor and disabled children.
2. POKROVSK – a city in the Donetsk Oblast. The city is near the frontline bordering the separatists Donetsk People's Republic. Father's Home orphanage – 35-40 children, only form or income is charitable donations. The older children help look after the younger ones and the children by themselves finished the 2nd floor of the house they live in and take care of repairs.
3. SLOVYANSK – a city whose sign is full of bullet holes and where people have drawn poppies around the holes. There are up to 2.6 million Ukrainian refugees, who have fled the war, many orphans.
4. TSEBLIV – a very small village approximately 90 kilometres outside of Lviv. 11 girls live in the renovated founding home of the Sisters of St. Joseph and call it home.
5. POTEKYCHI – located 40 kilometres outside of Lviv. 9 promising young children ages 4-19 call this place home. It is a renovated building abandoned by the former Communist regime.
6. ZAKARPATTYA – a total of 20 orphans have been permanently placed in the care of the Sisters of St. Joseph

