Columns
Horizons
Social Justice



The Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, sits along the western shore of Lake Winnebago. (Courtesy of Eilis McCulloh)



by Eilis McCulloh

Contributor

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

July 28, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In the weeks leading up to my annual retreat earlier this month at the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, these were (some of) the stories in the news:

- Supreme Court overturns affirmative action, but legacy admissions remain untouched
- Supreme Court rules that businesses can discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community
- War breaks out in Sudan, sending thousands fleeing for safety
- Migrants bused from Southern border
- Supreme Court overturns racist gerrymandering laws in several states

As I sat in horror, watching the news and reading emails about the practice of busing of migrants to "sanctuary cities," recent Supreme Court decisions and the war in Sudan, I found myself looking for the people who were taking to the streets and calling for justice.

As each Supreme Court decision or local government rule stripped the dignity of a person or (in my opinion) affirmed discrimination, I watched as people shouted, "This is not right! We know the truth." It reminded me of Sr. Kathy Sherman's song "Love Cannot Be Silenced": “Love cannot be silenced. It never has. It never will. Let justice roll like a river from the oceans to the hills.”

In each case, we saw that love, justice and truth cannot be silenced because "it never has, it never will." And I celebrated when truth and justice rang out in the Supreme Court's decision about gerrymandering.

With each court decision and each news story about another busload of migrants being sent across the country, there was a social media post (or another news story) about the people rising up. People across the country were moved to act, not only by their sense of justice but also by the Gospel call.

These events accompanied me during my first few days of retreat as I continued to reflect on the concept of truth. What did it mean that the Spirit of Truth kept jumping out at me? What is this? Who is this? Where is the Spirit of Truth in our

world — in my world — that seemingly propels us to speak out no matter the cost. She is, of course, right here with us. As the Gospel of John reminds us, "I will ask God, and God will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth [...] she remains with you and will be in you."

Advertisement

What consolation and a great reminder that the Spirit lives in each of us and points us toward the truth. She propels us into action as we work and pray to uphold the rights of all people in this country and around the world. She says, "Do not be quiet!”

As Earth citizens, we are invited to let the Spirit of Truth transform us as we advocate for the common good — and a world where all people are valued. She is with us when we are called to speak out against racism and white nationalism, the threats to our democracy, homophobia and all the other forms of discrimination that threaten to tear apart our country and the world. But, perhaps most important, the Spirit of Truth celebrates with us when we finally get something right — and affirm the rights and dignity of all people.

As I continued with my retreat, I was reminded of something someone told me not long after I entered religious life. This person said, "God calls. Jesus accompanies and teaches. But, the Spirit moves."

In our own lives, what or who holds the truth or guides us toward the truth? Who or what riles us up in righteous anger, sadness, and compassion when injustice occurs? What does it require of me/us to live into and out of this deep knowing of the Spirit? May we be attuned to the Spirit who moves us towards action, justice and communion.