

July 7, 2020

Please note that you do not have to agree with me and I write these words as my own reflection and not in an effort to create more conflict or division but, mostly, as a way of processing my own thoughts on the days and nights of these difficult times.

In last Sunday's Northwest Indiana Times there was a photo of a child in a parade protesting racial injustice and issues they believed attendant on the pursuit of racial equality.

The child was carrying a handmade cardboard poster with words written on it with a crayon.

The words were, "Murderers Wear Badges."

There is a big difference between following our feelings and having our feelings follow us, a big difference.

Early on in this pandemic and quarantine, I suggested that when it is over, we will all be suffering from some form of PTSD and now going on 6 months with no end in sight, I believe, that the trauma is taking serious toll of humane and careful thinking.

Anger and division are evident anywhere without warning. The anger is healthy and normal and appropriate, the division is not. The division is rooted, in my experience, in our own feelings, our feelings that tell us any number of things but most often those feelings that cause us to separate ourselves as over an above another person or group are because we feel inadequate, powerless, vulnerable, and anxious and fearful.

Sometimes, I just want to rage into the darkness, I try to stay focused but I have as many of you must, anger and resentment at so much that has been denied me and taken from me, that I suppress but any suppressed emotion will come back to visit another time, usually unexpected and with a good deal of unrehearsed energy.

We have not a lot of schooling in dealing with anger, we lack experienced models of anger management. On the contrary, we live in times when there

are those who think that anything goes and that their cause or position or grievance takes precedence over any other cause or position or grievance and that expressions of unbridled anger become rage is strength, but it isn't.

It is fear abusing power.

The damage done in so many ways and places with violence wildly directed in words and deeds directed at those we feel have made us and are making us feel inadequate, vulnerable, and fearful but this is not new to our time, in fact, it is a part of the systemic abuses of power embedded in so many of our customs and values and ways of living with one another.

The anger and resentment and rage that I feel and have felt these last 5 months, I must remember, are what many in this country have felt for generations and are the only feelings that some have ever felt when they consider their lives in common with mine.

Racism and sexism and militarism are systemic patterns that have caused generations of Americans to follow their feelings rather than have their feelings follow them, one way or another.

I think that we thought being the victors in World War II sufficient to make us one nation under God with liberty and justice for all, but I don't believe that it works that way.

Democracy is the work of a people, a work that is never finished, a work that can be wearying and challenging, a work that can overwhelm us, the best of us.

As many of us became more prosperous and found more time for leisure and the economic resources to pursue leisure we quit doing the homework required of citizens and left all of that to others and now as we find ourselves in a nation of private contractors who operate without any commonly recognized personal stake in the projects of democracy.

This is not a new phenomenon, it has been the way it is since the beginning where principles and commitments were not always noble and were not always rooted in a pursuit of life, liberty, and the common good.

What is new is the large number of young people from all over the socio/economic/racial/ethnic/gender/orientation landscape of our country that are trying to galvanize themselves into citizens in a quest for a just and lasting peaceful way of life together.

What will come of this remains to be realized as it is still a movement in its infancy, still a movement of causes not tested in the crucible of wisdom and discourse, a movement that is susceptible to corruption by private contractors.

It is a movement that I hope might be able to grow into a maturity that can bring about the changes in minds and hearts and, most importantly, what we teach ourselves and our children in our schools and stories of who we are as American and how we tell of our history.

And finally, we need to be mindful that what we wear does not make us anything, it is in our hearts where we find good and evil and fear and resentment and envy and violence and tenderness and forgiveness and peace and joy and, most importantly, hope and love.

PS

Many people in our parish wear badges and they bring good and generous hearts to their lives and their work and our parish.