



February 26, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Thursday, Russia invaded Ukraine in total disregard for the sanctity of human life. We join people of good will everywhere condemning this action. For the sake of humanity, Russia must stand down and return its military to its borders and seek a peaceful means to settle grievances with sovereign neighbors.

The following is an appeal from our Holy Father, Pope Francis, made on Wednesday, February 23, 2022, a day before the invasion. He asks people everywhere to pray and fast this Ash Wednesday through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace, for the intention to preserve the world from the madness of war.

“My heart aches greatly at the worsening situation in Ukraine. Despite the diplomatic efforts of the last few weeks, increasingly alarming scenarios are opening up. Like me, many people all over the world are feeling anguish and concern. Once again, the peace of all is threatened by partisan interests. I would like to appeal to those with political responsibility to examine their consciences seriously before God, who is the God of peace and not of war; who is the Father of all, not just of some, who wants us to be brothers and not enemies. I pray that all the parties involved refrain from any action that would cause even more suffering to the people, destabilizing coexistence between nations and bringing international law into disrepute.

And now I would like to appeal to everyone, believers, and non-believers alike. Jesus taught us that the diabolical senselessness of violence is answered with God's weapons, with prayer and fasting. I invite everyone to make next 2 March, Ash Wednesday, a Day of Fasting for Peace. I encourage believers in a special way to dedicate themselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day. May the Queen of Peace preserve the world from the madness of war.”

We encourage all of us to accept the Holy Father's invitation to pray and fast for peace on Ash Wednesday.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "+ Andrew E. Bellisario C.M.", enclosed in a blue oval.

+Reverend Andrew E. Bellisario, C.M.
Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "+ Chad W. Zielinski".

+Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Diocese of Fairbanks

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "+ Roger L. Schwietz OMI".

+ Roger L. Schwietz, OMI, Emeritus
Archdiocese of Anchorage