

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Good Morning,

It's not only the Middle East that's in a state of high alert following the drone and missile attack by Iran on Israel. The whole world is fearing an escalation of the conflict with Prime Minister Netanyahu promising that the confrontation is 'not over yet'.

Yesterday morning on the steps of our village church as people were leaving there was an outpouring of nervousness about the state of the world.

In the Book of Common Prayer there's a special prayer for 'In time of War and Tumults'. Written hundreds of years ago it's as timely as ever giving us words 'to deliver us from the hands of our enemies'.

Specifically it encourages us to pray "abate their pride, assuage their malice and confound their devices". Pride, malice and devices are the vices of warmongers.

And if anyone is wondering how we should pray without taking sides then here's the word – 'abate'. Or as the Oxford English Dictionary defines it 'diminish' or 'do away with' or 'blunt' or 'weaken' whatever pride and malice are motivating them

Here I must confess I'm not a pacifist. My father was in the army and I went to a military boarding school founded for the orphans of soldiers. I support the principles of a just war yet respect pacifists. But at a basic level I believe it's not only acceptable but right to protect the innocent with force if necessary.

What appeals to my spirit is this prayer to abate pride and assuage malice, because it applies to both sides of a conflict. It's pride and malice that ramp up rage and aggravate the situation.

I'm mindful that that a version of this prayer was in existence during the English Civil Wars where there was a great need for malice to be assuaged. The origin of that word 'assuage' means 'to sweeten'. It's almost an oxymoron. But in the present conflicts around the world there's an urgent need to sweeten the malice so that the slaughter of innocents might be abated.

You could even add it to the Sermon on the Mount – not just 'Blessed are the Peacemakers' but 'Blessed are those who have the courage to sweeten their malice'.

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