



A Reflection from Bishop Swing

Voices For A World Free Of Nuclear Weapons
Condemns The Invasion Of Ukraine By Russia

In the last week of February, 2022, the cries of lamentations rise. Mothers fleeing with their children. Citizens sheltering or fleeing their beloved country. Humanity catapulted into disorientation. Worsening suffering with no end in sight. Lamentations in Ukraine are heard the world over and take root in hearts worldwide.

Because of a needless war that toys with the potential of a nuclear war, Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons (*) condemns this invasion and warns of the catastrophic potential of this artificial conflict that pits three nuclear armed countries against two nuclear armed countries. The United States, the United Kingdom and France are on the side of the Ukrainians while China sides with Russia.

It was never supposed to be this way. In 1991, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had the world's third largest supply of these weapons. In the Budapest Memorandum of December, 1994, an agreement was struck. Ukraine would give its weapons to Russia with the understanding that Russia would give "ironclad" security assurances to Ukraine. The deal was that the territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine (and Belarus and Kazakhstan) would be maintained by Russia forever.

Yet here we are. On February 19, Russia tested the nuclear capabilities of a new hypersonic missile. About the same time, Russia placed tactical nuclear weapons over the Ukraine border in Belarus. And finally Putin said that if he is challenged in Ukraine, we all may soon witness a "consequence that you have never seen before in your history."

It is time for the world to awake from its slumber in the face of "the nuclear darkness that hovers so pervasively over our earth, God's earth." Say a prayer. Entreat the Orthodox leaders of Russians and Ukrainian to intervene in peace. Demand that political and moral leaders take responsible efforts to deescalate all of this world's nuclear weapons and live by our existing Treaties. Do something! Let our actions in the world be as real as the lamentations in our hearts.

+ Rt. Rev. William E. Swing
Convener of Voices

(*) Voices for A World Free of Nuclear Weapons is part of the United Religions Initiative