



THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF YORK

Writing in today's [Yorkshire Post](#), Archbishop Stephen is encouraged that even in the midst of horror and evil, good emerges

Just over three decades ago, we watched in amazement as people dismantled and knocked down the Berlin wall. Europe was changing before our eyes.

For people of my generation, born into a cold war world, this was unimaginable and fantastic. We had taken separation for granted. We had stopped believing things could change.

Just over six weeks ago, we watched in horror as Putin's tanks invaded Ukraine. Europe was changing before our eyes.

For people of my generation and the generations below me, this was unimaginable and horrific. We had taken peace for granted. We had stopped thinking things might change.

Lenin aptly once said, "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen".

We are living through these kind of weeks. There is war in Europe and we are all affected. Millions of people are on the move. Each day, more people are fleeing the terrifying reality of violence. Many others have been displaced, living in basements, hoping that they won't be shelled next.

The Red Cross has described the tenth largest city in Ukraine, Mariupol, as a scene resembling the biblical Apocalypse.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were looking forward to the Promised Land, to the good times that lay ahead. For the millions of refugees fleeing – what hope can we give them of better things to come? Ukrainian refugees need homes, work and education opportunities until they are able to return to their own beloved nation. Our Government has led the way with sanctions with some success and has provided aid and arms, but we haven't been as forthcoming when it comes to providing safe and easy routes for refugees and asylum seekers. There are, thankfully, some signs that this is beginning to change.

So, what can we do?

I have been humbled by hundreds of community efforts to provide a lifeline for refugee families. Our doctors and nurses, along with the medical evacuation regiment at Strensall, donated medical supplies for field hospitals. I recently blessed vans laden with goods and medical supplies leaving Cumbria for refugee centres in Poland. All this is hugely encouraging. What we see time and again, and what we pray for, is that even in

the midst of horror and evil, good emerges.

But there are other changes we must make. The sanctions that affect Russia will also affect us. President Zelensky has been very good at reminding us of this. We must all rise up to make sure Putin does not win. Peace is something we have to make and commit to each day. Jesus asks us to be peacemakers, not just peace lovers. We all have a part to play. We have sacrifices to make. In the UK, we must ensure that the poorest people don't take the biggest hit.

Furthermore, what about the million Rohingya refugees fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar. Or the two and half million refugees from South Sudan and another two and a half from Afghanistan? And even though it is truly shocking and tragic that in the space of a few weeks there are now at least four million refugees moving into Europe from Ukraine, the biggest refugee crisis in the world is the seven million Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.

We have seen a great outpouring of generosity from people in the UK in recent weeks. We are responding to a changed world and a desperate need. But we must respond to this need as well. I call on our government to think again about its whole approach to refugees. This country wants to do better.

Today, in churches here in Yorkshire and all over the world, people will gather around a wooden cross and remember the death of Jesus. Someone is dying before our eyes. And not just any 'someone', but the one whom we believe is God's own son, the one who came to us in poverty and who was himself a refugee in Egypt. It is like hope itself is dying.

On Sunday, in churches here in Yorkshire and all over the world, people will gather in the darkness, light a small fire, kindle a flame and declare that this Jesus who died on the cross is risen and that he is the light of the world. Hope itself is rising up.

This hope can change the world for good. It can inspire us to be better. It can break down walls. It can roll away stones.



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