

Anastasia Markiv^{1} – Lutsk*

**Historical monuments as a space for social ministry:
the example of the cathedral of saints Peter
and Paul in Lutsk**

The history of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Lutsk is inextricably linked not only to the city's religious life but also to its educational and social spheres. At the invitation of Bishop Marcin Szyszkowski, the Jesuits began their work in Lutsk in 1604 by establishing a public school at their residence, which was later reorganized into a college. Construction of the current church took place between 1616 and 1639 based on a design by Giacomo Briano; upon completion, the church and the college became a vital hub for the city's spiritual and educational life. The Jesuit community also engaged in charitable activities—such as caring for the sick and the poor—demonstrating the integration of religious, educational, and social functions within this ecclesiastical complex².

Following the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773, the church was elevated to the status of a cathedral. The complex underwent numerous alterations during the 19th and 20th centuries; however, religious activity ceased after the establishment of Soviet rule. In 1946, the Roman Catholic Church in Lutsk was deprived of the use of the building, which subsequently served as a warehouse and, from 1980, housed a museum of atheism. The revival of the Roman Catholic community began in the early 1990s, when the church was returned to the faithful and restored as the cathedral of the Diocese of Lutsk.

^{1*} Anastasia Markiv – PhD student at the Department of Museology, Heritage Studies, and Information-Analytical Activity, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University; Deputy Director of the Institute for the Development of Church Studies
ORCID ID: orcid.org/0009-0007-2833-0481, Email: nastiamarkiv@gmail.com

² Колосок Б. Знайомство з луцьким костелом Св. Трійці та Св. Петра і Павла. Київ, 1996. 18 с.

The resumption of the church's operations also marked its reintegration into the city's public life. Over the ensuing decades, charitable, volunteer, cultural, and social initiatives flourished within the church and the parish. Thus, the cathedral parish's contemporary social ministry can be viewed not as an entirely new phenomenon, but as the continuation of a long-standing tradition of utilizing church space for education, aiding the needy, organizing communal activities, and serving the local population. This tradition became particularly evident following the outbreak of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war, when the church and parish premises became vital hubs for humanitarian and volunteer efforts.

The specific area examined in this article is part of an historic building complex that once housed a monastery owned by the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity (16th–18th centuries). In 1829, Bishop Kasper Ceczowski invited representatives of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to Lutsk³. Upon their arrival, the nuns were entrusted with the care of the «Angelika» orphanage and a home for the elderly. Their primary activities involved looking after, supporting, and educating the residents of these institutions. At the same time, a school for the nobility occupied part of the building. Later, a gymnasium (secondary school) operated in the premises for a time; its teaching staff included, notably, Panteleimon Kulish.

In the mid-19th century, the Russian Empire's policy aimed to curtail the activities of the Roman Catholic Church, leading to the closure of numerous Catholic monasteries and churches. As a result of this policy, the Sisters of Charity convent in Lutsk was shut down in 1866. The school for the nobility that had operated within the complex also ceased to exist at that time⁴.

In the early 20th century, socio-political changes in the region created the conditions for the gradual revival of Roman Catholic institutions. This process was particularly active during the interwar period, when Lutsk became the center of the restored Roman Catholic Diocese of Lutsk. During this time, Catholic parishes and monasteries fostered not only

³ Історія та міфи монастиря шариток у Луцьку. URL: <https://monitorwolynski.com/uk/news/4687-historia-i-mity-zwiazane-z-klasztozem-szarytek-w-lucku> [Дата доступу: 12.03.2026]

⁴ Dębowska M. Kapituła katedralna w Łucku w dokumentach z przełomu XVIII i XIX wieku. *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*. 2012. T. 98. S. 67–96.

religious and educational activities but also charitable initiatives aimed at assisting the poor, the elderly, the sick, and other socially vulnerable groups. World War II and the establishment of Soviet rule led to renewed restrictions on the Roman Catholic Church, and a significant number of its institutions were either dissolved or prevented from carrying out their work⁵.

In the early 20th century, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul remained the primary center of Roman Catholic life in Lutsk. Following the re-establishment of the Diocese of Lutsk in 1925, the church regained its status as a cathedral and became the hub of activity for the episcopal curia and the local Catholic community. During the interwar period, religious, cultural-educational, and charitable initiatives flourished at the church, continuing the tradition of combining pastoral work with service to the community⁶. In 1924, the church suffered a major fire, after which its interior was restored and a new large altar was installed. In 1936, the church acquired a series of «Stations of the Cross» reliefs created by the sculptor Zofia Trzcińska-Kamińska.

