

Prayer Vigilance

Self-Examination and Active Participation Bring Healing

I attended a prayer vigil last July at the behest of our mayor, Mike Rawlings, following the tragic police shootings in Dallas, Texas. That a man who believed in the power of prayer was administering the city at a very turbulent time, reassured me, so I felt compelled to join him for prayer. Conflicting feelings, however, still haunt my mind. I was grateful to be among faith and elected leaders seeking a collective response to the senseless slaying of innocent police officers. I am still anxious regarding the tepid response to the growing necrology of young Black men slain at the hands of a nefarious few who swore to 'protect and serve.'

Today is a watershed moment in American race relations. As a diverse nation of people we can ill-afford to be passionately sympathetic about Dallas, but passively indifferent towards Falcon Heights, Baton Rouge, Tulsa, Charlotte, El Cajon or any others.

Address Implicit Bias

Collective healing begins when we confront the reality that both casualties deserve to be treated without implicit bias. Both inequities beg for public censure and social redress. Both atrocities were abhorrently evil and morally unconscionable. Both tragedies leave behind wives, children, parents, significant others and friends to mourn the unspeakable loss of loved ones. Healing happens when both protesters and protectors accept the incontrovertible truth that 'Black Lives' do matter and 'Blue Lives' matter, simply because 'All Lives' were created equal by God regardless of complexion, creed, or social context!

Life-saving Collaboration

The Black community and law enforcement in particular must work earnestly towards healing their strained relations. We can rebuild trust by insisting upon the ethical demolition of the 'blue wall of silence' in order to give justice a voice. A respectful dialog of mutual understanding regarding each other's perceptual and actual plight in this country should be initiated. Ongoing collaboration that continuously invents and invests in new initiatives (e.g., police/community sensitivity forums, police de-escalation training, community policing, comprehensive mental health screenings) promotes better relations as a result of engagement.

Stained Glass Voice of Social Responsibility

The church, too, must reconnect with the community before something happens within the community. Historically, the church has always been a prophetic voice for social responsibility. A church that sequesters itself behind the stained glass piety of its internally-focused walls has no altruistic value to its surrounding community and therefore has no legitimate reason to exist. 'Abel's blood' still cries out for justice even in our day, and we by sacred legacy are still 'our brother's keeper!'

How ironic that during his historic visit to Dallas in 1963, the late President John F. Kennedy was to conclude a scheduled speech at the Dallas Trade Mart with the following prophetic words until an assassin's bullet preempted it and claimed his young life:

"We in this country, in this generation, are—by destiny rather than choice—the watchmen on the walls of world freedom. We ask, therefore, that we may be worthy of our power and responsibility, that we may exercise our strength with wisdom and restraint, and that we may achieve in our time and for all time the ancient vision of 'peace on earth, good will toward men.' That must always be our goal, and the righteousness of our cause must always underlie our strength. For as was written long ago, 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain'" (Psalm 127:1b).

Unless God keeps the city, we will never really achieve uniform justice or lasting peace. No amount of incisive thought or human invention will ever suffice for His divine guidance and intervention.

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