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The activities of the Roman Catholic Church Archdiocese of Lviv in the area of pastoral, psychological and social support for victims of the war in Ukraine

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Abstract

The full-scale war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has brought pain and grief into the lives of Ukrainians and caused an outburst—indeed, an explosion—of needs that have affected every sphere of human life. The Christian view of the human person is integral, seeing the person as a whole being—spiritual, psychological, and physical—created out of love, for love, and for communion with God and other people. The traumatic experience of war has brought suffering and dissonance into each of these dimensions of human existence—the loss of meaning and values, including spiritual ones; the experience of extreme stress and psychological disorders; the loss of one's homeland, parental home, health, and even life itself. The Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, faithful to its vocation to serve through love, seeks to respond to and address the needs of those who suffer—on the spiritual, social, psychological, and humanitarian levels. This article presents and describes a specific fragment of such ministry and support—service to the human person in a concrete space and by concrete people.

Keywords

war in Ukraine, spiritual, psychological, and physical needs, value of health, extreme stress, psychological disorders, support, Center Assistance

1. Introduction

The war, that has been going on since 2014, escalating with the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, has permanently changed the lives of Ukrainians, bringing pain, suffering, and loss. Values, attitudes, worldview, faith—war becomes a kind of measure of these concepts. Constant suffering and death prompt reflection on humanity and the value of human life. Every day, the number of people who feel the impact of war on their spiritual and mental state continues to grow.

As early as 2016, Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Metropolitan of Lviv, established a team of clergy and lay people to help individuals with psychological problems and addictions. At the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022, the Archdiocese of Lviv, on behalf of the metropolitan, established a humanitarian aid crisis management team,¹ which included a psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance center established at the general pastoral department.²

On March 17, 2025, the Father Heinrich (Paul) Mosing Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Support was solemnly opened and consecrated in Lviv. The consecration of the Center, located at 30 Vynnychenko Street in the building of the former Carmelite convent and seminary of the Lviv Archdiocese, which was partially returned to the Church, was performed by Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Metropolitan of Lviv. The event was also attended by Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of the Kharkiv-Zaporizhia Diocese, clergy of the Lviv Deanery, members of the Ukrainian Parliament, representatives of regional and city authorities, Consul of the Republic of Poland in Lviv, Krzysztof Lukianowicz, educators, doctors, and psychotherapists from partner programs.³ Father Oleg Salamon, a psychologist and psychotherapist, has been appointed head of the Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Support.

An important aspect of our work and ministry (the Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance Center of the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Roman Catholic Church named after Rev. Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing) has

¹ Антикризовий штаб гуманітарної допомоги, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-Antukruzovuj_shtab_gumanitarnoi_dopomogu-ua (14.10.2025).

² Центр психологічної та терапевтичної підтримки, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-Centr_psuxologichnoi_ta_terapevtuchnoi_pidtrumku-ua (14.10.2025).

³ У Львові відкрили Центр ім. о. Генріха Мосінга, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-U_Lvovi_vidkrulu_Centr_im_o_Genrixha_Mosinga-ua (14.10.2025).

been and continues to be spiritual, psychological, and psychotherapeutic support for adults and children who have experienced pain and traumatic suffering and are in need of help (soldiers, veterans, their families, refugees, children, people with special needs).

Our work with people in need involves psychological, psychotherapeutic, and social support, as well as spiritual guidance. This is achieved through individual therapy for trauma, loss, panic attacks, and depressive disorders, as well as through group therapy and support groups. An important part of our ministry is teaching and providing psychological first aid (crisis intervention) when working with refugees and people in acute stress.

We see the fulfillment of our mission of helping others in the creation and leadership of support teams (clergy, psychologists, psychotherapists, doctors, social workers, volunteers). Another area of our work is supervisory and educational support (training, seminars, conferences) for psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, speech therapists, volunteers, as well as priests in their work and ministry. We strive to be helpful not only to the Lviv community but also to the whole of Ukraine.

2. Supervisory and educational activities

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, our center has organized approximately 1,000 hours of supervision for professionals working in Ukraine and with Ukrainians outside the country. Supervision has been and continues to be provided by domestic and foreign experts (Poland, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, Belgium, etc.) as part of their support.