World War II and the establishment of Soviet rule marked the beginning of a new chapter in the church's history. In 1945, the Bishop of Lutsk, Adolf-Petro Szelażek, and the cathedral's rector, Władysław Bukowiński, were arrested; in 1946, the Roman Catholic see in Lutsk was abolished, and the church was confiscated from the religious community⁷. Over the following decades, the church was used for purposes other than its original one: its premises were adapted for offices, workshops, and housing, while the crypt served, among other things, utility needs. In 1980, a museum of atheism was opened in the building, and part of the historical interior was dismantled or lost. Thus, during the Soviet era, the church was effectively removed from the city's religious and social life⁸.

⁵ Каліщук О. Римо-Католицька Церква в Україні у другій половині XX ст. у сучасному історіографічному дискурсі: регіональний зріз. *Літопис Волині*. 2023.

⁶ Малєончук Г. Римо-католицька громада Луцька в міжвоєнний період. *Науковий вісник Східноєвропейського національного університету ім. Лесі Українки*. Серія: Історичні науки. 2017. № 4 (353). С. 48–52.

⁷ Хом'як П. Роль Адольфа Петра Шельонжека у становленні Римсько-Католицької Церкви на Волині у міжвоєнний період. *Науковий вісник Чернівецького національного університету імені Юрія Федьковича*. Серія: Історія. 2021. № 1 (53). С. 69–76.

⁸ Каліщук О. Римо-Католицька Церква в Україні у другій половині XX ст. у сучасному історіографічному дискурсі: регіональний зріз. *Літопис Волині*. 2023. № 29.

The process of returning the church to the Roman Catholic community began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In September 1990, the faithful were granted use of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, and on June 27, 1991, the church was returned to the community. In the years that followed, the church was gradually restored as the cathedral of the Diocese of Lutsk and once again became a hub of the community's religious and social life. The church's revival involved not only restoration work but also the gradual re-establishment of associated cultural, charitable, and social activities.

The parish's history demonstrates the gradual development of a multifaceted social environment where religious, administrative, charitable, educational, cultural, volunteer, and integration-oriented functions interact.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, fundamentally altered the population's social needs and confronted religious communities with challenges requiring the rapid mobilization of available resources. For the Cathedral Parish of Saints Peter and Paul in Lutsk, its own material and spatial infrastructure became a key resource. Premises and grounds belonging to or functionally linked with the Roman Catholic Church began to be used for a wide range of social, humanitarian, educational, cultural, and security-related purposes⁹.

This circumstance is of fundamental importance for understanding the modern social ministry of the parish. Its specific nature is defined not only by the number of events held or the volume of aid provided but also by the very location where these activities take place. Social assistance is delivered directly within the church space—an environment historically shaped to facilitate religious activities and the life of the church community. As a result of the war, this space has acquired additional social functions without losing its sacred and ecclesiastical purpose.

This transformation in the functional role of historic church space is significant for the evolution of modern social ministry. While sacred and monastic infrastructure was traditionally associated primarily with worship, monastic life, church administration, and caring for the needy, today this space accommodates a much broader spectrum of social practices. Within a single complex, conditions have been created

⁹ Ворон О. П. Формування та основні напрямки діяльності релігійної місії РКЦ «Карітас-Спес» в Україні. *Українське релігієзнавство*. 2006. № 42. С. 123–135

for working with children, youth, people with disabilities, war veterans, internally displaced persons, and other population groups, as well as for fostering volunteerism, providing psycho-emotional support, and facilitating cultural and scholarly engagement¹⁰.

In this sense, the territory of the cathedral parish can be viewed as a multifunctional social space where various forms of ministry do not exist in isolation. They complement one another and create an environment of constant interaction among the church community, volunteers, socially vulnerable groups, professionals, young people, representatives of the civic sector, and other city residents¹¹.

One of the key elements of this infrastructure is the Caritas-Spes Lutsk center, operating under the Parish of Saints Peter and Paul in Lutsk. Its activities provide the organizational foundation for a significant portion of the social initiatives implemented not only within the parish but also across the Lutsk Diocese¹². The parish's religious facilities are used for the direct provision of social services, the hosting of events, engagement with various population groups, and the organization of volunteer activities.

The onset of the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, triggered a rapid transformation of the parish's established social ministry system to meet new societal needs. In the first hours of the full-scale war, over 100 volunteers gathered at the cathedral and parish premises, ready to help organize aid efforts. Operations took on a crisis-response nature almost immediately: volunteers wove camouflage nets, prepared hot meals, received humanitarian shipments, sorting and distributing them and addressed other urgent needs of both the military and the civilian population¹³. Subsequently, assistance for internally displaced persons arriving in Lutsk—who required food, hygiene products, clothing, temporary shelter, and other basic support—was added to these activities.

