

Pebbles of Peace

As we depart each week from our worship services, how do we encourage our members to continue God's work in the world? The world hurts - beyond our own doors as we hear and see daily the living nightmares across the globe in countries strife with civil war, the lingering horrors in school hallways from bullying, and the violence in our cities and neighborhoods. It all seems so far and out of reach. In spite of the morning radio news accompanying us in the shower and as we brush our teeth or the evening TV where blood would spill out into our family room, we can't turn our heads but must respond, however minimally.

Hungry refugees can be fed with funds from a variety of faith-based agencies. We can pray for peace at noon each day, joining a prayer chain with others around the world. Youthful violence can be minimized when we support parents instead of allowing the culture of media and the mall to raise our children for us.

Amid these boulders of hatred, fear, anguish and death which seem to far outweigh anything any of us could do, we need to put into the balance many pebbles of love. Enough pebbles of love to balance the scales and even tip it toward peace.

Sometimes the violence is from Nature herself. I remember from a few years ago a little "one liner" that crept into the news report of devastating floods that spring in North Dakota. A woman, elsewhere in the country, had given an anonymous donation of \$2,000.00 to each victim of the flood, amounting to \$10 million. Her modest way of caring for the homeless, the hungry and the brokenhearted victims of the ravaging Red River. A random act of kindness - her pebbles of love.

We each have our own modest way of acting out Jesus' command to feed his lambs and tend his sheep - to become shepherds. Although in the final judgment we may be separated out as sheep or goats; in fact, we will be judged by the way in which we acted as shepherds. Most of us will not be a Mother Theresa, nor will we have millions to give to the needy. But in the ordinary and mundane tasks of life - there were are.

Here this story of a woman theologian who humbly declares she has learned more about the nature of God from her own children and her call than all the books she has read. Jesus speaks to her, to you, and to me:

I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me, homeless and you sheltered me, imprisoned and you visited me . . .

When, Lord? When were you hungry and I fed you?

How could you ask that, you of the three million peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and the one hundred ways to fix the hamburger that could have been steak if you hadn't been feeding me?
How could you ask?

And were you thirsty?

I was in the Kool-Aid line that came in with the heat and the flies, left mud on your floors and fingerprints on your walls, and you gave me a drink.

But naked, Lord, homeless?

I was born to you naked and homeless. You sheltered me, first in your womb, then in your arms, and clothed me with your love (and spent the next 20 years struggling to pay the mortgage and the fuel bills, and kept me in jeans.

Lord, I never knew I visited you in prison. I've never been in a prison.

Oh, yes, for I was imprisoned in my littleness, behind the bars of my crib, and I cried out in the night and you came. I was imprisoned inside a 12-year-old-body that was exploding with so many emotions that I no longer knew who I was and you loved me for being myself. I was imprisoned behind my teenage rebellion, my anger and my music, and you came and sat by the wall of my hostility, took the abuse I heaped upon you, and waited in love for me to open the door. Now enter into the kingdom my Father has prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

Genelda Woggon has been ministered to and by children for over 40 years in her professional work as a Christian Formation Leader, most especially through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for the past 20 years.