One of the first to offer his professional assistance was Jacek Lelonkiewicz from Łódź (Poland), a trainer and supervisor working at Brief Solution Focused Therapy (BSFT) at the Short-Term Therapy Center,⁴ as well as his colleagues from the European Brief Therapy Association (EBTA), Anna-Maria Wolf from Denmark and Geert Lefever from Belgium (BSFT—EBTA).⁵ In May 2022, John Wheeler, Solution Focused Trainer, Supervisor and Consultant from England, conducted Solution Focused Supervision workshops. In 2022–2024, John Henden, a well-known BSFT trainer and psychotherapist, collaborated with our

⁴ Centrum Terapii Krótkoterminowej w Łodzi, <https://www.centrumtk.com> (15.10.2025).

⁵ European Brief Therapy Association, <https://www.ebta.eu/whoweare/> (15.10.2025).

Center to conduct two workshops, “Possible Severe Trauma Recovery” in Lviv (50 participants) and Kyiv (45 participants), as well as “Suicide Prevention” in Lviv (50 participants).⁶ In 2024, Jacek Lelonkiewicz conducted a workshop entitled “Working with Loss in the BSFT Paradigm” for 50 participants in Lviv.

Since 2017, we have been cooperating with the Concept of Integrative Methods (KIM Institute) represented by its director Reinhild Zenk from Germany and her team: Kerstin Juschkat-Schafhaupt, Stefanie Katz, Sebastian Gärtig, Petra Karger, Tanja Makarchuk, and especially Olga Olijnyk, who is responsible for cooperation with Ukraine on behalf of the KIM Institute.⁷ Over the course of eight years, the Institute has managed to organize and implement training for six groups of KIM consultants (100 people), supervisors (14), and trainers. Many additional workshops for the professional development of our specialists have also been held.⁸ Supervision was organized and conducted for training participants and specialists working at KIM.

We also received special professional assistance from our colleagues at Trauma AID Germany, in the person of its chairman, Frank Hofmann from Germany, who is the initiator, inspirer, and organizer of the educational project on trauma therapy “Psychosocial Trauma Support (TPSS+).” The cooperation with each member of his team was also very important: Dr. Ute Sodemann, Dr. Peter Bumke, Miriam Goel, Barbara Mayer, Gaby Fischer, Andrea Berger, and Birte Himstedt.⁹ From 2017 to the present, Trauma AID Germany has organized workshops for working with children who have experienced trauma in Lviv and Kyiv. In cooperation with the John Paul II Foundation in Lviv and our Center, TPSS+ trauma therapy training was conducted for psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, and educators. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 100 participants from all over Ukraine completed the training. We also have 16 local supervisors and two trainers. At the beginning of the full-scale war and to this day, we have received supervisory and human support. Starting in 2024,

⁶ *Ukraina: coraz więcej osób potrzebuje psychologicznego wsparcia*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kościol/news/2024-02/ukraina-co-raz-wiecej-osob-potrzebuje-psychologicznego-wsparcia.html> (15.10.2025).

⁷ Das Konzept Integrativer Methodik, <https://www.konzept-integrativer-methodik.de> (15.10.2025).

⁸ *KIM-Seminare für die Ukraine*, <https://www.konzept-integrativer-methodik.de/seminare-ukraine> (15.10.2025).

⁹ TraumaAid Germany. Psychotraumatologische Ausbildung. Weltweit, <https://www.traumaaid.de> (15.10.2025).

I am implementing a TPSS+ teaching project for kindergarten administrators and hospital staff in the city of Mykolayiv.¹⁰

I would like to mention the educational (training of crisis interventionists), therapeutic, and supervisory cooperation of our Center with Hubert Czupał and his team from the ACT Academy, a school of contextual therapy in Poznań.¹¹ The workshop and supervision meetings with Dr. Jakub Bartoszewski from Konin (Therapy of Possibilities) and many others have always been inspiring.

