



We proclaim a crucified Christ

1Cor1:23

25 February 2022

Message concerning Russian military incursion into the nation of Ukraine

Dear faithful in Christ,

It is with deep concern and heartbreak that we witness the military incursion of Russian forces into the sovereign nation of Ukraine. Violent conflict is never the answer to tensions between nations; reconciliation will not come by way of unjustified military imposition.

Despite Australia being such a long way away, nonetheless the prospect of war in Europe will impact not only on the innocent civilians of Ukraine, but on all who seek harmony between peoples.

May our own attention to the worrying development of conflict in Europe turn our hearts to prayer.

As we pray for that gift of peace that only the Lord Jesus can give, may we also bring into our prayer the peoples of Lebanon and the Middle East, and in African countries such as Ethiopia and Nigeria. It is not without deep concern that religious faith is part of the story in each of these places.

The Holy Father has invited the global Church to a day of Fasting and Prayer for Peace on Ash Wednesday (2 March). My brother in Christ, Bishop Mykola Bychok, the Eparch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Australia, will join me at the 1pm Cathedral Mass on Ash Wednesday, and will preach at that Mass. That evening, I will then join him at the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul, North Melbourne, for a Liturgy of Intercession for Peace.

All of us can do what we can in praying for the emerging conflict, for the conversion of hearts, especially for national leaders, and for working in our own back yard for peaceful action of justice and reconciliation. May I suggest that at parish Masses this Sunday, the 8th Sunday of Ordinary Time, that parishes use the Prayers for the Mass available for use "In Time of War or Civil Disturbance" (RM. p1362) and one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation. For private prayer, perhaps we could turn to the prayer of Jesus for peace in John's Gospel (Ch14).

May the God of peace enter the hearts of those who are intent on war, and may the Queen of Peace intercede with her Son, the Prince of peace, for the sake of the peoples of Ukraine here and in their homeland.

With every grace and blessing, I remain

Yours in Christ Jesus.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
ARCHBISHOP of MELBOURNE