



March 24, 2022

Dear Sisters, Associates, Colleagues, and Friends,

Heartfelt greetings from Rome! During these first weeks of Lent, we have become more painfully aware of the untold suffering in our world. With the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, about a quarter of the entire population have been forced to leave their homes. Already 3.5 million Ukrainians have become refugees, fleeing to other countries, and 6.5 million are internally displaced within the country.

Around the world, people are in solidarity, praying, and finding ways to respond. Governments with Caritas and other organizations coordinate efforts to address immediate needs of the displaced. Our sisters in Europe have been deeply touched by the suffering and are responding with great compassion and love, along with many families, friends, and young people.

In Poland, over two million refugees arrived in 24 days. Some of our sisters volunteer daily at a refugee center that provides immediate necessities. In cooperation with the government and Caritas, our sisters are accommodating children and adults in at least four of their institutions or homes. They also assist others by providing household items and by listening to many painful stories, often feeling helpless in the face of such suffering.

In the Hungarian Province, our sisters work in close cooperation with Caritas. They donate funds, provide overnight shelter, and collect items to bring to the Caritas center. They are receiving refugee children in our kindergartens, primary and high schools. Because of their ministry in boarding schools, sisters are only able to volunteer during their free time or on weekends. Four of the sisters also help to receive refugees at night at the border.

In the Bavarian Province, sisters help by collecting clothing and other items; in Germany and Sweden they are in consultation about the possibility of offering accommodation. The high school in Munich recently opened two classes for 48 Ukrainian girls ages 15-17, with two Ukrainian teachers and a student teacher; soon more children will be included in our kindergarten and elementary schools, and the provincial council is seeing how to support with finances. In Austria, thousands of refugees continue to arrive. Many are children, so the need is great for places in schools. Our school now has refugee children in almost every level.

In Slovenia, the situation is not so urgent yet; however, our sisters are cooperating directly with Caritas which collaborates with the state about needs for accommodation and volunteers to collect and to purchase necessary items and appliances. They have offered space in some of our places as shelters, if needed.

As a general council, we have contributed to Caritas Internationalis for Ukraine and are in regular communication with our provincial leaders, particularly in Eastern Europe, regarding the ongoing situation and possible needs. Our North American provinces have made generous contributions as well. For those wishing to contribute, we suggest going through one's province.

May all of us throughout the world be in solidarity, united in prayer, fasting, and acting for peace. Let us join Pope Francis in the prayer for peace and **Act of Consecration** of humanity, and especially of Russia and Ukraine, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary this Friday, March 25, the solemnity of the Annunciation.

May Mary, Queen of Peace, intercede for us and our world, and “lead us now on the paths of peace” (*Act of Consecration*).

Your Sisters

Roxanne, Inês, Carolyn, Julianne, Martina

The General Council