¹⁰ Ворон О. Соціальне служіння Римо-Католицької Церкви в Україні як складова її місіонерської діяльності. *Українське релігієзнавство*. 2013. № 66. С. 416-423.

¹¹ Панько О., Бегей С. Соціальна робота церков та релігійних організацій в умовах війни в Україні. *Філософія та політологія в контексті сучасної культури*. 2023. Т. 15, № 2.

¹² «Перші ластівки» – початок волонтерського осередку в Луцьку. URL: <https://caritas-spes.org/ua/news/community-news/pershi-lastivki.html> [Дата доступу: 14.05.2026]

¹³ Васкул С. Ukrainian Churches in the Value Spectrum of Social Practices: Criteria of Social Responsibility and Mission. *Multiversum. Philosophical Almanac*. 2024. № 1(2(180)).

Thus, during the first days of the war, the church and parish premises effectively transformed into a multifunctional humanitarian response center: they served as a hub for gathering volunteers; receiving, stockpiling, sorting, and distributing humanitarian aid; organizing meals; and providing a safe space for people during air raid alerts¹⁴. Significantly, this transformation took place without a prolonged period of organizational restructuring; prior volunteering experience, existing facilities, an established team, and the trust of both the parish and the local community made it possible to rapidly redirect available resources to meet wartime needs.

Support for military personnel, veterans, and others directly involved in the defense of Ukraine emerged as a distinct area of social ministry that took on particular importance during the war. While assistance initially focused primarily on meeting the troops' urgent material needs, the scope of support subsequently expanded to encompass the social, psychological, rehabilitative, and integration needs of veterans and their families¹⁵.

The church and parish premises gradually became a hub where military personnel and veterans could not only receive tangible material aid but also engage in social interaction, participate in joint activities, and access psychological support and social integration opportunities. A prime example of this evolution is the development of the «Share it» social integration space on the parish grounds, which hosts veteran gatherings, psycho-emotional support sessions, and inclusive educational events. This practice reflects a shift in the very logic of social ministry: moving from immediate responses to the war's direct consequences toward establishing long-term support mechanisms for those affected by the conflict or those who directly participated in the nation's defense. The functional scope of «Share it» allows it to serve as a space where individuals seeking support can simultaneously become part of a community, attend events, socialize, engage in volunteer work, and participate in public and educational activities.

¹⁴ Шість місяців війни: історії неустанної праці карітасівців у різних куточках України. URL: <https://rkc.org.ua/blog/2022/09/08/shist-misyaciv-vijny-istoriyi-neustanno-y-praczi-karitasivciv-u-riznyh-kutochkah-ukrayiny/> [Дата доступу: 14.05.2026]

¹⁵ Багаторічна співпраця практичних психологів із 6 прикордонним Волинським загonom. URL: <https://vnu.edu.ua/uk/news/bahatorichna-spivpratsya-praktychnykh-psykholohiv-iz-6-prykordonnym-volynskym-zahonom> [Дата доступу: 15.05.2026]

Another way the church space is utilized is for organizing humanitarian initiatives. Humanitarian aid distribution events take place on the parish grounds, allowing the church infrastructure to serve directly as a site for receiving, storing, and distributing aid. This is particularly crucial in wartime, as humanitarian responses require not only financial resources and volunteers but also physical space—specifically, facilities for storing goods, sorting items, assembling aid kits, holding volunteer meetings, and distributing aid to recipients. In the case under study, the relevant infrastructure already exists within the church grounds¹⁶.

Thus, the parish buildings and grounds serve as a kind of logistical hub for social ministry. The church complex provides a physical space where various stages of assistance ranging from the organization of volunteer work to the direct distribution of humanitarian aid can take place simultaneously.

A prime example of the modern social use of church facilities is the «Caritas Joy» free kindergarten; its operations expand the traditional understanding of parish social ministry by providing long-term, systemic support to children and their families¹⁷.

A distinct area of activity is the operation of a space for children and young people with autism. Its inclusion in the cathedral parish's social ministry structure reflects an expansion of the groups served by the church community. Supporting children with autism spectrum disorders requires a specialized approach, a suitably organized environment, and the involvement of professionals; consequently, it goes beyond the scope of ad hoc charity¹⁸.

