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USCCB president asks for Ash Wednesday prayers for Ukraine

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U.S. Catholics stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as their country struggles with political tensions, said a statement from the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., said in the statement Tuesday that the U.S. bishops, "together with tens of millions of U.S. Catholics of Eastern European descent join Pope Francis in solidarity and prayers for the people of Ukraine for an end to the current tensions and troubling events which continue to unfold there."

He lauded the heroic witness of Ukrainian Greek and Latin Catholic leaders "who stand firm for human rights and democracy," which gives hope that peaceful means to rebuild civil society may prevail.

Kurtz noted that Catholics in Ukraine have a history of being persecuted, and pleaded for religious liberty to be protected there. He asked U.S. Catholic communities gathered for the Ash Wednesday services to pray for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, "one that secures the just and fundamental human rights of a long-suffering, oppressed people."

Read the full statement:

Statement on the Crisis in Ukraine by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville

The bishops of the United States, together with tens of millions of U.S. Catholics of Eastern European descent, join Pope Francis in solidarity and prayers for the people of Ukraine for an end to the current tensions and troubling events which continue to unfold there. We are grateful for the call of Pope Francis, that all ?endeavor to overcome misunderstandings and build together the future of the nation.?

The heroic witness of Ukrainian Greek and Latin Catholic leaders, who stand firm for human rights and democracy, gives us hope that peaceful means might prevail to help rebuild civil society.

Over the centuries, Catholics in Ukraine have been severely persecuted, and Catholicism even outlawed. For this reason, we raise our voice in defense of religious liberty in Ukraine, a liberty further threatened by the invasive actions occurring in the country.

Together with my brother bishops, I ask U.S. Catholic communities, gathering for the beginning of Lent on Wednesday, to pray for a peaceful resolution of this crisis, one that secures the just and fundamental human rights of a long-suffering, oppressed people.

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