

## Holodomor

Do you remember the story from scripture about the time to come when Jesus will come again in the clouds with all the angels and will separate the people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats? One of the reasons the Sheep were rewarded with a heavenly banquet was that the sheep had given food to those who were hungry. The Goats, who had not, were sent away to eternal punishment. Imagine how angry God must be when people decide to deliberately keep food from those who are hungry or, even worse, when they starve them intentionally. Who would do such a thing? Someone did, and we are going to tell you about him so this wicked scenario never takes place ever again.

### **What is the Holodomor: an answer for middle school children.**

Have you ever heard the word “Genocide?” If you look it up in a dictionary, you will find a definition something like this: the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation. Most people have heard of the Holocaust but there is another genocide you should know about which was by a famine in Ukraine. A famine can happen because of lack of rain, or insects or diseases attacking the crops, but this was not caused by any of those things. In fact, Ukraine has always produced so much food that it is known as the “breadbasket of Europe.” So, what happened?

Each year on the fourth Sunday in November, we remember the Holodomor, a man-made famine, deliberately caused by the soviet government in Russia and its dictator Josef Stalin between 1932-1933. Stalin became a dictator by killing his enemies or sending them to prison. His heart became so cold that he got rid of anyone who got in his way.

In a series of 5-year Plans, Stalin worked to put in place his communist/socialist ideas. He built factories, closed churches, and called for the “collectivization” of the farms in Ukraine. He said that farmers were enemies of the people so he took over all their land and their farm animals and put them all on collective farms which were owned by the government. They were made to farm on this state land, but were not given any food. Anyone caught stealing “government” grain would be sent to prison or killed and so, the Ukrainian people began to starve. Their food was taken away and sold to other countries, and to make things worse, the borders of Ukraine were closed so the people could not get out and they became trapped with no food. The soviet police even went to all the houses to make sure the families were not hiding food and if someone was caught with food, they would be sent to a prison camp or killed. No one really knows how many people died of starvation during the Holodomor because the government would not allow the doctors at the time to document it as the cause of anyone’s death. Some people think it could have been as many as 10 million Ukrainian people. This sad story should make us determined to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

Another important thing to remember: God tells us we shall not kill. Stalin had killed the Ukrainian farmers because they were inconvenient to his political plan. Today, there is another group of human beings who are being killed, not because of their ethnic or social group, but because they are seen as an inconvenience and are not able to cry out for themselves. These are the unborn babies. We Christians must do all we can to end the terrible evil known as abortion.

Knowledge is powerful. Now that we know, we should work to make sure no one has to suffer like this ever again. Here are some things you can do in memory of the Holodomor victims:

Jesus tells us that He conquered death so that we could have eternal Life! Pray for those whose hearts have grown so cold as to support a culture of death.

Love as Jesus loves you! Treat everyone you meet as a friend and work for their welfare, even when they make your circumstances inconvenient.

Work to feed those who are hungry! Donate cans and pantry goods to your local food bank, organize a food drive at your parish in memory of these poor victims of the Holodomor.