



東本願寺ロサンゼルス別院

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

ESTABLISHED IN 1904

HARMONY
Rinban Noriaki Ito

In early March, the major topic in the news has been about the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army. It has been so sad to see the destruction of residential areas in many cities of the country and the endless stream of the elderly, women, and children fleeing to neighboring countries such as Poland.

What is so sad is that the Ukrainians did nothing to provoke the invasion by the Russian armed forces. Normally, when two countries are at war, both were at least somewhat responsible for the conflict. As our Chief Administrator, Bishop Wataru Kigoshi wrote recently in his statement regarding the invasion of Ukraine, *"our organization has a negative history of blindly following the policy of the Japanese government during World War II, voluntarily cooperating with the war by pushing many people to the battlefields."* In 1995, a "No-more-war Resolution" was implemented. It is an encouragement *"to work together with all people to realize a happy and peaceful international community that no longer permits war, transcending all ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences."*

Harmony is a word associated usually with music. It is when different instruments, different voices, evoke different tones and melodies that blend together perfectly. So, in everyday life, it refers to different people with different opinions blending together like beautiful music.

We have seen the divisions in our country over the past few years. Somehow, we seem more divided than in any period of our recent history that I can remember. But on a topic like the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army, we are united in condemning what their President has done. I admire the thousands of Russian people who protest to the point of being arrested themselves against the aggression their country has leveled on their neighbors. And, of course, I admire the courage and the resiliency of the Ukrainians.

We talk often of the teaching of interdependence, of how we are connected to each other even if we don't realize it. What happens on the other side of the world affects us. With the vast coverage in the news, we cry together with the people, the children who are the victims, the men who fight to resist the invasion, and the women who take their children and the elderly to the safe havens of neighboring countries. They are reminding us that we are dependent upon each other. And what they hope for is the restoring of the harmonious relationship that has existed between their two countries before now. That harmony between all people is what we who are members of Higashi Honganji are entrusted to work toward.

We can look to two lessons of wisdom...one the words of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, the wonderful Buddhist teacher who shared the teaching with so many, and the other the wisdom of a contemporary American.

From his book, *Being Peace*, *"If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace."*

The other are the well-known words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

They remind us that harmony starts with me and with you.