



September 20, 2020

Dear friends of God,

It seems that the fight of our culture right now is one of blaming. There are so many struggles and tensions that in some ways we want to take the easy way out of the various crises that we are dealing with at this time in our world. Blaming that person, that nation, that culture, that religion or that political party seems to be a reasonable response even though it is one of the most unreasonable reactions. Instead of honest dialogue, we turn to scapegoating some "other" that takes the blame for all that goes on in the world. It is ironic to me that we as Christians would blame "those people" since that is exactly what happened to Jesus. The political and religious leaders of Jesus' time blamed him and other troublemakers for the ills of society. To get rid of him they nailed him to a tree. Out of that came God's response, love. Our God of love responded with love rather than hate. God did not blame us but rather gave us the gift of new life and new opportunity in the Kingdom of God. God wants us to move from reactive violence to unconditional love in the present moment as we live out the Reign of God.

I want to share the following reflection from Benedictine Father Laurence Freeman:

Nothing is easier, or gives greater satisfaction, than to blame others for what has gone wrong in our own life [or in the world] This is the beginning of racist persecutions, ethnic cleansings, and holocausts. This is the beginning of witch-hunts and all kinds of personal or collective inhumanity. This is one of the most terrible parts of human nature: that we can take a perverse pleasure in blaming others, projecting on them our own problems and faults, making them scapegoats. It happens over and over again in the course of history and in our personal lives. It is the darkest side of our nature.

But deep prayer leads us out of the darkness. It allows us to forgive. It tells us the only way is the way of forgiveness and love. In fact, Jesus makes this the crux of his moral teaching. It is all he tells us to do: love one another. Especially our enemies. [...]

We see that the only way to deal with the complexity of human relations is the simplicity of love. In love we do not judge, we do not compete; we accept; we learn compassion. And we learn to release the inner joy of being that radiates outwards through us, touching others. This is why communities, families, and marriages do not exist solely for the perfection of the people in those immediate relationships. They also exist to radiate love beyond themselves, ... to touch all those who come into contact with it."

An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB, "Forgiveness and Compassion" in ASPECTS OF LOVE (London: Media Media/Arthur James, 1997), pp. 72, 73-74.

We, as people of faith, we need to continually turn to prayer. Let us pray for those whom we love, our neighbors and for our enemies. In deep prayer we will begin to see how interconnected that we are as God's beloved children in our human family. Then we can begin to walk the path of peace and reconciliation.

There is wisdom that I have shared a number of times and will continue to over our time together. It is challenging but important in our world where words are weaponized.

Before we speak we need to make sure that three things are true.

Is it true?

Is it necessary to be said?

Is it said out of love?

If all three are not true, then we should not speak the words.

I believe that God is calling us to be people that radiate love in a world that is so desperate for love, compassion, understanding and peace.

Please continue to pray for our young people in school, that in these challenging moments they will grow in knowledge and faith in a God that is always present with us. In particular, keep those young ones being Confirmed and receiving Eucharist for the first time this month.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Ken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.