Columns
Spirituality



A woman with a child evacuates from a residential building damaged by Russian shelling in Kyiv, Ukraine, March 16. (CNS/Reuters/State Emergency Service of Ukraine)



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I have a sense of powerlessness as I reflect on the Ukraine situation; it brings to consciousness how the world order that I have taken for granted is breaking down. As I began to write this reflection, I stopped as I became aware that I was writing about this dispassionately, too cerebrally. This is an impasse for me, and so I was drawn to something German theologian Dorothee Sölle wrote.

She wrote in a 1976 piece that a person caught in impasse — in a no-way-out situation — must find a way to express this suffering. "If one cannot speak about one's affliction in anguish, anger, pain, lament, at least to the God within, one will be destroyed by it or swallowed up by apathy," she wrote.

Contemplative prayer for peace

Join me for a contemplative prayer for peace especially for Ukraine each Wednesday of Lent 12-12:15 p.m. EDT. Join online via Zoom or stop wherever you are and pray for peace.

She continued that we must begin with acknowledged powerlessness for only that "can activate creative forces that enable one to overcome the feeling that one is without power." Carmelite Sr. Constance FitzGerald's words echo this belief. "… responding with full consciousness of one’s suffering in the impasse yet daring to believe that new possibilities, beyond immediate vision, can be given."

This Lent, if you are feeling a sense of impasse, I invite you to lament, to give passionate expression to your grief and sorrow at what is happening in the world. You may want to write something or to simply find a private space to loudly express your pain. As we follow Jesus’ ministry and life, we find an example of someone who also faced impasse, gave expression to his pain and dared to believe in new possibilities.

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Here is my Lamentation for the World.

Why? Why? Oh, God are millions of people torn away from their homes, exiled to other lands,

their places of shelter destroyed and the land wasted?

Why are mothers and children separated from the men they love who are left to fight neighbors as in the days of old?

My God, have we not learned anything?

Where are You, Holy Wisdom, present through the ages, where are you now when decision-makers are faced with excruciating choices as to how to defend an unjust invasion now that there is a nuclear option?

How did we arm ourselves in ways that escalate violence rather than protect us from unjust assaults?

Holy Wisdom, where are you when we need to imagine new possibilities for peace?

Divine Compassion, where are you when economic sanctions are used to stop Mr. Putin's war and we see only inflation as prices increase at the gas pump?

How did we become so tolerant of our capacity to consume that we are blinded to the basic human needs of so many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world?

Divine Compassion, have you abandoned us to serve our own needs and desires first?

Holy and Loving One, what is happening to our world gone mad?

Where are you when we are facing chaos and must imagine new ways forward?

Where are you when all that we took for granted is shifting before our eyes?

Where are you when we need to know that Love continues to hold us together and that we all are one?

Jesus on the cross cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" With that lament he freed himself to experience the unimaginable possibility of life after death. May the hope of new life in the midst of such suffering be given to us all.

Amen.

This story appears in the **Lent** feature series. View the full series.