

Notre Dame News

Ukrainian Archbishop Borys Gudziak to deliver Notre Dame's 2022 commencement address

📅 March 23, 2022

👤 [Dennis Brown](#)

Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak, the highest-ranking Ukrainian Catholic prelate in the United States and organizer and president of Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU), will be the principal speaker and receive an honorary degree at the University of Notre Dame's 177th University Commencement Ceremony on May 15, Notre Dame President [Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.](#), announced today.



Archbishop Borys Gudziak gives the keynote address at the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture's 20th annual fall conference. (Photo by Matt Cashore/University of Notre Dame)

“We have previously honored Archbishop Gudziak for his work as leader of the Ukrainian Catholic University as a center for cultural thought, for his Christian witness and for the formation of a Ukrainian society based on human dignity,” Father Jenkins said. “We now further recognize him as he speaks forcefully and eloquently in support of the Ukrainian people and in opposition to the Russian invasion of his ancestral homeland.

“The students, faculty and staff at Notre Dame have demonstrated continuing solidarity with Ukraine over this past month, and I know that they will benefit from and appreciate hearing the words of Archbishop Gudziak at our graduation celebration in May.”

Regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Archbishop Gudziak said earlier this month: “Ukraine has won this war morally. Today the whole world is united around Ukraine. The witness of Ukrainians, their biblical David vs. Goliath struggle, has inspired and given new purpose to a fragmenting Europe. It brought together the North Atlantic partners. This moral foundation is what Jesus preaches, what the Church is called to live. The truth of communion and justice, rather than violence and war, is God's will for us. God's truth will prevail, but the Via Crucis often entails great suffering. This Lent we see and experience Christ's passion, crucifixion and resurrection in a new way.”

He encouraged Americans to do three things: Pray, stay informed and provide help.

“Ukraine was not a threat to Russia,” he said. “In 1994 Ukraine was the first country in history to unilaterally disarm its nuclear arsenal. The real threat is the spirit of democracy, freedom of the press, the vibrant civic society that developed in Ukraine. That ‘virus,’ if passed to Russia, would create great danger to an autocracy, a kleptocratic oligarchy, which (Russian President Vladimir) Putin runs and is fostering in neighboring countries and on other continents.”



University of Notre Dame President Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C. and Archbishop Borys Gudziak. (Photo by Matt Cashore/University of Notre Dame)

At a ceremony in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on June 29, 2019, Father Jenkins presented Archbishop Gudziak with the [Notre Dame Award](#), bestowed since 1992 on “men and women whose life and deeds have shown exemplary dedication to the ideals for which the University stands: faith, inquiry, education, justice, public service, peace and care for the most vulnerable.”

At the same ceremony, Notre Dame and UCU signed a memorandum of understanding for the two institutions to “develop collaborations and exchanges in fields of shared interest and expertise.” Initiatives already have included Notre Dame’s Nanovic Institute for European Studies hosting six visiting scholars from UCU, 18 leaders from UCU graduating from the Catholic Leadership Program created by the Nanovic Institute and Mendoza College of Business, and Notre Dame Law School supporting a consortium of Catholic legal scholars in Central and Eastern Europe. The Ukrainian Catholic University is also a founding member of the Catholic Universities Partnership initiated by the Nanovic Institute in 2003.

UCU is the first Catholic university established in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Elevated in May 2019 by Pope Francis to metropolitan-archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia (the equivalent of an archdiocese), Archbishop Gudziak is widely admired internationally for his unwavering, courageous and humanitarian leadership of UCU. Founded in 2002, the university is built on the “pillars of the martyrs and the marginalized” — those who suffered and died under communist repression, and the intellectually disabled who too often exist on the margins of society, both of whom Archbishop Gudziak considered essential to rebuilding trust in Ukrainian society and who were virtually invisible under Soviet rule.

The archbishop exemplified the spirit of the martyrs in 2014 during the “Revolution of Dignity,” protests in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv that led to the fall of the corrupt government of Viktor Yanukovich. After the shooting deaths in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) of more than 100 pro-democracy demonstrators, including 29-year-old UCU professor Bohdan Solchanyk, Archbishop Gudziak and other religious leaders of all faiths joined with the protesters and their demands for transformation of Ukraine.

He said afterward: “At the moment, a solution seems impossible, but I am praying with the people of Maidan because I am part of Pope Francis’ school of thought — a pastor must have the smell of his sheep.”

Influenced early in his life by Rev. Henri Nouwen and his devotion to people with special needs, Archbishop Gudziak is especially admired for his creation of the Emmaus Center on the UCU campus, a place where people with developmental disabilities and their families receive spiritual support and share their lives with students.

In a Ukrainian Weekly story, Archbishop Gudziak said he considers the developmentally disabled “professors of human relations. ... We need the gifts they have. They don’t care if you’re a rector, a doctor or how rich you are. What they force us to confront is the most important pedagogical question of all: Can you love me?”

Raised in Syracuse, New York, by Ukrainian refugee parents who fled from the communists during World War II, Archbishop Gudziak stayed close to home to earn his bachelor’s degree in philosophy and biology from Syracuse University. He then studied in Rome at Holy Sofia College and the Pontifical Urban University, earning a theology degree, after which he received his doctorate in Slavic and Byzantine cultural history from Harvard University.

Archbishop Gudziak moved to his parents’ homeland in 1992 and founded the Institute of Church History in Lviv. He was ordained to the priesthood six years later and was named vice rector and then rector of Lviv Theological Academy, the institution that in 2002 transformed into the Ukrainian Catholic University.

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Bishop Gudziak head of the eparchy serving Ukrainian Catholics in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland. He is the author of more than 50 papers on the history of the Church, theological training and other topics, and in 2018 received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Syracuse.

He was appointed in February 2019 by Pope Francis the archbishop of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia — which, in addition to Philadelphia, includes the District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and eastern Pennsylvania. He also is the Ukrainian Catholic Church’s highest-ranking cleric in the United States, known as the metropolitan. He remains president of UCU and chair of the board and is a member of the permanent synod of the Church, which meets four times annually, usually in Kyiv.

The 2022 University Commencement Ceremony will be held in Notre Dame Stadium.

Posted In: [Commencement](#)

Related



John F. Crowley—tireless advocate, entrepreneur and ‘extraordinary’ father—to deliver commencement address to 2020 Notre Dame graduates

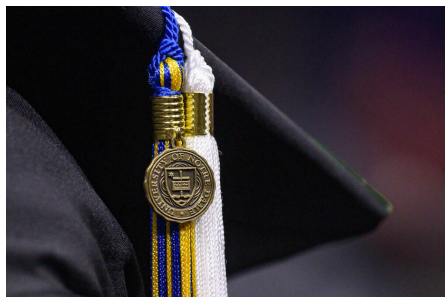


Environmental activist Sharon Lavigne to receive Notre Dame's 2022 Laetare Medal



Derrell Bradford to speak at ACE Commencement ceremony

The Commencement of the Notre Dame Class of 2021



Notre Dame to confer 3,180 degrees this weekend during in-person Commencement ceremony

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS ›



Notre Dame News

500 Grace Hall

Notre Dame, IN 46556 USA

[© 2022 University of Notre Dame](#)