Columns
Social Justice



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July 3, 2023

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Bruce Springsteen, "The Boss," has been singing for years that we "are born to run." It made him famous and rich. But the collected wisdom in the entire universe knows that we are born to die.

> "We are all made for something wonderful."
> —From The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

Life is full of challenges. For many of us there is enough time between "born" and "die" to taste both the bitter and the sweet. And for some, mostly sweet. Mostly warmth. For others, mostly bitter — chilled by the hardship of their lives. Wonderful seems beyond their reach.

Some of us have choices because we have love, we have hope, we have energy, education, a bed to rest in, food to eat, joy to celebrate. Life is not the same struggle for us as it is for those whose choices are limited. We are generally able to survive loss and grief and setbacks because we have a solid base to help us overcome. We may sway a little between the bitter and the sweet but we end up still standing. What determines those who have choices and those who don't? No easy way to know. Those with aching hearts who sleep in the rain? Or those who sleep in a warm bed?

Maybe Bruce Springsteen is right. There are those who run and run and run because all they know is darkness and pain without any hope.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. That was then. Maybe now we are the ones called to take away the sins of the world. To reach out and share our good fortune with those who do not bask in the warmth of love and peace but live in the exhaustion of life's storms. We often sing in Dan Schutte's song, "I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart."

It is not a suggestion.

> "Risk everything you have. It's not that much."
> —Malidone Somé at a 1998 conference at the Common Ground' Cindy Nord Center for Renewal

Are we not required to bring comfort to a world of pain? To nurture compassion? Between our blessings and setbacks we are called to share our spirit, our energy, our good fortune. Can we free the captive from the prison of poverty or racism of violence or loneliness or fear?

If we think that taking away the sins of the world is beyond us, we can just turn over and go back to sleep. In a warm bed. But if we focus on one neighbor at a time, one neighborhood at a time, we have the skills and the heart to do it each in our own way. It is within our reach. The question is do we have the will to do it?

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There was a guy who lived a long time ago. He was a simple man but he changed the world as he wandered through his neighborhoods teaching and preaching the love of God and the love of neighbor. He was a danger to the powerful because he thought that all should hear the good news. That love was more important than power. That sinners were worthy of love. Women deserve respect. The hungry should be fed. Children should be cherished and protected. Forgiveness is essential. Peacemakers will be blessed. Everyone is your neighbor.

He made some friends who wandered with him. They were a ragtag bunch, not unlike the crowds who followed him. As the number of his admirers continued to grow, the authorities were afraid. His teachings threatened their position of power. They couldn't stand for that. So they killed him. In the open. On a hill. Nailed to a cross. But they couldn't stop his teachings from spreading. Now it is our turn.

Yes. The Lamb of God showed us how to do it. And if we are true followers we will do the same. We are not powerless. Death is not the victor. We do not have to pay with our lives. Our only cost is time, energy and purpose.

The whole world is the neighborhood of José Andrés, founder of World Central Kitchen. He has organized and provided meals to thousands of people affected by disasters. The Gospel according to Andrés is feeding the hungry. A nation at a time. Not many can do this. Feeding one hungry person at a time in our small neighborhoods is Gospel as well.

> "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."
> —Horace Mann (1796-1859)

While we have time may we understand and experience that generosity is its own reward. And perhaps one day we will be greeted with, "Well done good and faithful servant."

We have sung that "We are the world. We are the ones who'll make a brighter day so let's start giving." So, what do you say? Let us resolve to join efforts and, all together, make the heavens proud.

The world is waiting.