Reflection for Monday,

February 19, 2024

*Did you need so many and such long days to supplant our wars, our weeping, my thirst, and your own image in my heart?*

*—Jean Grosjean*

I had a wonderful experience this week.  I got an email via my very outdated website (it still says I live in Colorado) from an Iranian man asking if I have access to the poetry of Jean Grosjean and, if so, could I scan the two books in English translation and send them to him?  He apologized for “rudeness” and said that he cannot get the books through Amazon, nor would he be able to receive them by mail in Iran.  He is working on a PhD in comparative literature and knows of no other way to get the materials.  The poet this man is studying, Jean Grosjean, was for a time a priest, but also did military service in Lebanon and traveled in Iraq and Palestine.  (He later left the priesthood and married and did many translations, including of the Bible and the Quran.) I love Grosjean’s work and I asked the man how he had found me.  He said that he had looked on Goodreads, and I was the only one who had posted about Grosjean’s work, so he tracked down my website to inquire.

I’m excited by the unexpectedness of this and that it worked out so well: I’ve already scanned one of the books to him. And this seems like an expression of the ideal to me—people who live in two countries that exist in political tension can find their way around the political barriers to share art. That is how an Iranian man, an American woman, and a French poet/priest all came together in a shared conversation.

That sense of the possible, and of healing conversation, has also heartened me in our after-church conversation about **a Lenten peace prayer vigil.** We are asking God to break open our hearts and our hands to pray and work for peace. This Lenten vigil will be two-fold. **We will meet in the narthex at 9:30 each Sunday during Lent (and possibly longer) for a brief time of prayer and communion.** With the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, we will remember Jesus’s body broken for us, and pray that our own hearts be broken open in faith and for peace.

Secondly, we have been inspired by the Birds of Gaza project (<https://www.birdsofgaza.com/>) and want to make our own birds to commemorate the precious lives of children that have been lost to war. We grieve the 10,000 children who have died in Gaza, the Israeli children who were killed or lost parents, the Ukranian children, the children fleeing danger at the border, and all of God’s beloved children globally whose lives are meant to be cherished and nurtured.

To that end, we will be making our own birds which will be collected and displayed in the narthex. **The creation of each bird will be an act of prayer in love and peace. If you would like to join us, we will meet this Thursday at 10 a.m. in the church library to begin creating these tributes.** Feel free to bring art supplies and/or origami paper, and the church will also have supplies on hand.

War and death have haunted the globe of late. It’s easy to lapse into a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. But the gospel offers us hope and solidarity that can make a difference. Please join us as we use head, hands, and heart in an ongoing vigil for peace.

In faith,

Elizabeth