



**PRAYING IN TIMES OF WAR
Teresa's Carmel awakens**



A REFLECTION, NOT JUST UKRAINE, AN INVITATION AND A SUGGESTION

A painful reflection

(TO PRAY IS TO AWAKEN AND TO EMBARK ON THE WAY, IN COMMUNION)

I summon you to a friendly and pressing call to prayer, which does not give up, to courageous faith, and to communion among brothers which is stronger than any war and any threat. From the quiet of Rome comes clear the voice of a brother of ours in the heart of Kiev (capital of Ukraine), thanking us for our prayer and support in the midst an environment of the sound of sirens and the nearby gunfire of the war that lurks.

I would like to wake up and wake you up, if you allow me, dear brothers and sisters, not to the terror of the war that paralyses, but to the humble courage of those who unite like the first Christians to pray with certain conviction that Jesus on the cross is the victor of history.

We are Discalced Carmelites. We come from hermits who were probably some crusaders and disarmed for another war no less arduous and difficult. We come from a woman who spent her life in an inner war to surrender to the Love of her life, and thus to conquer her own freedom as a child of God.

We are all in the same war.

To paraphrase St. Paul, if one part of the body suffers, we all suffer. We stand with the Ukrainian people, with the Russian people, and with all people against war, against all wars, even those that do not make the news because they are of no interest. The war did not start now. It has been going on for a long time in our land of the Ukraine, and in many corners of the world, even if it does not make the news. May I ask for your prayers for the victims of this war (Ukrainians and Russians) and their families. I relate to you that some Ukrainian mothers collect the identification of Russian soldiers killed on Ukrainian territory and send the news of their son killed on the front to their mothers in Russia. In gestures of humanity, amid the horror of war, is the response of good and courageous hearts that think of the mothers of the victims of the opposing side. The other war is those whose silent love sustains a world that seems to be crumbling. That love is victory and sustains the world.

War often reveals that we are outraged but not awake, frightened but not on our feet, angry but not on our way, in solidarity with those far away but not so attentive to those close to us, generous but safe in our comfort zones. To pray is to wake up to what we are not seeing and recognising about ourselves, our family, community, and country in this crucial hour of the world, the Church and Carmel.

An invitation

("VIENE DE CAMINO SI LE DAIS POSADA" John of the Cross) Carmel Welcomes

Dear brothers and sisters of the Carmel of Teresa and John of the Cross, we live in convents and houses that are well adapted and well arranged. I dare to invite you, as a father and brother, to put at the disposal of refugees, with due order and legality, so many spaces that we have empty, available and unused. Not to close ourselves off in our quiet wellbeing without hearing the cry of the homeless. Where possible, I mean especially in Europe at the moment, with the help of social agencies, to make space and some part of our convents available for those who have no

place to live now. What would our prayer be like if we have enough to eat and clothes to wear, a house and a roof, and we see these caravans of mothers with their children passing by and we do not offer them help. I do not mean what we need ourselves, but what we do not use and what is empty. I ask you to open your hearts to this call, to welcome and receive Jesus who is asking for a place to stay, because we have room. I thank you for the aid that you are already sending and that is reaching our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, and I encourage you to continue to be generous in the way that each one of you can and believes appropriate.

**A suggestion
(NOT ONLY UKRAINE)**

I commend to you, above all, so many situations of injustice, war, and self-interested forgetfulness of the media in many corners of the world, not only the Ukraine: the poor of the Sahel make no noise, nor do the children of sexual exploitation cry out. Peaceful people in some African countries are silenced by Islamic terrorism. Tribes are being massacred in the Amazon rainforest these days for economic interests. There have been floods in Australia, in the sister diocese of Lismore. The dream of many who try to reach Europe by the sea that bathes our coasts is drowned in silence. The cries of many abused women in countries where protest is systematically crushed do not reach us. Colombia is experiencing a frightening situation of political and economic uncertainty. So many kinds of white-collar mafias crush the other, even blessed by men and women who claim to believe in a God whom they crucify in the innocent. So many abandoned elderly people live alone in our big cities.... And hardly anyone talks about Syria or Afghanistan anymore. So many and so many situations... not only Ukraine, of course.

I ask you, brothers and sisters, not to remain silent about so many realities for which we want to pray together. Let us know the situation in your country, or in your region, so that we can be informed. We want to be a united body that suffers and celebrates as a family. This is our way to Easter, and the meaning of union with Mary and Joseph, already at the foot of so many crosses of history, visible and invisible, announcing the morning of Resurrection. Happy Easter journey, if we have gone up to Jerusalem with the suffering Christ!

Rome, 4th April 2022.
Day of the baptism of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

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General