



Monastic Musings

Living in and Practicing the Presence of God

Summer 2016



This newsletter is dedicated to all those who have lost their lives or were injured by the attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando FL. You are in our daily prayers! To the families and loved ones who are suffering due to the attack, you will always be in our prayers also. So many lives have been affected who should not have had to deal with this terror!

Teach Love Not Hate

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

As I sit here writing this article, I realize that nothing was learned from this attack other than the LGBTQ communities anywhere in the US are still not safe. There continues to be so much hate in this country for one reason or another. It is just a shame that people cannot learn to get along.

There is a constant pushing from someone or some “organization” that their ways are the only way. It is time for this to stop. It is also time for the country that has always prided itself on being the melting pot of the world to be the actual melting pot, that is, to learn to accept people for being a child of the Holy Creator, no matter what their faith/beliefs are. We are all children of the Holy Creator and thus all have been endowed with goodness and love in our hearts. Unfortunately, religion seems to always get in the way of goodness and love. Religion in so many ways teaches hate and that is sad. Some churches say “love the sinner, but hate the sin”. Well, in that statement, you are already setting up the person to be hated since you are calling him or her a sinner. Maybe they are a sinner by your church’s rules but not by the Holy Creator’s laws. People walk around and say “What would Jesus do?” But really, they should be saying “What DID Jesus do?” Notice the difference. Jesus is our example of how to handle things in life. Instead, people want to assign to Jesus and the Holy Creator things we feel they would say or do. That is the wrong move. Jesus taught us to be very loving to everyone whom we meet in our lives. We as humans have a very bad habit of mocking, ridiculing, and laughing at



anyone who does not meet the rules that have been taught to us by our churches. Excuse me, but who says your church is the ruling party in this country and thus all my life has to be focused on that way to perceive life? To be honest, that is why there are so many churches throughout this country! Look at all the vigils that happened after the tragedy in Orlando, FL. All of the different churches came together to voice their concern and support. And this is as it should be, but see what happens the next week. The churches are back to fighting one another and teaching hate once again.

You know, if you just would take time to talk with people you might find out that there is much you have in common with them. Yes their religion might be different from yours, but really, is that a problem? It should not be since this country was founded on freedom of religion! Over my many years and my traveling throughout this country, I have come to know and appreciate many different people and even some of their religions. Yes, I may not always agree with their teachings that lead to hate, but I try hard to find parts of their religion that lead the person to be loving to others. It is really enjoyable for me to sit and discuss religion with others who have a different religious faith than I do. It has opened my eyes in so many ways that I cannot even count the ways at this point. But what I have learned is that deep within the different religions, is the seed of the Holy Creator's love. We humans have done our best to cover over that seed of love and project hate instead and to use religion as a weapon to destroy and control others around us. When will we ever learn? The Holy Creator is only Love!

Challenge Hatred

by: Reverend Myrella LeClair

As I write this article, it is several weeks after the Orlando massacre. The sun is shining; the birds are chirping, and life goes on. I am still feeling incredulous and saddened by this horrific hate crime against the LGBTQ community. It would be so easy to just sink into despair and dwell in the darkness of hate, but hatred only breeds more hatred. We need to take a breath - to breathe in God – so that we can see that there is Light in this terrible darkness. To the people of Orlando and everywhere who are supporting the victims and their families, thank you for demonstrating to the world that Love is not only the *better* way but the *only* way. Thank you also for showing us that there are many ways to aid and to support the victims and their loved ones. You have taught us how to act toward one another no matter what our differences may be. What an inspiration after seeing the hatred espoused and perpetrated by the Westboro Baptist Church, Pat Robertson, and other fundamentalist “Christians” who preach and practice hatred towards the LGBTQ community as well as towards those of other religions and ethnicities. How can these “Christians” who spout hate and act hatefully towards other people say that they are followers of Jesus when Jesus preached and practiced only love? There were no exclusions attached to Jesus’ command to “love one another”:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 NKJV)

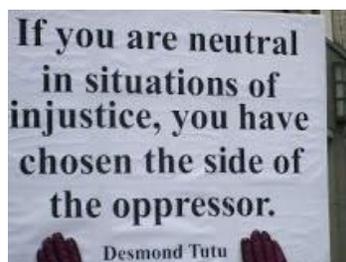
That is the one commandment that surpasses all others. If we cannot find it in our heart to love then at the very least, let us act respectfully toward all people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, color, sex, ethnicity, religion, or *lack of belief* in God. Far too often, ministers/leaders of the various religions have taught their adherents to hate those who do not believe or agree with their doctrines or their concept of God or those who do not believe in God. These religious leaders teach hatred of those whom they *judge* to be sinners. Religious extremism of any kind is still extremism. It does not matter if it is practiced by radical Muslims or radical Christians. Hate is still hate no matter how the haters justify it. Humans have committed atrocities in the name of God for centuries, and these atrocities continue today. It is time for those of us who disagree with the religious extremists to lead the way toward stopping hatred of any kind by ensuring that no act of hatred goes unchallenged. That does not mean that we act violently toward anyone; however, it does mean that we speak out and find ways to address the hatred. When we challenge other people's hatred, the one thing that we cannot do is to sink to the level of the haters and become the oppressors. We do have a choice as to how we act toward others and need to reflect on what hatred that we might be knowingly or unknowingly harboring in our minds and hearts and overcome our own hatred.



