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at the Ukrainian Catholic University
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Dear participants of the meeting, dear friends,

Slide 1

Unfortunately, my presentation and report will cover a slightly different topic. I will not be speaking about the past, but rather about the present. When I sent my project on visual documentation of the war to Paulis, he suggested that I present it to you.

Few days ago, I prepared the beginning of my speech. It started like this: "War is always war. It brings pain, horror, destruction, injuries, and death." And this is true.

However, yesterday, Zdislawa Wlodarczyk emphasized to us (to me) that wars are different...We should not think that something like Auschwitz will happen again, but we must remember that it did happen to ensure it doesn't happen again. This is precisely why we are here today.

When I was a schoolgirl and student, I learned a lot about World War II in history lessons and from the memories of my relatives and war witnesses. I recorded their interviews. The history of Ukraine is very complex. While Soviet forces liberated Auschwitz, they were occupiers on our lands, and after 1945, many Ukrainians from the western part of Ukraine were sent to Siberian concentration camps, the GULAG. Twice, Ukraine suffered mass starvation, recognized as genocide and called the Holodomor: in 1932-1933, when over 4.5 million people died, and in 1946-1947, when more than 1 million people perished.

While the German people asked for forgiveness for Hitler and his government from all the victims, Russia has never apologized to us, and years later, it returned with a new occupation.

I am happy that yesterday I was able to mention the name of a Ukrainian, a prisoner, and a victim of Auschwitz. The history of my people rarely indicates that someone was Ukrainian. Many are recorded simply as Soviet prisoners, even though they fought against the Soviets in the underground, and many are listed only with their place of birth without mentioning their nationality. Even today, we are fighting at the cultural level to ensure the correct attribution in museums, with labels identifying them as Ukrainian artists, not Russian. For example, a few names - Kazimir Malevich, Ivan Kramsky, Mykola Pymonenko, Ilya Repin, Oleksandra Ekster, Arkhip Kuindzhi, Maksym Berezovsky, Artemiy Vedel, Dmytro Bortnyansky. All of them are Ukrainians!!! Many people in the world are confused by this because they were taught a different history. Russian propaganda has worked hard on this and not only on this, and also with our church, our language, our media, in general with mental culture.

Yes, I am a witness to a new war, which has been ongoing in Ukraine for 11 years, starting with the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 and evolving into more than 2.5 years of full-scale Russian invasion with active missile strikes across Ukraine. Times change, but the humiliation and destruction of human dignity remain tools for those who wage war.

Slide 2

I am here to present my project, which reflects contemporary life in Ukraine. The project's title is "War. Sketches. Sacredness of Everyday Life," and it is hosted on a website of the same name <https://www.warsketches.in.ua/>. The English version is still in progress, but I will discuss some of its themes. The site features sketches with event dates and links to official news sources.

The project was not planned, without a premeditated concept. Since the invasion began, I have been creating quick sketches of events and associations happening around me. These sketches became a chronicle of my war experience. Since I work as an iconographer, the sketches are with sacred meaning. They reveal an invisible world where saints, angels, the dead, our heroes, our kin, and our God - accompany us.

The sketches are created with simple tools — pen, liner, and a few markers. They can be seen as naive icons or comics. They are ironic but recognizable, reminding us of the importance of life in Ukraine today.

I have created over a hundred sketches over two years. Now, it is difficult for me to draw daily due to the increasing number of casualties and destruction.

I have divided them into some themes:

Slide 3

1. A warrior in the image of Saint George the Dragon Slayer symbolizes struggle and strength

In the first days of the war, we didn't feel the ground under your feet, fear and uncertainty engulfed us, but we felt the shoulder of your neighbor and the decisive help of the world, especially neighboring countries, for which we are a defense.

Slide 4

2. Life in shelter.

Slide 5

The escape of children and mothers to Lviv and to the west. It is similar to the escape of the Virgin Mary and Joseph with the infant Christ from Herod the child-killer. For example, the children in Mariupol in the Drama Theater, where Russian troops dropped bombs with the inscription "CHILDREN" on the building.

