

13th March 2022

Costly

**“Dear sensibility! I source ... all that’s precious in our joys,
or costly in our sorrows.”**

Laurence Stern, A Sentimental Journey, ‘The Bourbonnais’

On the wall of my office hangs a calendar from *The Oldie* magazine, a publication I’ve subscribed to for many years. Each month the calendar offers two *Oldie* cartoons. One of them for March is set in a car-repair workshop. A forlorn customer has come to collect his car, only to be greeted by a mechanic in oil-stained overalls with: “I cleaned out your wallet for you, but the engine is still running a bit rough.” Anyone who’s been hit with a larger-than-expected bill for work on their car will appreciate this. Sometimes things cost much more than we bargained for.

Today we are faced with a high cost we never expected – the result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While we still look for “all that’s precious in our joys”, especially after two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, we now have to deal with all that is “costly in our sorrows”. The scarcity of oil and a surge in forecourt prices; the rising cost of natural gas, leading to an increase in home-heating costs; the potential of steeper rises in food prices; the upward pressure on inflation; an expected rise in interest rates ... costs we have to bear because what’s happening in eastern Europe.

Can I stand the cost? I hope I can ... Indeed, I must. Can we stand the cost, together, as a nation, as we seek to support our Ukrainian brothers and sisters in their pain? I hope we can. I pray we can.

In 2 Samuel 24, there’s a story of king David, who had messed things up with God. For restoration, the Lord commands David to offer a sacrifice on “the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite”. David wants to buy Araunah’s threshing floor so he can build an altar on it. But the humble man wants to offer the land freely to his king. David refuses. He insists on paying for the land. “No,” he says. “I will buy it from you at a price.”

I will not offer to God offerings that cost me nothing.

In our prayers for Ukraine, might we be aware of the costs that are involved, make the sacrifices we need to make, and choose not to offer to our God offerings that cost us nothing?

A prayer for today

“To give and not to count the cost ...” To pray, and bear the cost of loving actions.