

Roslyn. June 15, 2016

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you and mercy in the name of the Prince of Peace, the same Christ our Lord who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

In these past several days, we have seen on television, read in newspapers, and talked about the horrible massacre in Orlando, Florida. I am not one who rushes to snap decisions, especially when matters are rife with complication and layer upon layer of uncertainty. But it seems now the time has come to speak to the unthinkable reality that happened. I write you as your pastor...and I share my prayerful thoughts.

In these few days, my meditation has focused on the words of the Prophet Isaiah—"In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills: the Lord shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2, 4) We do not live in those days yet, at least not fully, but those days are surely coming. But we do have the sure hope that we as Christians, those who possess the sure promise of God, can and do live in the reality of God's coming kingdom in these days, in this present—now. The promised reign of peace is not something that is only to come, but it is something that we experience now.

But we do not only experience it now. We as Christians are called to work toward justice and peace for all. It is our baptismal calling, as those who go forth to bear Christ to the world, as those called to be Christ for the world. Living in the kingdom now means working for the betterment of all, in whatever capacity God has granted to us. The reality of human sinfulness and evil still exists, but we do not simply throw up our hands and pine away that nothing can be done. God has given us hands and feet, hearts and minds, and tongues and brains to put into action the good that we know. Will we always do the right thing? No—but doing nothing is seldom the right thing to do.

Not all of us are called to be activists, but we are all called to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." We are called to do all those things. In these trying days, we will hear a lot of rhetoric. We will hear reasoned arguments about rights and responsibilities. We will hear points made about government overreach and personal protection. We will hear rationalizations based on fear and misinformation. At the end of the day, we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

But do not be lulled by the promise of false humility. Walking with God always means taking a risk—the risk of reproach and censure, of chastisement and disdain. To walk humbly with God is to climb the hill of Calvary and bear the suffering of each other—even those who are different from us. In these days, we bear the suffering of gays and lesbians across this country, and even the whole world. We must admit the church's complicity in a culture that has allowed hatred toward difference to thrive. We must acknowledge our own complicity in that culture. But mere

acknowledgement is not enough. We must change our hatred to love, exchange our ostracism for welcome. We must not only pray, but we must also be doers of the Word.

Our society is surely broken, and it will never be as God intended until Christ returns. But we as Christians are called to love one another. We are called to rely not on our own understanding but to trust in the Lord. We are called to seek justice and peace in all the earth, just as our Lord promised to usher in a new age of peace. We are God's hands and feet in the world, but we do not do this work alone. We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, and God himself is right alongside us as we face these problems.

How is God calling us to act? Is God calling us to write to those who have the power to make change happen? Is God calling us to open our doors still wider in welcome? Is God calling us to speak out when it is uncomfortable? We are called...each and every one of us, to acts of kindness and mercy—but most of all, we are called to trust God above all else. However God is calling you to walk humbly with him, know that he is with you throughout it all. It will not be easy, but the way of the cross is never easy. It is the way of death—of a death that is but a gateway to eternal and abundant life.

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Daniel