In this instance, social ministry takes the form of regular, specialized support aimed at fostering a child's development and socialization while also supporting their family. The inclusion of children and young people with autism in the parish's general activities is also significant; this

¹⁶ Луцькі «Карітас-Спес»: співпраця осередків та активна робота на Волині. URL: <https://rkcc.org.ua/blog/2022/08/06/luczki-karitas-spes-spivpraczuja-oseredkiv-ta-aktyvna-robota-na-volyni/> [Дата доступу: 14.05.2026]

¹⁷ Єпископ Віталій Скомаровський освятив дитячу світлицю. URL: <https://catholic.volyn.ua/index.php/ua/2-uncategorised/1042-yepyskop-vitalii-skomarovskyi-osviatyv-dytiachu-svitlytsiu-2> [Дата доступу: 14.05.2026]

¹⁸ У Луцьку презентували соціальний простір для дітей та молоді з аутизмом. URL: <https://www.lutskrada.gov.ua/publications/u-lutsku-prezentuvaly-sotsialnyi-prostir-dlia-ditei-ta-molodi-z-autyzmom> [Дата доступу: 14.05.2026]

allows the initiative to be viewed not merely as a social service, but as part of the church community's inclusive policy.

Another initiative is the «Teplo u Kavi» (Warmth in Coffee) café, staffed by young people with Down syndrome. Its operation is vital to developing a model of social ministry focused on creating an accessible, inclusive public space.

Gatherings for veterans and psycho-emotional support activities have taken on particular importance during the war. The conflict creates a need not only for material aid but also for long-term social adaptation, communication, and support for those directly affected by it. Creating an accessible space for such gatherings enables the parish to address these needs by fostering an environment where individuals can receive professional support while remaining part of the community.

Thus, the social infrastructure formed on the territory of the cathedral parish has several interconnected levels. The first level is direct social assistance, in particular humanitarian support and assistance to vulnerable categories of the population. The second is permanent social services, represented, in particular, by a kindergarten and a specialized space for children and youth with autism. The third is social integration and psycho-emotional support provided by appropriate measures. The fourth is cultural, educational and public communication, implemented through scientific meetings, concerts, inclusive events and other events¹⁹.

Open spaces for shared leisure activities are also gradually being incorporated into this system. Notably, a pétanque court was opened on the parish grounds in 2026. Within the context of the parish's overall operational model, this facility should be viewed as a tool for social integration and for creating an accessible space where different generations and social groups can interact. Sports events, scavenger hunts, and other activities held on the parish grounds create further opportunities to engage children, young people, families, and volunteers in shared endeavors, while also fostering public trust in the Church.

Thus, the cathedral parish grounds function as a space that integrates assistance, socialization, education, culture, leisure, volunteering, and

¹⁹ Послуги із захисту та психосоціальної підтримки вразливих категорій українських дітей, молоді та дорослих. URL: <https://caritas-spes.org/ua/page/protection-2025-2026> [Дата доступу: 15.05.2026]

community interaction. This multifunctionality is a defining characteristic of the modern social ministry of the parish under study. The Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul itself warrants separate consideration. Its social function extends beyond the activities conducted in areas designated for administrative or social work; the church building itself remains a vital venue for charitable and cultural initiatives.

One of the most notable forms of such activity is the hosting of charity fairs. These events bring together the parish community, volunteers, and church visitors, mobilizing local resources to support individuals facing difficult life circumstances. The aid raised during these events is directed toward various groups in need, including people with disabilities, military personnel, war victims, people living with HIV, cancer patients, and other vulnerable groups.

A key feature of the charity fair model is that it enables a wide range of people to participate directly in social ministry. In this context, a church visitor can simultaneously remain an active participant in religious life and become a donor to a specific social initiative. Thus, charitable work becomes integrated into the everyday life of the parish community.

Charity organ music concerts held at the cathedral serve a similar function²⁰. The combination of a cultural event and a charitable purpose allows using the temple as a space for public communication and attracting resources for social support. Such practices are also important because they demonstrate the expansion of forms of participation in social service. A person can join it not only through direct volunteering or a financial donation, but also through participation in a cultural or public event²¹. For the parish, this creates additional channels for resource mobilization and communication with city residents.

The cathedral's historic underground space holds a distinct place within its social function. Amidst the full-scale war, it has become a safe shelter accessible to the public during air raid alerts demonstrating yet another significant transformation in the role of sacred space during

²⁰ Луцьк: благодійний концерт органної музики на підтримку онкохворих дітей. URL: <https://rkc.org.ua/blog/2024/10/31/luczku-blagodijnyj-konzert-organnoyi-muzyky-na-pidtrymku-onkohvoryh-ditej> [Дата доступу: 15.05.2026]

²¹ У Луцьку відбувся концерт-реквієм на вшанування полеглих Героїв. URL: <https://rkc.org.ua/blog/2025/04/07/u-luczku-vidbuvsya-konzert-rekviyem-na-vshanuvannya-poleglyh-geroyiv/> [Дата доступу: 15.05.2026]

wartime.²² Moreover, access to the shelter during air raid alerts is open to anyone seeking safety, regardless of whether they belong to the parish community.

