



[Photos by Marcin Mazur]

The Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, His Beatitude Metropolitan Epifaniy, to Lambeth Palace today.

The Archbishop invited His Beatitude and His Eminence Archbishop Yevstratyi Zoria, Archbishop of Chernihiv and Nizhyn, to express his solidarity with the people of Ukraine and to spend time in conversation, prayer and worship.

The two leaders held a meeting with Archbishop Justin before attending the midday Eucharist in the Crypt Chapel at Lambeth Palace. During the Eucharist, Archbishop Justin knelt to receive a blessing from Metropolitan Epifaniy.



They then took part in a roundtable discussion about the war in Ukraine with attendees including Lord Chartres, former Bishop of London, the Revd Prof James Walters, Director of the LSE Faith Centre, and the Revd Dr Jamie Hawkey, Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey.

In the meeting with Archbishop Justin, His Beatitude Epifaniy spoke of his gratefulness for the prayers of Christians in the face of the horrors of the Russian invasion of his country.

He described the daily deaths of children, the elderly and peaceful citizens, telling the Archbishop: "The Ukrainian people are suffering to a very great extent from this atrocious war. Everyday a lot of people die, literally every day, and this includes children, elderly people. peaceful residents, peaceful citizens. We are very grateful for your prayer support."



Archbishop Justin told his Beatitude Epifaniy and His Eminence Archbishop Yevstratiy of his great sadness that their visit was taking place against a backdrop of the terrible suffering of the people of Ukraine.

"The cruelty of the occupation has been extraordinary," he said.

At the roundtable, discussion focussed on Christ's teaching on love, how that shapes the faith of both Anglican and Orthodox Churches and how it is being practised in Ukraine.

Archbishop Justin assured the Ukrainian leaders of the Church of England's continuing support for the people of Ukraine, including through humanitarian fundraising, welcoming refugees and highlighting the courageous service of many leaders and faithful followers in Ukraine.



Metropolitan Epifany and Archbishop Yevstratiy shared moving accounts of living and ministering amidst the atrocities of war. The meetings concluded with the exchange of gifts and discussion of continuing ecumenical relations.

In his homily Archbishop Justin said: “We know that we are in the presence of those who bear a heavy burden of leadership in war. Let us pray that our love for them and their people, and our peace with which we bless them, may strengthen them in the difficult and stony path that they travel at this time.”

In a prayer of intercession during the service, Archbishop Justin said: “We ask, O God, for peace in Ukraine, for the defeat of evil, for the end of suffering of the people and for the end of the need for young people to give their lives. We pray for churches meeting the needs of people. We pray for your mercy, O God.”

Archbishop Justin regularly extends welcome and hospitality to senior ecumenical guests at Lambeth Palace. The Archbishop has engaged in dialogue with different ecumenical leaders while the terrible war in Ukraine has continued, as part of the Church of England's commitment to support and encourage peace.



Read Archbishop Justin's homily below:

It is a very great privilege to share this Eucharist with His Beatitude and His Eminence for many reasons. They are brothers in Christ, but most they come from a Church which is suffering - and to share with Christians who suffer leads us deeper into the understanding of the Cross of Christ.

In our meeting so far, we have spoken mainly of love. His Beatitude was saying that people say he is always talking about love. That is a sign of the grace of God, but in our readings I want to pick out two particular aspects both of which come from love.

Hosea the prophet was prophesying at a time of relative prosperity in his reign, but he was prophesying of judgement because in prosperity the people had forgotten God. We may say that in much of western Europe in the last 70 years, especially the last 40 years, we have forgotten God and been too comfortable. But what God says, the picture that is given is of a parent with a child and the parent says to the child "you've walked away from me but I taught you to walk". We have a new grandson and in a year or so his mother will be teaching him to walk. I watch our son and daughter-in-law with their new baby and you see the love that comes immediately. And God says through the prophet, "I can't forget this love, you've gone wrong but I can't forget your love".

Jesus speaking to his disciples picks up this theme and says "as you have received, so give". We know that in the Book of Job, Job says "naked I came into the world and naked I will leave". We bring nothing to the world and we leave with nothing except what we receive from God, which is his love, which we are to give generously. Notice in what Jesus says, when you go into a house, before you know how they will receive you, bless the house with your peace, and then if it is not a place of peace your peace will return to you.

We know that we are in the presence of those who bear the heavy burden of leadership, in war. Let us pray that our love for them and their people, and our peace with which we bless them, may strengthen them in the difficult and stony path they travel at this time. Amen.

Find out more about how Church of England churches are responding to Russia's invasion of Ukraine [here](#).

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