



March 2, 2022

Dear Members of the Campus Community,

As Lent begins today, we embark on a time of personal reflection, repentance and spiritual renewal. We will journey in the six weeks ahead to the celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, carrying with us the abiding promise of God's presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine last week, we have watched with anguish and deep concern as violence and turmoil unfold in eastern Europe. On this Ash Wednesday, I ask the entire University community to answer the call of Pope Francis to devote ourselves to prayer and fasting for peace today. May we also heed his powerful words: "May the weapons fall silent. God is with the peacemakers, not with those who use violence ... It is the people who are the real victims, who pay for the folly of war with their own skin."

Let us pray for the Ukrainian people, especially those trapped in the midst of violence and those who are now refugees seeking shelter abroad. Let us be inspired by the courage of Ukrainians as they seek to preserve their freedom and fledgling democracy, and by Russians risking their safety to protest against the war.

And let us be mindful of the strain and anxiety facing Ukrainian-Americans, especially members of our University and local communities. Within Lackawanna County, nearby Olyphant has the largest Ukrainian-American population. Throughout our region, including downtown Scranton and West Scranton, there are numerous faith communities with strong connections to Ukraine. In all, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania includes the second-largest population of Ukrainian-Americans in the nation, second only to New York.

Anyone who wishes to contribute to relief efforts might consider [Catholic Relief Services](#). The organization is working in collaboration with Caritas on the ground in Ukraine to provide safe shelter, hot meals, hygiene supplies, fuel to keep warm, transport to safe areas, counseling support and more.

Finally, as we embark together on this Lenten season, let us heed Pope Francis's call to be close to the suffering of the people in Ukraine while also not forgetting wars in other parts of the world. May each of us rededicate ourselves to care for our neighbors near and far, and may we continue to pray and work for justice and peace in our world.

Today, and every day of the Lenten Season that awaits us, is a reminder that God's love and grace is always with us on this journey.

Yours faithfully,  
Fr. Marina