

Monastic Scribe XXIX: June 10, 2022

We Are All One

Recently I watched a video, available on YouTube, of a performance of Jacob Lindy's "Tree of Life Cantata". An ensemble of eight musicians, including a narrator, tell the story of the mass shooting in the Tree of Life Jewish Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 2, 2018. On that day, during a Shabbat morning service a crazed white supremacist killed eleven people and wounded six others, including Holocaust survivors. Lindy is a retired psychoanalyst and has worked with survivors of this shooting. The performance takes about forty-five minutes and I was very moved by this beautiful, meditative and soul-stirring narrative. I have become more aware that incidents of Anti-Semitism are increasing in our land.

My awareness level of discrimination with other groups as well was heightened by this Cantata. Thus, a few days after I viewed this video, there took place in Buffalo, New York, on May 14th, the shooting of ten people who were killed and another three injured. Eleven of the victims were Black. An eighteen year old white man did all of this in broad daylight in a shopping center. It was premeditated as his own writings indicate. I wondered what Black children might have asked their parents that night? Did they feel safe? I felt sickened by this gross inhumanity. The picture has been made worse by the terrible massacre of so many children and adults, mostly Mexican-American, in Texas. Our society, our culture is sick! We worship guns but not children.

White supremacists openly oppose Jews, Blacks, Latinos, immigrants, Asians, all other people than white who threaten their sense of being American. I caught a title of an article, "White Christian identity crisis" but did not have the chance to read the author's explanations. But I can guess what that title means. The supremacists' websites proclaim the "Replacement theory" by which is meant their fear of the white majority in our country being replaced by People of Color and other new groups. Many of these white people were shook up by the election of Barak Obama and have since then been focused on pushing back, even eradicating, such groups who are other than white.

To think that some Christian Churches, including Catholic churches, would think this way, no less indulge in violent actions, is extremely disturbing. We have not heard enough condemnation and direction from our American Catholic Bishops.

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The White Supremacist movement is opposed to all that we believe. In his 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis wrote: "Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting."

What can you and I, mostly people of the White Christian Churches, do about this? I am not an expert, especially in real experience, but here is what I would suggest. First of all, we must acknowledge the reality of racism and discrimination. Be clear that I am not talking about guilt and shame. I am talking about the reality of justice. I think of my favorite quotation from the prophet Micah, "This is what is good and what the Lord asks of you: "To love mercy, to act justly and to walk humbly with your God." Many Whites are in denial or just ignorant of the reality of hatred and systemic patterns of discrimination. Some have good Black friends or co-workers. And thus some Whites think this interpersonal acceptance of Blacks is the solution. But Blacks see that the problem is systemic and needs changing. We must, first of all, really understand this. Maybe I need to study more to know the facts and the history.

Secondly what I can do is stand up for what is just, speak up, do not simply accept injustice. I must, as Saint Paul says, speak the truth in love. And then I remember Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad..." (Matt. 5:11.) Speaking up for justice and protection of people today also involves facing gun violence in our society.

Thirdly I may be able to be more active according to my own particular circumstances of age, work, residence. I may be able to join a movement of African-Americans, Jews or Others to work for justice in some concrete way. I can put up a Black Lives Matter sign on my property.

Perhaps a help to all of this is meditation and contemplative prayer where we let go of dualistic thinking. No more us/them, first/last, in/out. Yes, we may disagree with others on some levels but we do so with respect and with love. Unity of the human race, as well as the beliefs of my religious tradition, do not obliterate different cultures, various ways of seeing things. But unity is built on love and respect. Our model and goal is a Triune God, three in one, different but all one. If White Christians have an identity crisis, we must go back to the teachings of Jesus

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Christ and our belief in a relational, Triune God. You can contact me at:
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NB The next blog will be published on July 1st, three weeks after this one.

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Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.