

With all that is happening in our country these day, all that has been happening in the past weeks leading up to our June session, trying to figure out where to begin this exercise has been hard and painful, but I knew I had to find a way to start. When I was able to pull myself away of helicopters flying died down, it was nearly intended or expected to and my community have Corona and Racism. As susceptible to both. I because as I thought gather information things would happen to my progress. In March addition to receiving messages regarding the Covid-19 or from people okay during my time of from the Seminarians of Color Conference in Washington D.C. All through April and May my time was devoted to teaching on Zoom amid the continued texts and emails. Throughout all of this time, I struggled to pull myself away from the television that was feeding me information necessary for my and my family's health and welfare. Then a member of my community was murdered while the whole world watched. Now the phone calls, texts and emails have doubled and I have forced myself to turn off the television. I am angry and I feel helpless - not Hopeless - but I do feel helpless. I want to do something to make a difference but what? How can I contribute to why community, my city, my church? How do I demand justice with my mask on? How do I make my voice heard through my mask without appearing to be a violent threat when on some level I probably am one? What will justice look like for me? What will justice look like From me? What does the Lord require of me? What does the Lord require of you? What does the Lord require of US?...



I can hear the prophet Micah, crying out, “what does the Lord require of you, but to Do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”¹ But that was not an answer, that was a question posed by the prophet. When I listened again, I heard despair. Micah’s cries go out against the people’s political and religious abuses of power. The people had gotten comfortable and in their great comfort become blind to the injustices in their society. How does a people reach a place of such blindness that they do not know that the Lord requires that they Do justice, not be just but DO justice?

A series of novellas by Giovanni Boccaccio titled “The Decameron” offers some insight into how wealth and advantage can impair people’s abilities to empathize with the hardships of others.² “The Decameron” details events of the Black Death, which when contracted could lead to death within four to seven days. The Black Death killed from forty to fifty percent of Europe’s population, including some members of Boccaccio’s family. He begins by describing how the rich secluded themselves in their homes stocked with quality wines, provisions, music and other entertainment. The very wealthiest retreated to their countryside estates, leaving the middle class or poor to fight for their lives and in many instances die in the neighborhoods from which they could not flee.

“The Decameron”, after detailing the events of the plague, continues with a series of 100 stories narrated by ten of the nobles who fled. The forward began with the proverb, “It is inherently human to show pity to those who are afflicted”, but goes on to present a variety of characters sharply indifferent to the pain of others. Boccaccio’s goal with these novellas seems to have been to make us aware that we can sometimes think of ourselves as upstanding and moral and yet be unaware of our indifference to others.

We, in this country, all live with some portion of privilege as Americans and as Christians. The challenge is to not become indifferent. We must remember that there is a force greater than any privilege, that force is death. Death is a neutralizer. Although privilege does not allow for escape from death in the sense of physically dying, it should also dissolved in the waters of our Baptism. Baptism allows us all to share citizenship in

¹ Micah 6:8, NRSV

² McKinley, Kathryn, “How the Rich Reacted to the Bubonic Plague Has Eerie Similarities to Today’s Pandemic” *The Conversation* April 16, 2020 accessed June 4, 2020

the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God.³ Just as the pall covers the casket, and covers privilege, so do the waters of our Baptism. We all die the same death to sin and we are all cleansed, forgiven, resurrected and adopted into the same family, the household of God. We must also allow the waters to clear our vision so that we recognize the value in all of God's children. Colorblindness is not a virtue, it is a means to ignore the value of all of our differences, to ignore all of the varied gifts and talents that live in the diversity of the kingdom of God. Not everyone has the privilege of colorblindness.⁴ Paul, in Galatians, reminds us that as we were baptized into Christ we were clothed in Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free.... For we are all one in Christ Jesus and therefore heirs according to the promise.⁵ Paul is not suggesting that we are the same, but that we are ONE in Christ.

Micah's question was rhetorical because he knew that somewhere deep inside the people knew what they should do. The prophet sought to remind them and to warn them of the need for change and for action. The cries of Micah were to action, the cries of Micah were to DO justice. In the synoptic Gospels the lawyer or scribe asked Jesus must he do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."⁶ From this statement in our Gospels, we come to understand justice as the consequence and expression of love.⁷ Having to love all of your neighbors as yourself will lead to some level of discomfort. For some it will be the discomfort of not trusting that motives are sincere. For some it will be the discomfort of seeing yourself through a lens other than your own and then acknowledging what may have been unconscious behaviors and/or attitudes.⁸

We can not afford to continue to avoid this place of discomfort because it is through the experience of this discomfort that growth happens. Struggles such as this

³ BCP Catechism, Holy Baptism p. 858

⁴ Halstead, John, Contributor "The Real Reason White People Say 'All Lives Matter' -The Problem With "Colorblindness" " Huffpost, July 25, 2016 updated July 26, 2017 accessed June 4, 2020

⁵ Galatians 3: 27-29, NRSV

⁶ Luke 10:27-28, NRSV

⁷ Sedgwick, Timothy The Christina Moral Life: Practices of Piety (Church Publishing 2008) p. 95

⁸ Halstead, John "The Real Reason"

lead to new life. We must choose to struggle together against injustice and not against one another. We must wade through our troubled baptismal waters together. We must become vulnerable to one another, willing to move beyond the boundaries of our comfort zone. We must engage one another with a listening ear, an ear willing to hear and acknowledge one another's truth, realizing that we are not the same, but we are one. Change is challenging, the struggle is real but, change and struggle we must and I would offer that if we allow ourselves to be changed and if we don't run away from the struggle, the injustice of the plague of racism that is seeking to divide us as a nation and devour our country, we will do justice together. This is what the lord requires of US.