Columns
Spirituality
Social Justice



"Jesus and Saint Veronica," attributed to Hieronyous Francken III (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)



by Robancy A. Helen

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

March 23, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

We began the season of Lent with a heaviness of hearts as we watched the war between Russia and Ukraine.

People from across the globe expressed their dismay to try to stop the war. They protested against war and welcomed peace and harmony between the nations.

Pope Francis gave a universal call to make Ash Wednesday a day of fasting and prayer to stand with the people of Ukraine. He says his heart aches over the situation and calls for action. He visited the Russian Embassy in the Vatican to show his concern and called Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine.

Christianity, though born out of bloodshed and pain, embraces peace and fraternity, hope and harmony. It shows concern for others, reaches out to the needy.

A friend of mine called me from Terni, Italy, asking me to pray for Ukraine and asking that priests, nuns, and other Catholics have adoration in their churches to do the same. She texted priests and others in India and elsewhere to ask them for this favor.

"I am unable to sleep and think of nothing else but praying for these people of Russia and Ukraine," she said.

She does not worry about her sister-in-law, who is in a coma, but her heart reaches out to the cry of the people of Ukraine.

Isn't it beautiful? This is a fine example of empathy and caring for those people who need our prayers and support the most. We know love by this — that Jesus laid down his life for us —and we ought to lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16).

A person who reaches out to others will have the experience of the risen Jesus. Imitating Jesus in our lives is a challenge, but we do it with love, just as he loves us unconditionally with great mercy and compassion.

Loving one another regardless of differences of any kind is what the world needs today, as we face challenges and problems like inequality, conflicts, migration, poverty, unemployment, exploitation and injustice, to name a few.

Jesus suffers when he sees us acting against the will of God, but his passion and cross are glorified when we deny ourselves and take up the cross for someone else with a sense of fraternity, understanding and solidarity.

The Earth keeps going around because we can love and can resemble Christ through our words and deeds with sincere hearts and minds.

Advertisement

"My heart melts whenever I see the withered crop" is a quote attributed to Thiruvarutprakasa Vallalār Chidambaram Ramalingam (1823-1874), one of the most famous Tamil Hindu saints and one of the greatest Tamil poets of 19th-century India.

We all need to have a heart that can feel for others and do something for others, getting us out of our comfort zones, indifference and even pessimism. Each of us has lots of human capital within us. That capability should be used for others as an instrument of love, service and hope. It can also provide the opportunity to put our faith in action, as Jesus has mandated us to do through his example and precepts.

Christianity is not a mere individual enterprise. It is communitarian in its dynamism and core. Based on this, we have to reach out to others in whatever way we can, not only during Lent but beyond — every day of our Christian faith and vocation as disciples of Christ.

Above all, Jesus reached out to the needy, marginalized and vulnerable people: the poor, the sick, and the sinners. He knew people needed to be loved and cared for. Even his touch healed many. His gaze transformed sinners to saints and tax collectors to fishers of men.

As we start this season of Lent, we are called once again to go to Calvary and reflect with great compassion on our mission and commitment to the people.

We are called to heal people who are sick in body or mind. The needs are plenty, but the workers are few. Our invitation is to become the reason for someone to be happy, someone to be alive, someone to be important, and someone to be loved.

This call requires dedication, magnanimity and focus. As Mother Mary stood by the cross until the end, we need to be with Jesus to build up his kingdom with a singular

devotion to God's power and grace.

In Lent, this season of grace, let us spend our time with Jesus in orphans, the poor, the needy, and others who need our helping hand to make our lives meaningful and holy, and we will make a difference in them with a ray of hope.

This story appears in the **Lent** and **War in Ukraine** feature series.