

Welcoming the people fleeing Ukraine

Last week Jesuit Mission held a Ukraine Emergency Response Webinar about the swift international effort of the Jesuit network in supporting thousands of vulnerable refugees fleeing the crisis in Ukraine.

The webinar welcomed special guests and project partners of Jesuit Mission, Fr Alberto Ares SJ, Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe and Fr Marius Talos SJ, Director of Jesuit Refugee Service Romania, who are both managing the situation on the ground.

“The Society of Jesus activated the emergency response in less than a week. We have opened houses from the very beginning to welcome arriving refugees and provide critical support for vulnerable people, including children with cancer and other serious health concerns,” said Fr Alberto.

Thanks to a partnership between Jesuit Mission through Xavier Network and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe, at-risk communities fleeing the Ukraine are being provided with emergency shelter, food, psychosocial support, medical escorts, translation and accompaniment.

“JRS Romania has already attended to more than 10,000 refugees, supporting different aspects of their needs, from welcoming to integrating them,” said Fr Marius.

Among these refugees, more than half are children, who have walked for two days to arrive at the border exhausted and traumatised.

“Meeting an 11 year old boy (refugee) carrying his trolley without any adult accompanying him, is the most shattering image I have ever witnessed,” said Fr Marius.

“So in front of destruction and shattering dreams, we have to propose and to promote the building up of opportunity and provide long term solutions including schooling, housing and services of integration,” said Fr Marius.

The current crisis in Ukraine has prompted dialogue on the plight of refugees around the world, especially with the European Union agreeing in record time to activate protection and legal status to help people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

“Unfortunately I think refugees and migrants, especially from other continents are treated as scape goats and do not receive the same treatment in Europe. Migration is often instrumentalised to generate fear and polarisation,” said Fr Alberto.

But, the Jesuits in Europe are ensuring that refugees are treated with dignity and they are going above and beyond in delivering both immediate and long term support for those in desperate need. Dance classes and playrooms for children have additionally been set up to allow people to temporarily disconnect from the reality of the world and to laugh.

“For years we have been suffering from social distancing, finally, with this crisis, we are all witnessing and experiencing the importance of social proximity,” said Fr Marius.

Jesuit Mission has extraordinarily raised nearly half a million dollars to support JRS' Emergency response to welcome refugees in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries.

To learn more about the Jesuit's Emergency Response to the Ukraine Crisis, you can watch Jesuit Mission's webinar at jesuitmission.org.au/webinar-ukraine/.

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CAPTION: A screen-shot from Jesuit Mission’s webinar about their partnership with JRS Europe and JRS Romania, supporting refugees fleeing the crisis in Ukraine. (From top left) Zach Martorana, Communications Officer of Jesuit Mission, (top right) Helen Forde, CEO of Jesuit Mission, (bottom left) Fr Alberto Ares SJ, Director of JRS Europe (bottom right) Fr Marius Talos SJ, Director of JRS Romania.



Caption: A refugee family arrive at the border in Poland. Image taken by Sergi Camara.

Supporting Links:

Ukraine Emergency Response Webinar
jesuitmission.org.au/webinar-ukraine/

About Jesuit Mission

Jesuit Mission works in over 10 countries across Asia and Africa to uphold the innate dignity of people living with the effects of poverty, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable. Funds from our supporters:

- Break cycles of poverty through teaching and education
- Protect the health of communities by providing medical care and programs that improve access to clean water and toilets
- Develop independent, sustainable communities through livelihood training and income-generating projects
- Provide vulnerable individuals with pastoral care, social inclusion and advocacy
- Support refugees in crisis
- Enable effective disaster response and relief.