

Lviv residents seek comfort in Sunday service

By [Bernat Armangue](#)

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A Ukrainian woman dressed in military attire prays inside the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)

LVIV, Ukraine — Their hands clasped in prayer and faces ridden with fear and sadness, some residents of Lviv sought consolation at a Sunday Mass at a Catholic church in the city in western Ukraine.

The 17th-century church was silent during the ceremony, reflecting the moment laden with emotion and concern because of the ongoing Russian invasion.

Some people in the church held small papers with the names of their loved ones written on them. Others just stood in silence, their heads bowed during prayer.

Built by Jesuit missionaries, the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv was damaged during World War II and used to store more than 2 million books during the Soviet Era.



A Christian worshiper prays in front of a memorial to fallen soldiers at the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. The memorial is dedicated to Ukrainian soldiers who died after 2014. (Credit: Bernat Armangué/AP.)



Used military ammunition and Christian iconography decorate a memorial to fallen soldiers at the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. The memorial is dedicated to Ukrainian soldiers who died after 2014. (Credit: Bernat



Armangue/AP.) Christian worshippers attend a Sunday mass in the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



A Ukrainian man dressed in military attire prays inside the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)

Since it reopened in 2011 after renovation, it has served as a military church, offering prayer and consolation to Ukrainian service personnel.

In the past 11 days of the Russian invasion, the church has become more important than ever, even as Lviv itself hasn't seen intense shelling and destruction as other cities in the country.

Rev. Taras Mykhalchuk explains that “because the church is the garrison church, priests who preach here are military chaplains.”

“First of all, during the last eight years, we have been trying to help the army above all spiritually, to pray with them and to fulfil all of our duties as priests,” he said.

Unable to be with the troops in the field because of intense fighting, the priests try to offer consolation also to those who have been left behind and need comfort more than ever, Mykhalchuk said.



Christian worshipers attend a Sunday mass in the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests celebrate Sunday mass in the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv,

western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



A Christian worshiper prays during Sunday mass in the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. The memorial is dedicated to the Ukrainian soldiers who died after 2014. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



Christian worshipers attend a Sunday mass in the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)

“We are raising the quantity of prayers, and we pray,” he said. “We need to understand that together with our military, we are on our land.”

Inside, light from dozens of candles flickered, lighting up faces of men and women standing by in prayer.

In one corner, a memorial with dozens of small photos is posted for fallen Ukrainian soldiers who have lost their lives since the clashes in 2014. Men and women wearing military uniform could be seen among the people attending the service.

In a separate room, donated clothes, sleeping pads, and relief material have been stored, waiting to be distributed where needed.

Mykhalchuk is certain Ukrainian soldiers are “led by love and light” in defending their country.

“Love is a very strong feeling and it is stronger than death,” he said. “God is a fair judge and I think that very soon everything will be put in its rightful place.”



Ukrainians dressed in military attire talk inside the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



Christian worshipers light candles and pray after Sunday mass inside the Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)



Cloth donations and sleeping pads are stored inside a church in Lviv, western Ukraine, Sunday, March 6, 2022. (Credit: Bernat Armangue/AP.)