There is much wisdom to be found in the following Cherokee proverb:

"A Native American grandfather talking to his young grandson tells the boy he has two wolves inside of him struggling with each other. The first is the wolf of peace, love and kindness. The other wolf is fear, greed and hatred. "Which wolf will win, grandfather?" asks the young boy. "Whichever one I feed," is the reply."

Let us choose then to feed the "wolf of peace, love, and kindness" that is within us so that when we challenge hatred, we choose to do so with love as Jesus did.

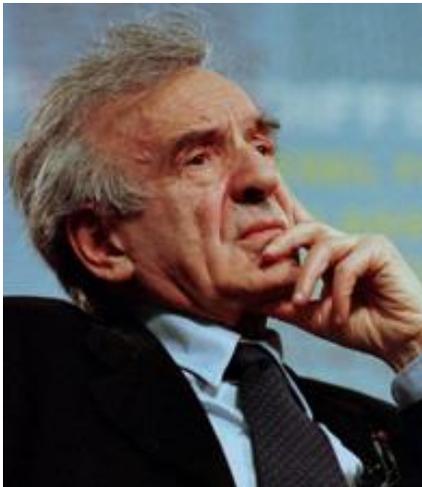


The Voice of the Voiceless – Elie Wiesel (1928-2016)

by: Father Ron Lahti

We've all been horrified by the senseless violence and killing in Orlando, Baghdad, Hebron, Turkey in past few weeks. I say "horrified", yet I really think because not a week goes by that there isn't yet another mass murder, we've actually become pretty de-sensitized to the killing. But, to be polite, we say we are "horrified". And politeness is all it is. If we were really "horrified", our horror would be followed by actions to see that such atrocities are stopped. For most, our active response to these atrocities is attending a prayer vigil, lighting some candles, and singing "Amazing Grace", and then going about our normal lives leaving it up to "them" to fix the problems.

Somewhat dimmed by the mass murders here and abroad last week was the passing of a great man, a Nobel Laureate, Elie Wiesel. For those who do not know, he is a survivor of the Nazi holocaust – a thinker who tried to articulate the feelings of those who survived, and those who did not. His book, Night, chronicles the experience of the concentration camps through the eyes of young boy – himself. He has been lauded as the "Voice of the Voiceless" for his work not only for, and with, holocaust survivors, but also for giving voice to all of the oppressed and "voiceless" of our world. Elie Wiesel was one voice who spoke up for Gay men during the onset of the AIDS epidemic when most other notables took a "what should I care about those people" attitude. I was fortunate to know Rebbe Wiesel while I was a teaching assistant/student in the Department of Religion at Boston University in the 1980s. He was a thoughtful, compassionate man who wrestled with man's inhumanity and G-d's apparent lack of interest in it.



One of Rebbe Wiesel's teachings was that, when faced with catastrophic sorrow and loss, wallowing in self-pity, resentment, and despair does nothing. "Because I remember I despair, because I remember I have the duty to reject despair" he famously said during his Nobel Prize speech in 1986. The key is to reject the self-pity and take action to correct the offending issue, or if that's impossible, take action on behalf of someone else who is in need. He would be one of the first to say prayer meetings mean nothing without action. Countless prayers went up during the Holocaust, but it did not stop until **people** corrected the evil.

Likewise, the many present evils we face will continue until we decide to take action to correct them. Of course, we can take action with our votes this fall for our President and members of Congress. But we also have choices that we make every day. If we are horrified by violence in our society, we can each ask ourselves: Do I want to watch those violent movies/television shows? Do I want to allow my child, or me, to play violent video games? Do I really need to perpetuate a culture of violence by owning guns? Do I need to "flip off" that rude driver, or make a caustic remark to that disinterested shop clerk or wait-person? How do I communicate with those close to me

– is it loving and interested, or cynical and sarcastic? Do we stand nervously by when someone tells an off-color “joke” about “fags” or “niggers” or “kikes” or _____, well, you can fill in the blank. Or, do we challenge their ignorance with truth? We all have countless opportunities to “be the change we want to see” to quote Mahatma Gandhi. St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta said “We are not called to do great things, only little things with love.” I believe that with each “little thing with love” that we do, in some spiritual sense we raise the world just that much more, opening another tiny crack for the Light to shine in.

Finally, I leave with one last quote by Rebbe Wiesel “**“I know and I speak from experience, that even in the midst of darkness, it is possible to create light and share warmth with one another; that even on the edge of the abyss, it is possible to dream exalted dreams of compassion; that it is possible to be free and strengthen the ideals of freedom, even within prison walls; that even in exile, friendship becomes an anchor.”** May his memory be a blessing.

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All writings are the views of the author(s) on a particular subject and are meant to challenge your thinking so as to help you grow in your spiritual walk with God.

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