Columns
Social Justice



(Unsplash/Jisoo Kim)



by Winnifred Lepcha

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

June 14, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

It was raining. The car was speeding along smoothly. A cooling breeze passing through the car kept the passengers comfortable. We were all wrapped in our own thoughts: talking, laughing, listening to music or just quietly enjoying the ride.

Being seated at the window of the speeding car, I was delighting in the freshness of the early-morning air, with the plants and the trees washed by the rain, as we headed toward the hills — leaving behind the crowds and the noise of the town.

After crossing through the crowded town, the car was entering a quiet and still section of the road in the midst of the jungle. The greenery, the peculiar silence, and the melodious singing and chirping of the birds caught my attention.

I was engrossed in listening to the varied music coming from the deep forest, when I saw a lady crawling at the roadside. It was a deserted area in the dark forest — with no houses, no one walking there. The woman was half-naked, and the clothing that was left on her body was torn apart. She was bleeding as if she had been sexually abused and seemed like she might be mentally challenged. She seemed too weak to stand on her feet, and no one was there to lift her up.

The car passed by. I was completely upset by the awful sight, which remained imprinted on my mind. The car did not stop, nor did any of the passengers say anything about her. Some apparently didn't even notice her crawling there. I didn't know what to do — had no one to speak to because I didn't know anyone in the car — and we passed the woman quickly. We left the place far behind, but it traveled with me for the rest of my journey, disturbing my thoughts.

Question after question arose in me. How can we be so inhuman toward other human persons in dire need of care, concern, love and respect? How can one barely notice, or let go of what we see so easily?

Advertisement

We have so much to talk about in life — finance, beauty, name, fame, mercy and compassion — but we have no hands to stretch out to the needy. All around us we see beggars, the lame, the blind, the sick, the old, the abandoned. Don't we have anything for them? What have we been to them?

In other words, we speak a lot about love and charity, care and concern. But do we really have the heart to love one who is in pain?

I need not go to distant places to find persons in pain who need help, who need care and love. We have them around us in our family, in our community, our neighborhood.

Have I opened my eyes to see their pain? Am I sensitive to what the person sitting beside me is going through? It seems we are blindfolded and can't see the other person; we have lost our senses and have been walking like dead people. We are human but have forgotten how to have a human nature. God created us in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27) and commanded us to love one another (John 15:12). When did we lose our likeness to God? How often have we been keeping the commandment of love?

The world today has been growing selfish and self-centered, and it is infecting all of us. In his first letter, St. John says "Anyone who says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother is a liar since no one who fails to love the brother whom he can see can love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). When our words and actions are not oriented toward the good of others then we are surely becoming liars.

The disturbing sight that I saw that day has left behind a great challenge for me. Though years have passed since that day, that image has not faded from my sight.

The car in which I was traveling just passed by her, but she is still journeying with me. What if she were my mother, sister or my aunt crawling at the deserted roadside? Where did she go? Who took care of her? Who cleaned her wounds? The questions and that poignant sight still linger in my mind and disturb me.