

Will We Ever Give Peace a Chance?



**“Dear Lord [and Mission Friends],
What a madhouse the world is!” ***

Unless we choose to ignore the news—which sounds tempting sometimes—we are bombarded daily with a barrage of the saddest, cruelest, most horrific, most unbelievable, most absurd happenings, local and global. But ever since I was old enough to be aware of such things, I’ve considered the very worst of this barrage to be **the ever-present fighting of wars**. I think it was the 1968 My Lai Massacre, in which the U.S. killed 500 unarmed Vietnamese villagers, mostly women and children, which spurred me in those years to many a march or protest or angry college essay. In recent years I have devoted several mission newsletters to wars and their complexities, particularly those involving our mission areas, including massacres in Guatemala, genocide in Iraq, and the war in Ukraine.

Rulers from time immemorial, thirsting for more land, more riches, more power, have always commanded their armies **to kill** in order to defeat the enemy of the moment. And I find it incredible that in this day and age they are still killing to satisfy such ambitions.

*Anna Karenina, Leo Tolstoy

War’s atrocities and possible alternatives have been the topic of countless writings by the world’s greatest thinkers since the dawn of the written word. And so what can one possibly say that hasn’t already been said? I will merely attempt to stimulate our too-often complacent mindsets while also offering, from varied sources, some lesser-known but, I hope, thought-provoking quotes to ponder.

Surprisingly, it was a top World War II general, Omar Bradley, who stated, *“Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected ‘The Sermon on the Mount.’”* In further illustrating the absurd advancement of today’s weapons, astronomer Carl Sagan said, *“The nuclear arms race is like two sworn enemies standing waist deep in gasoline, one with three matches, the other with five.”* Yes, the tools of war have, of course, ‘evolved’ through the ages, to the point that now it’s just a matter of who pushes the button first. Not much else has changed, however. Human nature, it seems, remains constant—there will always be greed and so there will always be war. Sadly, we’ve rarely implemented the suggestion of Sun Tzu, a 5th century BC Chinese military strategist who wrote, *“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”*



A mourner visiting a memorial for her parents and siblings, killed when their house in Ukraine was bombed. She wasn’t home.

Perhaps more realistic for our world is to contemplate and try to answer one of comedian George Carlin’s typical play-on-words: *“How would it be possible to have a civil war?”* It’s not, of course. As explained by non-violence activist Louise Zwick in a 2022 *Houston Catholic Worker*, *“As long as men trust to the use of force...we must make sure our own force is...more bestial than the enemy’s. Only a ... more savage and brutal force will overcome him ...”*

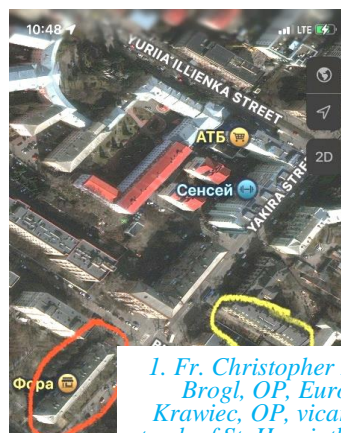
In a meditative poem on the war in Ukraine (but applicable to all war), Fr. Tim Conlan, our missionary in Rabinal, Guatemala, agrees: *“What caused the war? Ideas—formed in the polluted labyrinth of the brain waves of criminals planning to rob humanity of any possibility of rising above animals.”*



In “Masters of War,” Bob Dylan’s lyrics decry those warmongers as they command from their safe, well-appointed offices:

You that never done nothin'
but build to destroy,
You play with my world
like it's your little toy.
You put a gun in my hand
and hide from my eyes
And you turn and run farther
when the fast bullets fly...
You fasten all the triggers
for the others to fire
Then sit back and watch when
the death count gets higher.
You hide in your mansion
while the young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies
and is buried in the mud.

