

When I realized I was part of the problem

Like most of you, I continue to shake my head with the violence, sadness, discord and hatred that continues to beset the world and our souls. My initial reaction to a tragedy, like the ten victims of white supremacy in a supermarket in Buffalo, is to put a collage of their faces on our back table with the ever-present vigil candle, so that we remember them in prayer. It is a natural reaction that is all too familiar. It was on Monday morning, in previewing the day, that I reminded myself to do this before the 12:05 Mass. Then, I asked what the next things are to do. It was at this moment that I realized ***I am part of the problem***. I am not spending enough time praying, quietly reflecting on the given situation and all that it entails. If we stay in Buffalo, we see innocent lives taken, a deranged young white supremacist, and racism-hatred on full display. Hopefully, our first response is to pray for the ten who lost their lives and the others injured. We pray God immediately welcomes them with loving arms. We ask God to comfort their loved ones. Hard as it may be, we pray for forgiveness for the assailant as he is, no doubt, very troubled. Also, forgiveness releases personal hatred towards him where our disgust with him has little power over us. We pray for his parents and family as their lives, too, are forever changed. Perhaps we may honor the victims' lives by learning about them through the Internet or if this paralyzes us too much, then perhaps a rosary offered for them, a determination to do more random acts of kindness and the like. **WE MUST LET IT SPEAK TO US FOR THE GOOD.** We may ponder the truth that we do not know the day nor the hour and thus ask ourselves if we are prepared. We may spend time asking ourselves what is going on and ask God how this may change, how we can be instruments of progress and healing? This may lead us to assessing our spiritual journey and what may need redirection. We need to look at the issues of guns, unaddressed warning signs, hatred and violence, the failure as a nation to address mental illness and the like. Perhaps we may look to see what racist tendencies remain within us. Why do they remain? What does this suggest? We may be swayed by the need to change from an "I'm not racist" defensive stance to an "I need to be anti-racist," proactive stance where I take a more active stance against racism (ageism, sexism, sexual prejudice, classism, religious intolerance, etc.), and be a prophetic voice in a world where we are too afraid to say or do anything.

The list of issues are endless (gender/sexual identity, January 6, republican and democrats disdain for the other side, Roe v. Wade analysis, gay anything, loss of civility, Biden, Trump, division in human discourse, Putin's endless rage and the inability to quell it just yet, discord in the Church, rising prices, lack of baby formula for God's sake). In discussing my insight that I am part of the problem with a most trusted friend and the need to spend more reflective time letting the heart and our God speak to me, he added the need for me to assess how I am contributing to all these. I asked myself how I am contributing to the situation in Ukraine. The unrest was just that, I did not sleep Monday evening. Tuesday presented itself as a new day, with a new opportunity. The gospel that day spoke of Jesus' offer of peace, so radically different than what the world can offer. It is one that lets us sit in the din of the craziness of the world and find in that offer of peace, a hope, an unconditional love and a call to love and to serve. Seconds removed from these thoughts, I read from Sr. Joan Chittister's reflections on the Rule of St. Benedict with respect to the leader and the members of the community, ***"the***

common search for truth is pitched at a delicate balance...they are to speak their truth, to share the perspective from which they see a situation, to raise their questions and to open their hearts, with honesty and with trust. The prioress and abbot are to listen carefully for what they could not find in their own souls and to make a decision only when they can come to peace with it, weighing both the community's concerns and the heart they have for carrying the decision through. If we focus on the good, on "God's will for the world" (a common Chittister theme), if we listen, open hearts, speak and share truth, be vulnerable to hearing from others what we do not know, see or appreciate, then peace can replace unrest. It's worth giving it a try!