



## Reflections

# Sacrifice to help the Ukrainians

AS soon as the war in Ukraine started, the church-going people of St Boniface, Okehampton and Holy Family, Chagford chose to compromise on the principle 'charity begins at home'.

Like many other organisations our parish experienced massive losses on various levels due to covid. We had planned a number of activities this year, including renovation work to the parish hall and fundraising events to compensate for the losses incurred, as well as to cover the upcoming expense of St Boniface's centenary

celebrations on September 18 this year.

We decided to put our parish needs on hold and immediately offered our parish hall and large car park as venues for collection and storage of donations that are now being delivered to the border areas of Ukraine, Poland and Romania.

A wide range of items were requested for the displaced Ukrainians, including jars and tins of baby food and dog and cat food. I remember walking into the parish hall to find three people sorting massive amounts of items and struggling to find space to stand up! And our

parishioners managed to contribute over £1,400 towards the Ukraine appeal despite fewer parishioners attending services in person in our churches. We saw a similar response during the Syrian war and refugee crisis.

I've served in Okehampton and Chagford for just over 10 years now and something I personally admire is the willingness of people to reach out to those in desperate need, even when it requires a bit of a sacrifice. There is an ongoing conversation among some of our parishioners about how to engage Ukrainian Christians

in our upcoming centenary celebrations — although we are not sure at this stage how we can do that. However, it shows the exemplary generosity of peoples' hearts and minds in trying to accommodate and support those in dire need.

Someone recently asked me why activities such as our recent help to the Ukrainians are not promoted publically. My reply was that such acts sometimes automatically become public, but most of the time we are happy to stay in the background. We are aware of Jesus's words: 'When you give alms, your left hand must not

know what your right is doing' (Mathew 6:3).

I am sure there are many people in this area who give willingly to those in desperate need. To them as well as to our generous parishioners I like to repeat what Willian Penn said, 'He that does good for good's sake seeks neither paradise nor reward, but he is sure of both in the end.'

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