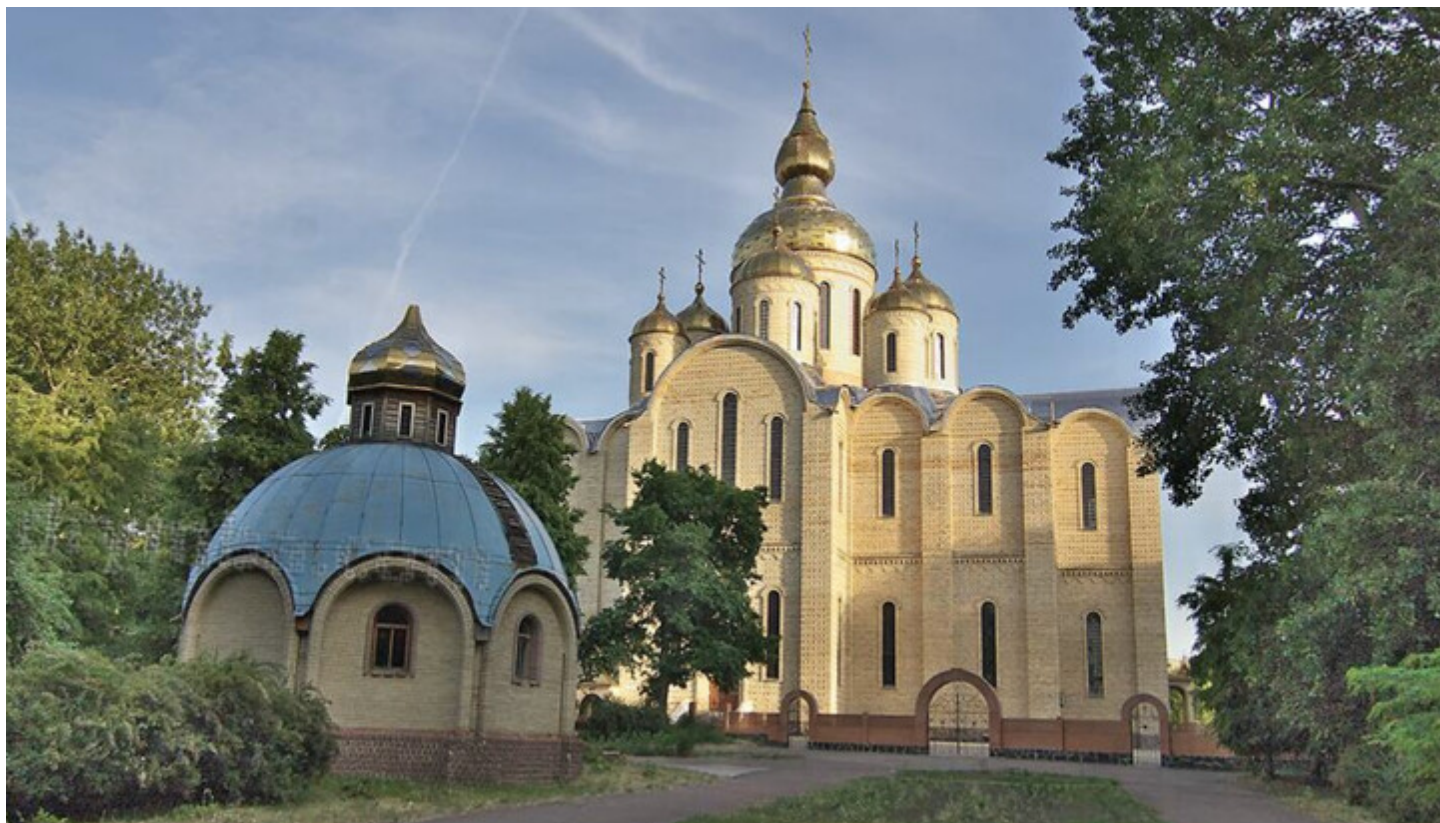




## **Metropolitan and parishioners injured during raider attack on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Cathedral in Cherkassy**



**DECR Communication service, 17.10.2024.**

On October 17, 2024, the Archangel-Mikhail Cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Cherkassy was seized by raiders in camouflage during a second attempt.

The assault began around 3 a.m. The attackers, with their faces covered, stormed the church, where a night Liturgy was being celebrated at that time, according to the Telegram channel of the Cherkassy Diocese. There were about a hundred raiders, who violently expelled the believers from the cathedral and its grounds. Witnesses were prevented from filming the crime: their phones were confiscated or they were blinded with flashlights. Stationary surveillance cameras were also destroyed.

Additionally, the raiders broke into the diocesan administration building and blocked the diocesan clergy dormitory. “The minor children of the priests (seven children from 3 months to 8 years old) are frightened and in a state of stress,” reported the Telegram channel “Cherkasy Blagovestnik” early in the

morning.

It later became known that those who captured the church also robbed it. The criminals vandalized the accounting office, stealing documents and computer equipment. According to representatives of the cathedral, quoted by the Union of Orthodox Journalists, money collected by parishioners for a bell and restoration, two bishop's panagias (engolpions) with relics, as well as crosses, icons, church utensils, and books disappeared from the church. They even stole clothing and food, including jam and winter preparation supplies.

Orthodox residents of Cherkassy gathered to defend their shrine, led by Metropolitan Theodosy of Cherkassy and Kanev. They managed to push back the church raiders, who, as they left the cathedral, opened fire with a gas pistol at the parishioners and used tear gas against the believers. Among the attackers, local residents recognized “clergyman” Nazar Zasansky from the schismatic structure “OCU.”

After some time, radicals and representatives of the authorities began gathering their supporters on social media and several hours later launched a second assault. Storming the cathedral grounds, the raiders beat the believers and sprayed them with tear gas. Many defenders of the shrine experienced vision problems afterward, and several parishioners were reported to have suffered concussions, skin injuries, and more.

Metropolitan Theodosy addressed Orthodox Christians after the “OCU” raiders stormed the Archangel-Mikhail Cathedral. He blessed the courageous people to leave the territory of the captured church. “The Lord, the Mother of God, Archangel Michael, and Saint Makarios are always with us!” he said, noting that the believers had done everything they could and blessing them to gather for prayer in private homes and apartments, and to seek medical help for their injuries.

According to the Metropolitan, with the departure of the believers from the cathedral, the [Divine] grace had also left. Metropolitan Theodosy expressed confidence that they would return to their shrine for prayer. The hierarch emphasized that the struggle for justice would continue in the courts, although, in his opinion, there is little hope for fair justice.

The Archpastor himself was among the injured: the attackers struck Metropolitan Theodosy of Cherkassy and Kanev on the head and sprayed him with tear gas. According to the Telegram channel “Pershyi Kozatskyi,” the Metropolitan was taken to the hospital after the attack.

As reminded by the Union of Orthodox Journalists website, attempts to seize the cathedral in Cherkassy had been made before: on September 29, people in camouflage gathered near the cathedral

but did not dare to initiate an assault upon seeing the parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who came out to defend their shrine.

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