Since 2023, our center has been cooperating with the organizations “The Kolping Case in Ukraine” and “Wings-of-hope” from Germany in the KResT trauma therapy project for 30 psychologists and educators from Ukraine. The team includes Lutz Ulrich Besser, Julia Borchardt, Martina Bock, and other specialists.¹²

3. Areas of work for the Center's for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv named after Rev. Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing—employees and volunteers

We see our work and ministry as helping and supporting people affected by war, suffering, and pain. We offer individual and group psychotherapy, spiritual guidance, and work with people with special needs and addictions. Our team consists of clergy and lay people who are qualified specialists in various therapeutic modalities (EMDR, ACT, KIM therapy, TPSS+, Gestalt therapy, art therapy, crisis intervention, and others) and volunteers: Fr. Oleg Salamon, Fr. Mikołaj Biskup, Julia Jurkiv, Roksolana Pryzvanska, Lilia Drobot, Oksana Rybak, Tetyana Nimetz, Sofia Kuflovska, Oleg Longin, and others. Another thing we do is provide supervision to our specialists and volunteers, as well as to people from other support centers: rehabilitation and resource centers, organizations that are also involved in psychosocial, spiritual, and psychotherapeutic support. We help to form and train first aid and crisis intervention teams in parishes, communities, and

¹⁰ Projekt Ukraine, <https://www.traumaaid.de/projects/ukraine/> (15.10.2025).

¹¹ Akademia ACT. Szkoła Psychoterapii Kontekstualnych, <https://akademiaact.com> (15.10.2025).

¹² Ukraine strengthening trauma specialists in times of war, https://wings-of-hope.de/en/countries/ukraine/#toc_Professional_Training_for_Trauma_Specialists (15.10.2025).

military chaplaincies. As a support center established by the Archdiocese of Lviv, we carry out our activities in various locations in Ukraine. At the moment, we are cooperating with the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi with the Christian Rescue Service, the Diocese of Kyiv, the Chaplaincy Ministry at the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops of Ukraine, the John Paul II Foundations in Lviv and Khmelnytskyi, the "Ademantel" Foundation, and others. We have organized and trained 8 groups (approximately 180 people) of clergy and laity in first psychological aid and crisis intervention from 2022 to 2025, who today help and support people suffering from traumatic experiences and the pain of loss. The course consists of 7 modules—2 full days (140 hours). In the program developed by our Center, participants acquire crisis intervention skills, namely: first psychological aid (RAPID), crisis intervention in ACT therapy, the basics of Somatic Experiencing—A Body-Oriented Approach to Healing Trauma (P. A. Levine) and TRE (Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises—D. Berceli), basic skills in Psychosensomotor Therapy (Pat Ogden), "Tryzub" stress management course of Thomas Piko, the BASIC Ph program, working with grief and loss, working with military personnel, veterans, and their families, and the basics of group work and working with children.

An important part of our ministry is working with military personnel, veterans, and their families through spiritual, psychological, and physical rehabilitation. Retreats (prayer with the Word of God, confession, Eucharist), family camps, individual and family therapy, support groups. A special experience for our staff and volunteers has been leading support groups for mothers and wives who have lost their sons or husbands in the war. We have seen how important it is to help women who are experiencing loss (2 or even 3 years of pain) in an integral way that touches all areas of their lives: spiritual, social, and psychological.

Another area of our ministry is working with people with special needs and their families. We conduct individual and group corrective classes, provide therapeutic care for families, and offer educational and supervisory support for specialists.

Today, our Center has about 45 employees and volunteers who, through their work and various projects and initiatives, serve people in need of help and support due to the pain and suffering caused by war.

4. Conclusions

The activities of the Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance of the Lviv Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church named after Father Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing provide a vivid example of integral service to people, combining spiritual care, psychological support, psychotherapy, supervision, and education. In the context of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the Center has become a space where faith and science, spirituality and psychotherapy, mercy and professionalism interact for the healing of people in all dimensions of their being. Working with military personnel, veterans, their families, children, people with special needs, as well as supporting specialists and volunteers demonstrates a systematic, multi-level approach to assistance. Thanks to cooperation with international partners—the KIM Institute (Germany), Trauma Aid Germany, ACT Academy (Poland), European Association for Brief Therapy (EBTA), and other organizations—the Center is creating a network of professional supervision, educational programs, and therapeutic initiatives covering various parts of Ukraine. Thus, the Center's activities reflect the Church's vocation to serve people in suffering—through love, solidarity, and professional competence, contributing to the holistic restoration of the person in their spiritual, mental, and social dimensions.

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