

Today the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven join our prayers with the global community for the people of Ukraine, at this deeply terrifying historical moment. We watch with moral outrage and horror as another nuclear weapons-wielding state is emboldened to abandon diplomacy in favor of international gangsterism. Killing indiscriminately with impunity; environmental destruction without boundary or responsibility; the plunging of millions into refugee status; the flouting of the very fundamentals of law, human rights, international cooperation and the authority of the United Nations - these are the common threads that tie together Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Ukraine, during this most blood-stained of centuries. They are also constitutive elements of the unmitigated evil that is constantly unleashed through the design, development and existence of nuclear weapons in any nation or people. As US Catholics, therefore, we believe that the starting point of our response should be to highlight the lesson of last Sunday's Gospel reading, Luke 6:39-45, which reads in part: *"How can you say to your brother [or sister], 'let me remove that splinter in your eye', when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye."*

As we unequivocally condemn the deranged behavior of Russia's dictator Vladimir Putin and his minions, we are obliged also to acknowledge our own government's role in creating this crisis. For more than thirty years now, US foreign policy in that region of the world has been pursued with a provocative agenda of destabilization, imperiling Russia's national security through the expansion of NATO right up to its borders. This project has been intensified in recent times by apostate evangelical Christian factions in Washington, which have openly admitted their desire to provoke world events that they believe will bring about the second coming of Christ. And over all of this madness and slaughter preside its silent partners, the only winners in any war today: US-based weapons contractor corporations like Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, General Electric and United Technologies (to name just a few), whose profits increase with every cluster bomb and missile launched, every body torn to pieces.

For our complicity with all of these forces that are literally driving the world insane, we beg the forgiveness of God and neighbor. While affirming our solidarity with both the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, we pledge noncooperation with any armed faction in this senseless conflict. To all soldiers we say: lay down your weapons. Your courage and sacrifice belong at the service of peace for the future of the human race, not to be spent in bloodshed on the altar of the national security state. Together, we can let the words of Martin Luther King Jr. echo through these times until they shake the world back into reality: *"The choice today is between nonviolence and non-existence."*

Amen.