

There Comes A Time

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It's been a week, a short seven days, since we heard the horrifying news that there had been another mass shooting in America. It was on Sunday just a week ago that we awoke to the heart wrenching broadcast of another terrible massacre, the largest terrorist shooting in America, not just anywhere, but in Orlando, the city that is called the "happiest place on earth." Forty-nine young people, just out for a little laughter and for a bit of dancing, listened to the sweet rhythms of Latin music one minute and were mowed down in the fast volley of gunshots from an assault rifle in the next.

And I remember thinking, "Oh Lord, not again." How many times have our hearts ached at the sight of our children, our babies, our young sisters and brothers lying butchered on the classroom floors of places like Columbine, Newtown, Virginia Tech? There have been 188 school shootings since 2013 alone. But, it's not just that our hearts ache. It is that our souls are tired.

We who have been around the work of social justice for a long time are getting tired of the gun violence that bloodies our streets and empties them of our children, our beautiful-loving-talented-and promise-laden children. We in this room have been teaching children in schools and treating them in our hospitals all our lives. We have been working for them in shelters and clinics, food pantries and bread lines. We have been filling out their immigration papers, teaching them English, singing them to sleep in Spanish, working to keep them from being trafficked in the poorest parts of America, feeding them under the bridges and across the tracks in some of the darkest and most forgotten places in this country. We have been doing this for far too long to simply give in and give up to a gun lobby that drapes their indignity in constitutional rights but drips with blood lust for unfettered profits. We have worked too hard and too long to give in and give up.

But, we are tired. It is ok for prophets to get tired, to look for a little shade from the searing sun of justice building. The great Rev. Martin Luther King Jr once spoke of his exhaustion during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He said:

There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November. There comes a time –

Brothers and sisters, we are here today **because we know as Franciscans that there comes a time when we must acknowledge that we too are tired**. After 50 years of working for justice, calling for equality, laboring for peace, and struggling for the care of creation, we are tired of politicians with empty promises and a political campaign likely to cost this country \$5 billion dollars and threatens to build walls and exclude religions from this country.

We are tired this Sunday morning and **we may be tempted in jubilee to put up our feet** and rest on our religious laurels. We have worked hard and done much. And we might justifiably say to ourselves – it is time to rest, it is time to relax, it is time to reach for a little respite.

But, brothers and sisters, **I am going to make another plea this morning.** Don't give in just yet. Don't give up right now. I know that the signs point to despair and discouragement. But, this is the moment when Franciscans shine.

It's in the darkest hour that Franciscans see the clearest light. Jacques Dalarun in his latest book, *The Canticle of the Creatures*, elegantly chronicles how St. Francis wrote his symphony of praise for all creation, not in the happy sunshine of good fortune and not in the warm breezes of pulsating joy, but in the midst of mind piercing blindness and excruciating pain, with mice running all over him all day as he tried to eat and all night as he tried to sleep. He saw a new light in the deepest darkness.

Brothers and sisters, **there comes a time when we must go from exhausted to energized.** And this is that time.

And the second reading from **Paul's Letter to the Galatians** tells us how we can do it.

The Galatians are fracturing themselves into camps, dividing themselves into interest groups, splintering into factions, depleting their goodness and draining their kindness. And Paul reminds them of the vision that impels the Christian message to the world – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female.” We are one in the love of Christ.

We are in time of particularities. We love our autonomy. We want to speak our individual mind and get our particular way in the world today. And that is all well and good but Paul knows something more profound. And it is this: we are the beloved community of the Lord. Jesus has chosen us and the Holy Spirit has anointed us not for competition against each other, but for compassion for and with one another. As Christians our deepest call is communion. As Franciscans our greatest witness is our brother/sisterhood.

There comes a time when the children of God must come together and work together.

There comes a time when the fighting must end, the finger pointing must stop, and the divisions between red state Americans and blue state Americans, red hymnal Catholics and blue hymnal Catholics, liberal religious and conservative religious, progressive Franciscans and traditionalist Franciscans must come to an end... and we must recognize the deepest truth of all. That in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.

There **comes a time to believe with all our strength** that we are the **beloved community** of the Lord. There comes a time and that time is now, because we have been called, chosen and consecrated by the God who is good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone, in Jesus Christ who is the Lord, now and forever. Amen.