NZ Catholics to join Pope Francis next Friday in prayer for Ukraine

Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand are being asked to visit their churches next Friday to join with Pope Francis in a special day of prayer for Ukraine.

Pope Francis will [consecrate Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary](https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-03/pope-francis-to-consecrate-russia-and-ukraine-to-the-immaculate.html) next Friday, 25 March, during a service he will preside over in St Peter's Basilica.

New Zealand’s Catholic bishops are asking Catholics here to offer special prayers for everyone caught in the Ukraine war by going to their local parish church on Friday to pray the Rosary.

Bishop Stephen Lowe, the Bishop of Auckland and Secretary of the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, said visiting a church next Friday would be a show of solidarity.

“All over Ukraine, people are having to flee their homes because of the war. Leaving our homes here in Aotearoa New Zealand to go to our local church to pray on this special day would very much be showing solidarity to the people having to leave their homes in Ukraine.

“Normally we would have a Mass or advertise a time for the Rosary but with the current Covid-19 restrictions imposing a limit of 100, we are hoping people will visit their local church throughout the day. The bishops too will also be heading to their respective cathedrals to pray the Rosary on Friday in support of Pope Francis.

“What is important is leaving your homes on Friday to visit your local church, at a time that suits you. We will be asking all churches to be open from 7am to 7pm so as many people as possible can visit at different times during the day, in keeping with the Covid-19 restrictions.”

Bishop Lowe said Friday would be a day of prayer for everyone affected by the war: “We will be praying for those who have been wounded or killed. We will be praying for those who care for the wounded. We will be praying for those who have suddenly become refugees and for those that care for them. And we will pray that the Russian leadership and soldiers may have a change of heart.

“This is the season of Lent, which is about the change, the conversion of the heart. Christ calls us to love our enemies and to embrace each other as brothers and sisters. And as we pray for Ukraine we also remember those caught in other conflicts, including Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere.”

The Church’s National Liturgy Office has created prayer material specially for Friday 25 March  to be used in parishes. [Click here for the PDF version](https://www.catholic.org.nz/assets/Ukraine-NLO-Prayer-resource-for-Friday-25-March-2022.pdf). Click [here for the Word version](https://www.catholic.org.nz/assets/Ukraine-NLO-Prayer-resource-.docx).