Thus, in current circumstances, the cathedral serves liturgical, cultural, charitable, and safety-related functions simultaneously. While these roles do not supersede its primary sacred purpose, they expand the church's societal role during wartime.

This structure points to a distinct form of social ministry in which the church space itself becomes a key resource for aid—encompassing facilities with diverse purposes that are united by their inclusion in a single ecclesiastical complex.

The historical continuity of this space is of particular significance. The former episcopal residence, the monastic complex, the cathedral, and its crypts stand as tangible evidence of the evolution of social ministry. Today, these same buildings are utilized to address emerging societal challenges. This demonstrates the capacity of church infrastructure to adapt its functional role to meet societal needs while preserving its historical and religious identity.

Significantly, this model does not entail a separation of social outreach from church life. On the contrary, social initiatives are organizationally and spatially integrated with the parish; the church remains a place of worship while simultaneously hosting charity fairs and concerts. The former monastic space remains linked to the Church's activities, yet simultaneously hosts social and integration projects. The underground area retains its status as part of the historic church complex but serves as a shelter during the war. The parish's open grounds are used for sports, youth, and social events.

As a result, a model is formed in which sacred, social, cultural and public use of space interact with each other. It is this feature that distinguishes the studied example from the analysis of a separate charitable organization. The subject of the research is a wide and complex system of social service that functions on the territory of the Roman Catholic parish and uses its material and organizational infrastructure and human resources.

²² «Карітас-Спес Україна» надає притулок біженцям. URL: <https://caritas-spes.org/ua/news/war/karitasspes-ukraina-nadae-pritulok-bizhencjam.html> [Дата доступу: 15.05.2026]

In this context, the full-scale war became a factor that significantly expanded the social functionality of the church space. If before the war, separate premises were used for charitable, educational, cultural and volunteer initiatives, then after February 24, 2022, the functions of humanitarian response and civil security were added to them. At the same time, the parish infrastructure continued to be used for long-term social programs aimed at supporting children, people with disabilities, veterans, families and other population groups.

Therefore, the activities of the cathedral parish in Lutsk provide grounds to view the church building and its surrounding grounds not merely as a site for religious practices, but also as a resource for the local community's social resilience amidst the war. Its significance is defined by the combination of physical space, organizational capacity, a volunteer network, and the church community's enduring presence in the life of the city.

АНОТАЦІЯ

У статті досліджено особливості та трансформацію соціального служіння римо-католицьких парафій Волині в умовах російсько-української війни на прикладі кафедральної парафії святих апостолів Петра і Павла у Луцьку. У роботі розглянуто історичні та організаційні передумови формування соціального служіння кафедральної парафії святих апостолів Петра і Павла. Особливу увагу приділено історичній тяглоті використання церковного простору для реалізації освітніх, благодійних і соціальних функцій. Простежено розвиток відповідних практик від історичної діяльності церковних інституцій Луцька до сучасних форм соціального служіння парафії. Проаналізовано зміни у діяльності парафіяльної спільноти після початку повномасштабного російського вторгнення 24 лютого 2022 року, коли вже сформована волонтерська мережа була оперативно мобілізована для гуманітарного реагування.

Визначено основні напрями соціального служіння парафії в умовах війни. Особливе значення у дослідженні надано ролі церковних будівель і території парафії як інфраструктури соціального служіння. Показано, що церковний простір адаптовано для гуманітарної, волонтерської, соціальної, культурної та інтеграційної

діяльності. Встановлено, що поєднання церковної інфраструктури, волонтерського ресурсу, організаційного досвіду та партнерської взаємодії забезпечило швидку адаптацію парафії до умов війни. Обґрунтовано, що російсько-українська війна спричинила не лише кількісне розширення соціального служіння римо-католицької парафії, а й зміну його організаційної моделі та змісту. Зроблено висновок про перехід соціального служіння від переважно локальної благодійної діяльності до комплексної системи гуманітарного реагування та соціальної підтримки населення.

Ключові слова: Римо-Католицька Церква, пам'ятка культури, Волинь, Луцьк, кафедральна парафія, костел, культурна спадщина.