

Annecy: Joanna helps the Church in Poland to welcome Ukrainian refugees!

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Annecy

One hundred days after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, neighboring Poland is hosting more than a million displaced people. And three million Ukrainians have passed through the country. A parishioner from Annecy is helping the Polish Church in welcoming this multitude. A story of friendship and international solidarity.



Joanna and Fr. Marek ©Joanna Front

When war broke out on February 24, Joanna Front was marked by the images of fleeing people. ***"My great-grandparents and grandparents moved between Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia. We are all brothers or cousins! I felt a real impetus, a need to move closer."*** The Franco-Polish sophrologist leaves for her country of origin with an Annecy association which provides material aid and plans to return with people fleeing Ukraine.

"We spent nights transporting refugees"

On the Ukrainian-Polish border, Joanna, who belongs to the Risen Christ Parish in Annecy, meets Father Marek. The Polish priest is in charge of the pastoral care of families in the Archdiocese of Przemyśl. Joanna is touched by this Christian community and all the volunteers. **They are struggling to welcome everyone as best they can, in an emergency situation.** *"At the beginning, we spent nights transporting these refugees from the train station to places of accommodation offered by the city, the congregations, etc."* says Father Marek.

A situation in constant evolution

With the conflict stalemate, the archdiocese is getting organized. New accommodations must be found, as well as lasting solutions for displaced Ukrainians who want to stay in Poland or take refuge elsewhere in Europe. Joanna lends a hand: ***"The situation is dynamic, the Department of Pastoral Family Care has been constantly adapting to the new circumstances. We had to create partnerships, find sponsorship, communicate... to be able to best help these people on the ground."*** This welcome would have been impossible without **volunteers from Poland, other European countries, and even from America!** And without **the financial help of foundations, associations and private individuals.**

"This is an opportunity to experience real charity"

This reality has shaken up Father Marek's daily life. *"He doesn't sleep much!"* notes Joanna. *"I believe that this situation is a grace for our Church! It is an opportunity to experience real charity,"* says the priest. ***"I see Christ in each of these Ukrainian people who leave their homes."*** Joanna has decided **to make a long-term commitment to the archdiocese on the border.** She works as a manager remotely from Annecy and regularly leaves for Poland to stay there for several days or weeks. ***"I've always been committed and that's where I thrive!"*** Currently, **two hundred people are accommodated in the centers of the Archdiocese. And more than eight hundred people** have been helped to find a permanent place to stay, in Poland or in other countries in Europe. The Department of Pastoral Family Care of the Archdiocese of Przemyśl still needs volunteers and donations to continue this project.