

â??Evilâ?? act in Ukraine needs our prayers, says Australian Primate

The attack by Russia is an act of evil which impacts not only upon Ukraine, but Europe and the whole world, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Archbishop Geoff Smith, said today in a letter to the Church.

â??Our rightful response must be first to pray to call upon God to seek His intervention in the hearts and minds of our world leaders that they may once again choose peace over war,â?• the Primate said

â??We must pray for the people of Ukraine, for their safety and wellbeing and pray for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian forces. Finally we must pray for the strength of those who work across international borders for unity and harmony.â?•

Archbishop Smith, who is also Archbishop of the Diocese, echoed the call of the Archbishop of Canterbury to make this Sunday a day for Prayer for Peace.

â??I also encourage you to participate with the wider church in Pope Francisâ??s call to make Ash Wednesday, 2 March, a day of prayer and fasting for peace,â?• he wrote.

The Primate quoted Psalm 46 which declares Godâ??s message to us â??be still and know that I am Godâ?•.

â??This message continues to be the message for us today. It reminds us to have confidence in our God who is indeed a refuge and strength for all who call upon him,â?• Archbishop Smith wrote.

You can access the full text of the Primateâ??s letter here, which includes recommended prayers.

Earlier, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, in a joint statement, condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine as â??an act of great evilâ?•.

â??Placing our trust in Jesus Christ, the author of peace, we pray for an urgent ceasefire and a withdrawal of Russian forces,â?• The Most Rev Justin Welby and the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell wrote.

â??We call for a public decision to choose the way of peace and an international conference to secure long-term agreements for stability and lasting peace.

â??We invite Christians to make this Sunday a day for prayer for Ukraine, Russia and for peace.â?•

The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, meanwhile, affirmed the right of Ukrainians to defend their homeland and assured his people that God would watch over them.

â??At this historic moment, the voice of our conscience calls us all as one to stand up for a free, united and independent Ukrainian state,â?• said Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, in a statement to his people.

Archbishop Shevchuk was supposed to be in Florence, Italy, for a meeting with other bishops from Europe and around the Mediterranean, which Pope Francis was scheduled to address on Sunday, but stayed in Kyiv with his people.

In calling for on people to pray and fast for peace in Ukraine on Ash Wednesday on 2 March, Pope Francis urged believers and nonbelievers alike to combat the â??diabolical insistence, the diabolical senselessness of violenceâ?•.

The Pope said that due to the â??alarmingâ?• developments in the region, â??once again, the peace of all is threatened by partisan interests.â?•

â??I encourage believers in a special way to devote themselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day. May the Queen of Peace protect the world from the folly of war,â?• he said.

Like many around the world, he felt â??anguish and concernâ?• after Russian President Vladimir Putin recognised the independence of the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

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