



JESUITS

UKRAINE

On **24 February 2022** the world collapsed for the people of **Ukraine**.

Since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, **more than 10 million people** have had to flee their homes. Approximately 6.5 million have resettled in safer parts of Ukraine. Others have crossed the borders of **Moldova, Romania, Hungary** and **Poland** in search of safety. More than 2.7 million refugees have entered Poland alone, forming the largest single **refugee wave** in Europe since World War II.

Governments, but especially millions of private individuals, NGOs and religious organisations, including the **Jesuit Refugee Service** and **Jesuit houses**, have been involved in helping.

Nothing will convey the drama of the Ukrainians better than the photographs below.



Destroyed building in Kiev. [Photo: Ales Ustsinau]

Leaving your place of life is a **dramatic decision** that many delay until the last minute. For many, however, there was no longer a choice.

Not only have emblematic cities like Mariupol been destroyed, but also large parts of major cities like Kiev and Kharkov.



Evacuation from Borodianka near Kiev and Bucha. *[Photo: Ales Ustsinau]*



Photos: Facebook of Beyzym Jesuit Retreat House, Bartłomiej Przepeluk SJ

The **Blessed John Beyzym Jesuit Retreat House** in the city of Khmelnytsky has been transformed into a haven for people fleeing from areas where war has already arrived or the threat of military action is significant.

More than **1,000 people of many nationalities and religions** have found here temporary shelter, food, and the opportunity to talk. Many families are accompanied by their four-legged friends.



*Photo: Facebook of Beyzym Jesuit Retreat House,
Bartłomiej Przepeluk SJ*



Photo: Jesuit Refugee Service

The safer, western parts of Ukraine have witnessed both **joyful moments** and **dramatic partings**. The first photo shows a baptismal celebration, quickly arranged at the Blessed John Beyzym Retreat House. The second is a parting. Ukrainian men aged 18-65 are not allowed to leave the country, so the country's borders are crossed mainly by women with children.



Polish-Ukrainian border. [Photo: Sergi Cámara/Entreculturas-Alboan-JRS]



Polish-Ukrainian border. [Photo: Sergi Cámara/Entreculturas-Alboan-JRS]

Crossing the **border** means complete **safety** from shelling, rockets and bombs.

Refugees receive a great deal of help from the first moments, but for many of them this is only the **beginning of a long and stressful journey** to find a home, a job, a school.



On the safe side in Poland. *[Photo: Sergi Cámara/Entreculturas-Alboan-JRS]*

Most refugees travel **into the unknown**, receiving transport assistance from private volunteer drivers or using the many trains.

In Poland, for example, people with Ukrainian passports do not have to pay for tickets.



Train station in Poland. [Photo: Sergi Cámara/Entreculturas-Alboan-JRS]



Free shop for new-borns' mothers in Kraków.
[Photo: "Open Krakow" Program]



Clothes free shop for refugees.
[Photo: "Open Krakow" Program]

Once in the city, one of the first options for **assistance** is to go to the reception area and the so-called "**free shop**", where refugees can choose the items they need themselves in a pleasant atmosphere reminiscent of a traditional shopping centre.



New home. *[Photo: Jesuit Refugee Service]*



Volunteers in action. *[Photo: Jesuit Refugee Service]*

The refugee experience is transformative both for the refugee families, who in the midst of suffering find goodness and hope for the future, and for the hosts, who take on a share of the suffering.

These volunteers are building a new, hospitable society in countries that have not experienced war and refugee phenomena for nearly 100 years.



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