



*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.
I have come that you may have life in abundance.
(John 10:10)*

Daily our media flashes before us the ills of our world – from the anger, hatred, bigotry, violence, exploitation, homelessness, the environmental disasters that are slowly eroding our planet to the indifference and numbness which sometimes comes from such sad news.

As I write this reflection we are remembering the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; many of whom still bear the ravages from the 1945 atomic bombs. Recently, we have witnessed violent and senseless murders that seem motivated by hatred and racism. During these past weeks, the plight of victims of human trafficking was once more brought to our awareness showing the desperate need for positive responses. Are we being moved to action with what is happening to our brothers and sisters? And even closer to home, what is my personal response? In trying not to become immune to the suffering around me, I've looked for some encouragement in the midst of the darkness.

Did you know that the Vatican has published new resource materials to help combat human trafficking? The *Pastoral Orientations'* 36 page document highlights the vital and heartfelt importance and compassion that Pope Francis and so many within the Church have for people all around our globe. It may be little known that Pope Francis established the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Peter K. A. Cardinal Turkon, who is responsible for the combined offices that focus on Justice and Peace and Human Development, has stated that: "Our joy is to bring people to fully realize what they were created to be".

Many selfless people have risen to assist, support and give light in depressing and dark situations. In all fairness to the media, we have seen examples of heroism in horrific situations. These individuals and communities witness to the resilience of the human spirit and are sources of hope and encouragement.

There are many positive and global efforts being made to combat the evils that seem to want to devour our human spirit. Faith communities, who live by the Golden Rule, are making positive efforts of inclusion and respect. However, many of these efforts go unnoticed. Isn't there a great need for all of us to move beyond rhetoric and pleasing powerful people to focus on the crying needs of the vast majority of our sisters and brothers? It seems to me that our very survival as a species and the survival of our earth depend on putting our differences aside and finding common ground – the common

ground that affirms that God gave LIFE to each of us and an unconditional love that we will never understand. As we long to be in communion with others, I believe that God has the same longing for us to choose to live our lives more abundantly. If we don't, may God have mercy on us!

Beginning right now and especially on September 1st, let us fully embrace the *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*. This day not only focuses on our growing environmental needs but also on ALL creation of which we human beings are a part. Aren't we called to live in harmony with all creation? I think so. In this era of promotion of the human person, I think we need to humbly begin by claiming our 'creaturehood'. This is a graced place from which to move into discovering the awesome persons God created us to be. From here, we are called to take care of all that God has given. How very diverse and abundant are God's gifts. We can help to restore the harmony within creation that God first put into motion and longs to have restored.

In all that is happening in our individual lives and within our global family, the words of C.S. Lewis come to mind. "God whispers to us in our pleasures. God speaks to us in our conscience but shouts to us in our pains. It is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world".

May each of us be roused to hear not only the challenge but the good news that we are deeply loved into abundant life. This life is precious and to be shared with everyone.

Can we join together in praying for all who are victims and survivors? Can we also pray for converted hearts for those who victimize others and themselves? It can be one of the hardest, most challenging and difficult response to pray for those who perpetuate violence in any form. But this may be one of the most life-giving acts of love we could ever do.

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