

The Archbishop spoke today in the debate on the situation in Ukraine and Russia. The speech follows in full...

My Lords you may have seen that the Archbishop of Canterbury and I have already spoken about the unprovoked attack on Ukraine as an act of great evil. This is a dark hour for Europe. We have called on Anglican churches to make this coming Sunday a day of prayer for peace and on Tuesday encourage parishes to join with the Anglican diocese in Europe in prayer at 6 pm, especially for those who minister and witness for peace in Ukraine itself where we have chaplaincies and minister alongside other denominations and faith communities. We are all invited to join with Pope Francis in making Ash Wednesday a day of fasting and prayer for peace.

Perhaps in the west, we have taken peace for granted. The horrors being visited on Ukraine must be a wake-up call for us that peace is something you need to work at. What is happening in Ukraine is truly shocking, but, sadly it is not surprising. We have seen it coming. Ukraine now stands alone, unprotected by the treaties that protect us and allow us to believe that peace is a normal state of affairs.

But it isn't.

Peace is a choice. It is a decision that we need to make each day about the way we live and about our responsibilities to and with our neighbour, be that in our family, in our local community, or between the nations of the world. And we need the policies, the wisdom, the tenacity and the international resolve that will deliver it.

Previous generations knew this. They knew it, because they had experienced the horrors of war that most of us haven't.

In the post-war period we invested in international bodies and associations that would bind us to each other. In 1950, for instance, Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, said when announcing a plan to pool coal and steel production, that the plan was motivated so that solidarity in production would make war between France and Germany not only unthinkable, but materially impossible.

But Ukraine is not defended by NATO. What we have seen from Vladimir Putin in the last few days is a terrible, flagrant disregard of the Ukrainian people's legitimate right to self-determination. As the noble Lady Baroness Goldie has put it, he has chosen war.

Right now, as well as generous, humanitarian aid and support for refugees, about which I hope the minister will say more in his summing up we need to know what is happening - we must use all our diplomatic muscle and energy, stringent economic sanctions, and focused political will to force Russia to step back from this aggression, withdraw its troops and silence the guns, not least because effective sanctions will mean many innocent Russians suffer as well. Our actions must be swift and cohesive if they are to be decisive.

Jesus urged his followers to be peacemakers, not simply peacelovers. This is an important distinction, because it is a call to action.

First, in support of Ukraine, and especially the many innocent children and families, potential refugees living with this conflict and its consequences, and support for those who are bravely protesting on the streets of Russia. But peace, lasting peace, requires more. It requires a new commitment to international instruments of law and order, accountability and investment so that we make peace and choose peace, not just hope to keep it. The suffering of Ukraine, the imperialist ambition of Russia, our own acceptance that an immoral flood of corrupt money that flows (from Russia) through London has to stop.

And as followers of Jesus, we pray because we believe God's grace has the final word, not the horrors of sin, not death.

But we also pray because that prayer will shape our will and will shape our resolve. The prayers of Christian people and of all people of faith and goodwill are with our government, and with all the leaders of the free world, as we both implore Russia to change course, but also determine to play our part in the active pursuit of peace in our world today.

Text of a prayer alongside image of a woman's praying hands

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