

MFV Capitol Witness 2-20-18 Faith Reflections

Whenever I'm in this Capitol – at a Rotunda Rally, in a hearing room, in a legislators office, or praying, chanting and singing in the Senate Gallery – I feel the hovering presence of the prophets calling me, and all the gathered faithful, to ***“do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God”***, which is to walk in solidarity with all who are hurt and victimized. And now, in my advancing senior years, I'm challenged by the admonition of the poet, Dylan Thomas, ***“do not go gentle into that good night; Rage, Rage against the dying of light.”*** I'm more enraged with each news cycle, whether national or state calamities are being reported.

Even the granite stones of this elegant Capitol are crying out because the motto of this state is being ignored, ***“the Welfare of the People is the supreme law.”*** Inscriptions above us in the Rotunda proclaim, ***“The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.”***, ***“Righteousness exalteth a Nation...”*** The Senate Chamber wall contains the inscription, ***“nothing is politically right that is morally wrong.”*** The handwriting is on the wall, yet the moral values of this state are being violated and eroded by leaders elected to uphold them. Injustices prevail, when ***“Justice for the Common Good”*** is required.

There is ancient precedence for this. Jeremiah, in warning of an invading horde from the north, chastises the leaders of Judah:

(Read Jeremiah 6:13-15)

“They did not know how to blush”.....The leaders of Judah declared Shalom (well-being, wholeness, peace) but made no provisions for it in their life together – **and they didn't give a damn!**.....Noted biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann writes in his commentary on Jeremiah:

“It is precisely the royal ideology (***make Jerusalem great again!***) that precludes moral sensitivity and covenantal anguish over failure. It intends to keep critical questions muted, so that establishment policy may advance unchecked.” (Is he talking about 6th century BCE Judah or 21st century America?!) “ Brueggemann continues, “When one does not listen to the word of God the result is destructive social policy.” (Jeremiah 1-25, ITC, p. 69)

Notice the contemporary relevance of the ancient Word: *“they have treated the wound of my people carelessly...yet they were not ashamed. They did not know how to blush.”*

- We are with you, Parkland, Florida, mourners, “we are together as one American Family” and we promise to address mental health matters – but the NRA is off limits..... Trump should be blushing.....
- Dreamers, we’ve got your backs, just keep hoping; but we’ve got to build the wall..... Trump should be blushing.....
- Poor and hungry people we know you’re there but we have to cut the budget somewhere; but don’t worry, we’ll send you a box lunch..... Trump should be blushing.....
- People of color, women, and workers, we’ve violated your grievance rights and civil rights; we prefer tort reform; what’s more we plan to make it harder for you to vote; there’s too much “fake” voting..... They should be blushing.
- Victims of predatory lending, so sorry that you have credit problems and can’t pay your bills. Our bills are paid by the industry..... They should be blushing - and put to shame.!
- Recipients of Medicaid and those languishing in hopes of Medicaid expansion, sorry but we’ve got to cut the budget in favor of other more important priorities. Your health will have to wait..... They should be blushing.....
- Troubled youth who get thrown into jail; too bad, but don’t worry, we’ll place you with adults to teach you a lesson.... They should be blushing...

Yes, Jeremiah is hovering over us saying ***“they have treated the wounds of my people carelessly”*** and now, **People of Faith, what are you going to do about it?**

We hope this Capitol Witness event will help each of us answer that question faithfully. In solidarity with the dispossessed of this state, and in partnership with each other, let us pursue **justice for the common good** with prophetic urgency.

I conclude with a brief reading from Psalm 114, meditatively translated by Hebrew scholar, Stephen Mitchell.

“When Israel went forth from Egypt, when a people of slaves was set free,
God was their only guardian, the Unnamable was their guide.

The Red Sea saw it and ran back; the mighty waters took flight.

Like rams the mountains leaped up; the small hills frolicked like lambs.

What made you run back, sea? Why did you take flight, waters?

What made you leap, mountains, and made the hill frolic like lambs?

The whole earth trembles and dances when the God of freedom

appears...” (A Book of Psalms.HarperPernnial)

“The whole earth trembles and dances when the God of freedom appears.....”

The universe is aligned with us in the struggle for **Justice for the Common Good.**
Amen

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