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Letter of the Holy Father to His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, major archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč, on the occasion of the funeral of Cardinal Lubomyr Husar

The following is the Letter sent by the Holy Father to His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, major archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč, Ukraine, on the occasion of the funeral of Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, major archbishop emeritus of Kyiv-Halyč, who died on 31 May.

Letter of the Holy Father

To His Beatitude

Sviatoslav Shevchuk

Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč

Beatitude,

On the day of the Christian celebration of the dear earthly presence of the major archbishop emeritus of Kyiv-Halyč, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, I wish once again to be among those who pray to the heavenly Father, entrusting to Him the elected soul of our Brother.

I am urged to do so by the extraordinary influx of people who in these days have come to pay homage to the mortal remains of the Cardinal and of whom I have come to know. This presence is an eloquent sign of what he was: one of the highest and most respected moral authorities of recent decades for the Ukrainian people.

I address you, Beatitude, with whom I have a long-standing relationship of knowledge and esteem, to comfort you in the loss of one who was for you a father and spiritual guide.

He was thus for the entire Greek Catholic Church, which he gathered from the “catacombs” where she was forced to flee persecution, and to whom he restored not only the ecclesiastical structures, but above all the joy of her history, founded on faith through and beyond any suffering.

After the laborious and intense period of his ministry as “father and head” of the Greek Catholic Church, and with the arrival of old age and illness, his presence among the people changed in style, but, if possible, became even richer and more intense. He regularly intervened in the life of your country as a wise teacher; his way of speaking was simple, understandable to all, but very profound. His was the wisdom of the Gospel, it was the bread of the Word of God broken for the simple, the suffering, for all those who sought dignity. His exhortations were gentle, but also very demanding for all. He prayed tirelessly for all, aware that this was his new duty. And many felt they were represented, addressed and comforted by him, believers and non-believers, even overcoming confessional differences. Everyone felt that a Christian was speaking, a Ukrainian impassioned by his identity, always full of hope, open to the future of God. He had a word for everyone, he was able to “feel” people with the warmth of his great humanity and his exquisite gentleness. He loved, most of all, to engage in dialogue with the young, with whom he had an exceptional capacity for communication, and who came to him in great numbers.

I am moved to think that today all Ukraine mourns him, but also that many are certain that he reposes in the embrace of the heavenly Father. They feel that, after having had a coherent and credible example of life, they will be able to benefit from his prayer, with which he will protect his still-suffering people, marked by violence and insecurity, and nonetheless sure that Christ’s love never disappoints.

With gratitude for this unique religious and social presence in Ukraine’s history, I invite you to be faithful to his constant teaching and his total trust in Providence. Continue to be aware of his smile and his caress.

Upon all over you, beloved Ukrainians, at home and in the diaspora, I invoke abundant heavenly blessings.

From the Vatican, 5 June 2017.

FRANCIS