The narrator in Erich Maria Remarque’s World War I novel, *All Quiet On the Western Front*, illustrates all too clearly the exploitation of the almost interchangeable young troops on both sides: “...*I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, ... cast over an abyss of sorrow. I see how people are set against one another, and obediently, innocently slay one another...Now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, ... your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship ... Why do they never tell us ... that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death? Forgive me.*”



1. Fr. Christopher Fadok flanked by Frs. Thomas Brogl, OP, European socius, and Jaroslaw Krawiec, OP, vicar of Ukraine, in Krakow at the tomb of St. Hyacinth (before the attack). 2. Building on fire across the street from the priory. 3. Priory circled in yellow; destroyed building in red. 4. Piece of shrapnel from exploded drone.

I know there are certain causes that must be defended and others that must be opposed, and that there have been many times when the only choice is to fight, but why aren’t there more choices? As articulated by World War II conscientious objector Albert Dietrich, “*There are perhaps many causes worth dying for, but to me, certainly, there are none worth killing for.*” Or in Mahatma Gandhi’s words, “*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?*”

When pacifist Dorothy Day was criticized for not endorsing one side or the other during wars, she ...insisted on promoting nonviolent actions—prayer and fasting and (again) ‘The Sermon on the Mount,’ including generously receiving those seeking refuge from violence and slaughter. This summer, on his way to Krakow, Poland for a world-wide meeting of leaders in the Dominican Order, our Prior Provincial, Fr. Christopher Fadok, O.P., took the opportunity to visit the Polish Dominican Province in Kyiv where, due in large part to your generosity, the friars have been doing just that: receiving,

caring for, and protecting refugees and victims of the war in Ukraine since it began in February 2022, three and a half years ago.

But Fr. Christopher was privy to much more than he ever expected. He arrived at the Dominican priory on July 9, and for three hours during the dark early morning of July 10, the Russian Federation launched about 400 drones and 18 missiles, mostly in Kyiv, one of these striking a building just across the street from the priory. Father reported “the eerie whine of incoming projectiles, the terrible crash of impact...” Their house shook, he said, and they could hear shrapnel hit the roof. After creeping outside to see if there was anyone who needed assistance, the friars headed to the basement for shelter—a familiar procedure for them—but their guest, Fr. Christopher, was quite shaken and still gets chills watching the news footage.

How fortunate for those of us currently living in the U.S. to have never experienced a full-blown war here! But we shouldn’t have to live in the forest to know that trees are falling and to do what we can to save them and not to prevent their dying from entering our thoughts and prayers.

Certainly Fr. Christopher will not soon forget that terrifying night. But for many of us, sickened and outraged while watching the news of the first bloody bodies falling in Vietnam, or the first heads falling in Iraq, or the first mothers running with their babies in Ukraine, or the first unspeakable October 7 atrocities in Israel, and then seeing it all over and over, night after night, we eventually became desensitized and then forgot. A poem by twentieth century playwright and German exile Bertolt Brecht describes this process:

The first time it was reported
that our friends were being butchered,
there was a cry of horror.
Then a hundred were butchered
But when a thousand were butchered
and there was no end to the butchery,
a blanket of silence spread.
When evil-doing comes like falling rain,
nobody calls out "stop!"
When crimes begin to pile up,
they become invisible.
When sufferings become unendurable,
the cries are no longer heard.
The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.

And the opening of Fr. Tim's above-mentioned meditation on the Ukraine War hints of this phenomenon of desensitization:

**Battles rage with big guns blasting.
Screaming rockets fly to their mark,
scorching the earth and obliterating
dwellings of peaceful peasants
as their screams echo in the night.
Millions displaced, wounded, killed.
The land seeded with deadly mines
to plant fear, maim, or murder.
The war-weary pilgrims hurry
to cross the border to a neighbor.
We watch the news off and on, glad
that hope is on the way: more and
better guns for a counter offensive.
Ammunition may outlast the people
who resist, until there are no more.
But what can we do?**

