“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”   Saint Augustine wrote those familiar words in his Confessions, or autobiography, at the turn of the fifth century.

It brims with meaning for us Christians. “You have made us for yourself” reminds us that it is God’s act, and not our own that has brought us into being, and that creative act flowed freely from God.

Our restless hearts call out to us repeatedly, manifested either by a kind of impatience we don’t fully understand or bouts of feeling out of place in the world.

We have a sense of knowing that end the end our true rest will be with God, though we have no idea what form that will take, only that it will be relief from everything that troubles us in this life. When we pray that one who has died will “rest in peace” has as much to do with peace beyond our understanding as it does with resting in any way we know about rest.

All this came to mind when I read that line from Paul’s letter to the Philippians: “our citizenship is in heaven.” It started me thinking about where we are truly at home, which led me to Augustine’s declaration. It’s a bold statement that, like Augustine’s, packs in much more significance than can be held in its five words. “Citizenship” strikes a resounding note in today’s world. Jim Dyke said to me after the Wednesday evening session on the collects something along the lines of how incredible it is that this far into the twenty-first century there are still brutes in the world who can do what Putin is doing in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian people are courageously fighting to defend their homeland, the place where they can feel safe and live in as much peace as the world has to offer.

And yet there it is in Putin and his thugs, the human (though it seems sub-human and is certainly inhumane) desire to have more—more power, more territory, more satisfaction of the pride of sin by taking from others what is theirs, including their freedom, their very lives.

As I said to Jim it is incredible to me that this far into the evolution of the human species we evidently still think the best way to resolve differences is by waging war, killing each other in wholesale fashion.

It is particularly alarming when we spend resources and lives and money and water . . . and on and on . . . on this methodical killing of each other, resources we could otherwise direct toward eradication of illness, hunger, and homelessness. (There’s that word again: home.)

Altogether it sounds like a truly Lenten theme. In our collect we pray for God to be gracious to those who have gone astray. Astray from God’s ways. I printed out the collect and readings as I always do, and beside “gone astray from thy ways” I wrote, “so . . . everybody?” Because there we have it on this Second Sunday in Lent, our common failing to follow God’s ways unerringly.

Putin is putting it on the world stage: utter disregard for human life and dignity, absence of concern for the most vulnerable, condoning—no, directing—the killing of regular citizens, including children and patients in hospitals.

And it is fitting that we should be directing money from our own pockets—you and I—toward food and shelter and clothing for the victims of these horrors. It is also appropriate—and yes, I get the irony of this in light of my anti-war comments just seconds ago—that our nation and others are contributing in various manners to the military defense of the Ukrainian people.

While events in that part of the world have galvanized our attention on human cruelty in the most despicable terms, we might use this moment to look inward as well. Where and when are we willing to place our own needs and wishes above others’?

The point is not to find something to feel guilty about and then wallow in our guilt. That serves absolutely no purpose in God’s world. Finding where we have gone astray, in the words of the collect, serves a purpose only insofar as it moves us toward changing behavior and attitudes. We don’t have to be power-hungry despots in order to benefit from this introspection. As a matter of fact, despots and would-be emperors seem to be immune to that practice.

We, though, by God’s grace (right there in the collect), believe and pray that we can be brought again with penitent hearts to hold onto God’s unchangeable truth, the truth of God’s constant and never-ending love for us. And then, also by God’s grace, our restless hearts will eventually find their rest in God. + + +

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from thy ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of thy Word, Jesus Christ thy Son; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**A reading from the book of Genesis.** [15:1-12,17-18] *The People are seated*

The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. Then he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates”

### Psalm 27 *Dominus illuminatio*

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? \*

the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh, \*

it was they, my foes and my adversaries, who stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army should encamp against me, \*

yet my heart shall not be afraid;

4 And though war should rise up against me, \*yet will I put my trust in him.

5 One thing have I asked of the Lord; one thing I seek; \*

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;

6 To behold the fair beauty of the Lord \* and to seek him in his temple.

7 For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter;\*

he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling and set me high upon a rock.

8 Even now he lifts up my head \* above my enemies round about me.

9 Therefore I will offer in his dwelling an oblation with sounds of great gladness; \*

I will sing and make music to the Lord.

10 Hearken to my voice, O Lord, when I call; \* have mercy on me and answer me.

11 You speak in my heart and say, “Seek my face.” \* Your face Lord, will I seek.

12 Hide not your face from me, \* nor turn away your servant in displeasure.

13 You have been my helper; cast me not away; \*

do not forsake me, O God of my salvation.

14 Though my father and my mother forsake me, \* the Lord will sustain me.

15 Show me your way, O Lord; \*

lead me on a level path, because of my enemies.

16 Deliver me not into the hand of my adversaries, \*

for false witnesses have risen up against me, and also those who speak malice.

17 What if I had not believed that I should see the goodness of the Lord \*

in the land of the living!

18 O tarry and await the Lord’s pleasure; be strong, and he shall

comfort your heart; \* wait patiently for the Lord.

**A reading from Paul’s letter to the Philippians**. [3:17-4:1]

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Luke. [13:31-35]

Some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”