

Read Archbishop Justin's speech during a General Synod debate today on Russia's invasion of Ukraine

I first want to say thank you to Bishop Nick for a superb and magisterial opening speech with which I agree entirely and therefore I shall cut back significantly on what I was going to say.

Peacemaking, we need to remember, is one of the beatitudes. Peacemaking is of the character of God, which is why peacemakers are called God's children. They are a chip off the old block.

Peacemaking requires humility and sacrifice. We see this in Jesus setting his face towards Jerusalem. It needs confrontation, as he showed with those opposing him. It is the pattern for all humanity. At times peace-making is as hard as a diamond. At others it is the glory of the crucified God, the conquest of evil through self-emptying.

Yesterday we saw both as we had the privilege at Lambeth Palace of a visit from Metropolitan Epiphaniy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which was given autocephaly through a Tomos of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 2019. It had been under the oversight of the Russian Orthodox Church since 1684.

In addition to a previous online call I had with Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Hilarion in February, we are seeking opportunities to meet further with the Russian Orthodox Church, but that has not been possible to date.

But yesterday over the course of three and a half hours of prayer and discussion we heard the most heart-breaking stories of atrocities against civilians and against Orthodox clergy in occupied territory.

Yet amidst it all the Patriarch spoke of love for all, especially enemies.

Of course, like all Ukrainians he feels passionately about the terrors and horrors visited on his country. The lies told and the remorseless fear and attack. But the passion is not showing itself in hatred. Nor is it showing itself in weakness, but in faith and determination and a plea for support for the Church in its humanitarian work - and for Ukraine.

Let us give that support as a Church as best we can. Let us also be determined in seeking peace, and we are asking the Government to re-return the funding of the unit in the foreign office which has been so seriously cut back and was set up, at church-urging, three years ago to specialise in mediation and peace building.

And let us also pray for and support our armed forces (Bishop) Nick mentioned they were being cut back.

And particularly pray for the chaplains the Armed Forces Synod is represented here.

Thank you.

2 min read