Indeed, what *can* we do? In a 2023 speech entitled "365 Days of War in Ukraine," reprinted in the *Houston Catholic Worker*, Ukrainian pacifist Yurii Sheliashenko offered his vision: *"Both sides have so-called peace plans to secure all they want in an extremely violent manner and then make the other side accept the new power balance. But defeating the enemy is not a peace plan. Taking contested land is not a peace plan. Our humanity is at stake. The ability of humankind to live in peace and resolve conflicts without violence is at stake. Peace is not eradication of the enemy. It is remembering our universal human brotherhood...and...human rights. Governments and rulers of the East and West are corrupted by military industrial complexes...We must advocate ceasefire and peace talks, not only in Ukraine but everywhere, in all endless wars. We must learn and teach practical methods of living in peace, non-violent governance, and conflict management...We can achieve justice without violence, as...King said...This world is sick with endless wars...and must be healed with love, knowledge and wisdom..."* Our President seems to share this vision. Regardless of what one believes his motive is for working toward peace, at least he's pointing in the right direction, and our new pope is right there with him. Just a few days ago, Leo called for a day of fasting and prayer, *"while our world continues to be wounded by wars in the Holy Land, in Ukraine and in many other regions of the world."* He said we must ask Our Lady, Queen of Peace, to intercede to the Lord for *"peace and justice and to dry the tears of those who suffer because of the armed conflicts underway."* And he added that the President's diplomacy is reason for hope.



Our Lady, Queen of Peace

I wish I still believed that such a world could come to pass. I just don't think we will ever be able to stop war altogether, but we can and must do our part to help protect, provide essential services, and alleviate the suffering of innocent victims and the vulnerable. I was gratified upon hearing about the First Lady's letter to Putin, beseeching him to release the 35,000 Ukrainian children who were abducted and taken to Russia early in the war. *"Mr. Putin, you can singlehandedly restore [the children's] melodic laughter."* Before the letter, a thousand or so had been returned or escaped back to Ukraine, the others having been sent to Russian military camps for training or foster care to await adoption. Who knows if the letter will have any effect on Putin, but at least it reminded many, who had in fact forgotten, about this horrific war crime. And so it is incumbent upon all of us to become aware of the world's current atrocities, to send prayers and support commensurate with our capabilities, and to not forget or become numb.



I've come to realize that the primary reason I keep returning to the grueling topic of war is the children. **It's always been the children.** I share Dylan's fear and anger that he sings of in the last verse of "Masters of War":

You've thrown the worst fear
that can ever be hurled:

**Fear to bring children
into the world.**

For threatening my baby,
unborn and unnamed,
you ain't worth the blood
that runs in your veins.

It was another president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, ironically also a top general in World War II, who, like others quoted herein, recalled 'The Sermon on the Mount', though indirectly: *"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."*

Let us help reverse those priorities and support our Polish and Ukrainian Dominicans in their mission to care for the war's victims and refugees, especially the children. Please know that your gifts are received by them directly and totally and used for humanitarian purposes only (shelter, food, clothing, baby supplies, and medical supplies). Thank you for bearing with me.

Peace to us all,
Lesley Warnshuis



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in your will. Our legal name is:
Province of the Holy Name, Inc.
Dominican Mission Foundation.
[We are qualified as a 501(c)3
tax-exempt, non-profit organization.]

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www.dominicanmission.org
to watch our new video
on the Mexicali mission
and see some familiar
faces and buildings
come alive!**

Upcoming Mission Appeals

**If you are in the area,
come and hear our preacher.**

Oct. 11-12 SF (parish TBA),
Fr. Jordan Bradshaw, O.P.

Oct. 25-26 St. Thomas More,
Cottonwood Heights, UT,
Fr. Dominic Briese, O.P.

Oct. 25-26 St. Anthony of Padua,
Helper, UT, Fr. Joshua Gatus, O.P.