

Pastoral Reflection
First Sunday of Lent
March 6, 2022

*The word is near you,
In your mouth and in your heart.*

“Please do cherish blue skies. Cherish every moment of your life.” This woman from Kharkiv was being interviewed by Cal Perry in Lviv where she had fled after her neighborhood was bombed and her neighbor killed. Her words stopped my reflections on some ways I could live a simpler life style. I could *choose* actions: eat a more plant-based diet, clean out a tote bag of “stuff” each week, take time to visit friends and neighbors, etc. I could make choices based on personal growth, community needs, and responses to the climate crisis. She did not get to choose how to simplify her life. She did not choose to be a refugee. As Cal Perry, the interviewer, remarked, “It’s a thing that happens to you. It happens in an instant. You have 10 minutes to get whatever you can carry and leave your home.”

In my reflections this Lent, I cannot escape feeling with the people of Ukraine, cannot fathom the decisions they have to make for their families and themselves, cannot imagine what they must feel starting over and depending on the care and charity of others for their most basic needs. What is the likelihood that many will be able to return to their homeland?

This is an age-old story. People are displaced by war and violence. They need to move because resources are depleted. The reading from Deuteronomy tells of the wandering Aramean who went to Egypt and became a nation, strong and prosperous. They were driven out by the Egyptians and left to wander in the desert seeking a new home. This story is familiar, but it takes on a new urgency when we see and hear the people who are being displaced in our own time. What makes the story of the people of Ukraine more difficult is that this story is lived today by many people throughout our world.

I don’t have answers, just a deep compassion that I hope will open my heart to the needs of others and to the rest of creation. I hope I can hear through them a word that is near me, that is in my heart. I hope I can respond faithfully to the challenge to speak up for peace and for actions to save our planet. May each of us find ways “to live simply so that others may simply live.”

A blue sky now takes on so much more meaning for me since I have been reminded to cherish it. This is a small piece of the abundance in our lives.

Lynne Schmidt, SSND