

Devotion – Week of March 20, 2022 – Third Week of Lent

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

At the Atlanta Symphony last Thursday night, the new conductor, Natalie Stutzmann, spoke emotionally about the tragedy in Ukraine and noted that this war directly affects members of the orchestra, as well as her. She has friends in both Ukraine and Russia, and has performed often in Russia. She noted the horror of cousin fighting against cousin, brother against brother. She stated that those on stage “are just musicians, so what can we do?” Well, they decided to dedicate the performance of the Mozart Requiem to Ukraine, and then she asked us to stand as the ASO Chorus sang the Ukrainian national anthem. We were all deeply moved.

I was on Youtube this past weekend and found a new recording by John Rutter, the famous English composer, of a “Prayer for Ukraine.” He stated that he had heard this Ukrainian prayer and decided to set it to music. The link below will take you to that recording, performed by the Cambridge singers. The words in English are very simple:

God, save Ukraine
Give us strength, faith, and hope
Our Father
Amen

I just heard from an old college friend, Michael Andrews, who lived in for 2 years and served as a photographer for the Baba Yelka project there. This project, in rural areas of Ukraine, was founded to preserve folk songs, dances, stories, and culture of the native people there. He says, “Traditions there live in the practices and memories of villagers, mostly grandmothers. The Baba Yelka team is racing against time to preserve Kirovograd’s rich cultural history to inform and enrich future generations.” The Peace Corps published a photo essay by Michael about this effort. The link is listed below, as well as a link to the Baba Yelka project.

I hope you will listen to Rutter’s music, look through the Baba Yelka story, and pray that this wonderful country can be saved from destruction. I am reminded that this war is not men fighting men. It is also children and grandmothers in danger of not only losing their lives and their families, but their history as a unique people of God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjI3kVwI2-U>

<https://www.peacecorps.gov/stories/photo-essay-preserving-ukrainian-culture-baba-yelka-project/>

<https://babayelka.kr.ua>

May we all pray this week for peace.

Jeanne