

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022

*Acts 7:59, 60 "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep."*

*Revelation 6:9 "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained."*

'He's a martyr to the cause.' 'What a martyr!' We tend to use the term 'martyr' lightly implying amused derision. There was nothing laughable about the martyrdom of Stephen. He fearlessly proclaimed the word of God and berated the church officials for their ungodly behaviour. He even forgave them as he was being stoned to death.

It is said that the God fearing Abel, slain by his jealous brother Cain was the first martyr and there have been many since. Maybe the defenders of the steel works in Mariupol in doggedly refusing to abandon their country and their freedom will be considered martyrs.

To be a martyr you are expected to have always followed a creed, religious or otherwise, through thick and thin before making the ultimate sacrifice. Thankfully few of us have to face this final outcome but we should always calmly and resolutely proclaim our beliefs in the face of 'amused derision'.