But can war and civilization go hand in hand after that ?

Slide 6

3. Life on the edge, where rockets hit residential buildings, schools, and hospitals, the places where there are many civilian people.

- For example, in Vinnytsia on July 14, 2022, a missile strike claimed the lives of 23 people, including 3 children.
- In Kharkiv, a missile fragment hit a teenager at a bus stop, and his father prayed over his dead son, holding a prayer book with the inscription "Save and protect." But now he ask " Our God, take care of my son
- Slide 7
- In Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiyi, a hit on a 9-story building reminded me of my home in Lviv, where I wondered which floor is safer in our situation.
- Slide 8
- In Chernihiv on March 16, 2022, people went out for humanitarian aid, for fresh bread, and were shot in line. Allow me to read a comment by Iryna Starovoit on this sketch: "This is a sketch from Chernihiv, depicting a real situation in early March 2022. During the occupation, people in Chernihiv went out to get humanitarian aid and fresh bread, and they were shot while standing in line. Many Ukrainians felt their hearts stop and their brain cells die at that moment of unjust suffering and senseless death. Bread, which is deeply symbolic for Ukrainians, is not only part of our communion and a hint of free life, but also a sign that when it is unavailable, hunger begins. This is the most terrifying thing that has happened to Ukrainians in the 20th century, something the world has recognized as genocide and calls the Holodomor."

Slide 9 - life without electricity and watch a missile attack

Slide 10

At the Ukrainian Catholic University, where I work, more than 130 people—students, teachers, staff, and community members—are participants in the war directly on the front line. 29 fallen heroes. If we take into account the student who was also supposed to come with me but couldn't because her father died in the war, there are 30 fallen heroes in the University community, along with him.

In March 2024, the son of my friends died in the war. In memory of his life, after a long break, I drew a sketch with the words of his mother—"Son! A true warrior! Honor!!"

Slide 11 - in October 2022 russia's rocket kill yange family. The woman was pregnant. I created this sketch with my finger on my mobile. Because we was sitting in a shelter.

Slide 12

Despite everything, Ukrainian society, culture, and spirituality are undergoing a huge Transformation, which theologians call Transfiguration. Alongside death, we celebrate Christmas and the Resurrection, we wait for the Annunciation, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. That is why there are a lot of religious sketches with metaphysical and ontological emphasis on the Ukrainians in the presence of the dead, including soldiers who guard the Shroud on Good Friday, or guard the faithful during the Easter consecration, or guard the sleep of the newborn Jesus, or soldiers who are under the protection of the Holy Mary or Mandylion of Christ.

Millions of Ukrainians give their lives for their friends, so that we, their friends, relatives, close and unfamiliar neighbors, may live in dignity and freedom on our God-given and generations-old land. We identify Christian meanings with our reality and believe in God's care, believe that God is with us... but we often realize that the Son of God, dying on the Cross, said "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Slide 13, 14, 15, 16,17, 18

Now we are in this powerful place of human pain and suffering, but at the same time it is a place of strength and love for life, experiencing holiness and humanity through the example of St. Maximilian Kolbe, and I also would like to mention the prisoner and martyr of Maidanek, the Ukrainian St. Omelyan Kovch, with a similar story and example of the life of people of the twentieth century.

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In a few days, I, a person of the twenty-first century, will return home to Ukraine, the safest place on earth, no matter how paradoxical it may sound. Because there is a fullness of life in our land. We appreciate every meeting, we are grateful for the reappearance of missing persons, those returned from captivity, and we are learning to accept(екцент) death. Sometimes it

becomes a routine. We give thanks for a quiet day. We are thankful for a night without alarms, although there is no such day or night throughout Ukraine.

But we are at home and we know that there is a holiness in every struggle for justice, which gives strength and inspiration to those who believe in the victory of good.

Thanks to your countries and individuals for your support of Ukraine. Please, continue to believe in us, pray for us, help us to overcome this evil that has become evident.

Truth will surely prevail! But, at a high cost to us...

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” John 15:13