

RECTOR'S PINT

Is Vladimir Putin a happy man? He is an autocrat with dictatorial control and power, but I suspect it has not brought him peace. History is peppered with despots who had too much individual power and abused it with devastating and far-reaching consequences, it rarely ends well for them.

Jesus once asked the question, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but lose his soul?"

That though is the nature of the abuse of power. At the beginning of Lent, I reflected in a sermon about the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. They were, in fact, temptations for him to abuse his power, to use it to his own advantage. I reflected that we have a saviour who gave power away to serve others, and to take on evil, not to add to it. "Compare and contrast with the power structures of our world".

I hope and pray that by the time this is read, some sort of negotiated peace will have been reached and that the fighting will have stopped.

But against all the despots and dictators, against all the death, destruction and despair that results from their actions. I still believe this is God's world, although it seems to be fallen and broken. There is so much kindness and compassion and goodness which reflects the love of God. We saw this evidenced in the extraordinary and immediate response from Ukraine's European neighbours.

As individuals in small Oxfordshire villages, we might feel powerless, overwhelmed by a sense of disharmony, still navigating Covid, rising bills to pay, perhaps personal difficulties but then we compare with the sudden overwhelming and unjustified assault that Ukraine has undergone.

This has resulted in an extraordinary response here as well. People have donated bundles of emergency gear and clothes and generously given to the appeals that have sprung up. Many of us will by now know that at least one family from Ukraine is being welcomed to Great Milton, there might well be more locally as homes are opened by some who will be in positions to do this.

This generosity of course needs to be sustained. In considering our response to the crisis, as individuals, and as village and church communities we need to look at support in all areas.

Each of us has something to offer. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul tells his readers that they are all 'many parts, but one body', like them, all of us have complementary functions: However much we can give and help, I am sure that our villages will do all that they can.

On Easter Sunday we will once again affirm that ultimately God's purposes are far mightier, as we proclaim Jesus' victory over death, evil, and human sin. As we approach Holy Week, and Easter, we pray with all those caught up in conflict and suffering, in Ukraine and the many other conflicts around the world.

Simon