

Several days ago, I ran across the following words from Langston Hughes, in a comic strip, no less. The strip appeared before the shootings in Norway and Seattle, and other places:

“I’m so tired of waiting, aren’t you, for the world to become good and beautiful and kind? Let us take a knife and cut the world in two, and see what worms are eating at the rind.”

These aren’t cheerful words, to say the least. But I found them compelling, especially in light of recent events, and I wrote them down. I realized, once again, that there are times when a lament is appropriate, even necessary, to give voice to. I found myself asking once again, “What are we to do?”

What is our response, as we see another mindless and inexplicable killing? One answer, in fact it should be our first answer, is to look at Jesus. In our Gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus withdraws to a deserted place after the death of John the Baptist. But the crowds follow Him, and Matthew tells us: “When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.” Later on, we hear how Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish and fed thousands of people, giving the food to the disciples to give to the crowds.

Jesus’ response was to keep going. He did not let the vastness of the crowd, nor the death of John the Baptist, paralyze Him. He did not let the opposition of the Pharisees, nor the incomprehension of His disciples, nor the fickleness of the crowds, nor the certainty of the Cross, keep Him from healing and feeding the people. When the disciples approach Jesus and suggest that he dismiss the crowds so that they can get something to eat, He says to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” I always imagine this as an example of Jesus’ sense of humor. But in fact, Jesus actually enables the disciples to do just as He said! He takes the loaves and the fish that they give Him, multiplies them, and gives it *to them* to feed the people.

If we look at our lives, we see that Jesus has kept going with us. As St. Paul tells us in our second reading from Romans, neither *no thing* nor *no one* can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ! And so, as Jesus has done with us, so are we called to do. We are called to keep going. We are not to be paralyzed by the seeming futility of our actions, or the immensity of the problems affecting the world. There is a writing attributed to Mother Teresa called “Anyway.” There isn’t enough space here to share the whole thing, but I’d like to share a couple of lines: “The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.”

Sometimes we forget how much God gives us to do what we’re called to do. God pours out grace upon us all the time. We have the Word, and the sacraments, and the love of God in Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus multiplied the little the disciples had, and fed thousands, Jesus can take what we have and do wonderful things through us.

So, even though extremists use violence, let us be extreme in our *nonviolence*. Let us be extreme in Christian love for each other and for the world! In the face of hatred and acrimony, violence and death, we can still have hope. As God says through

the prophet Isaiah in our first reading, “Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life.” We can have life, if we listen to and follow Jesus.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we keep going.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP