

Sunday 8th August 2021
Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

The symbols we use are the barbed wire reminding us of pain despair, fear and injustice and the light of the candle insistently proclaiming the presence of Christ.

Today our Peace Hope and Justice prayer will be a reflection on Phoenix Kwazulu Natal.

A number of persons were killed in KZN during the violence around the 12th July 2021. Shockingly the true number and causes are yet to be confirmed.

In the Phoenix area some persons were killed by vigilante actions. They were mostly people designated as African.

I wish to share a disturbing a quote about those horrifying deaths.

"We are very far off from recognizing the inalienable right of a black body to exist as autonomous and sacred, and not to be reduced to a racial demographic that is considered dangerous and killable in a time of threat"

I am sure this comment triggers a response in each of us. Differently for each perhaps, but consistent with how we respond daily to the triggering stimuli in our lives. It is how we are. How we learned to respond.

Our own accumulated information from hearsay, social media, friends and what we see. We instantly blend it all into our armory of history, experience, prejudice, fairness, hope, fear, mercy and much more.

Initially we may respond with a reflex action, a gesture, an utterance or even emojis. Depending on the trigger our response may even be a total response of mind, body and emotion.

Perhaps, our triggered response to the quote may change when we add more information. The quote is from an article in the Mail and Guardian by professor Sarojini Nadar, based in Cape Town. She grew up in Phoenix and has family there.

The quote talks of freedom, othering because of race, poverty, perceptions of threat, denial of living life to the full, labelling, power to end a life summarily and violently.

It presents us clearly with the question: How do we live each day, with paradox, uncertainty and complexity?

Let us pray.

Lord we pray for the greater Phoenix area, her people, her pain, her women, and her future. And we prayer too, today parent God for all women who continue to suffer because of their gender.

O compassionate God, your love addresses all our fears as we realize again and again that we need to believe in saying yes to all your creation, as *family*.

O merciful God, when we feel threatened, our anxiety, our negative thoughts, our history, our gossip, our prejudice, our hate, our resentment, our disdain, our discomfort, our lack of faith and our inadequate reserves of grace, spur us on to mount the horse of fear and go off in an apocalyptic gallop.

We pray, our all-embracing Lord, for a quickening of our hearts and minds to avoid our reflexed right or wrong responses, but rather, a wrestling with the right and wrong in all we do, and are, and have in our being.

Forgive us loving God. O how adept we are to use our body language, our gestures, facial expressions our tone of voice, our sense of righteousness to convince and persuade and even con others. Forgive us Lord when we are reluctant to confront in truth.

O God, can we recognize the complexity of human encounters. The foolishness of trying to be certain, all the time. Of asserting our right to always know what is right and what is wrong in any situation.

O patient teacher, teach us to understand what is required of us. Can we reflect on Jesus as the way, and our way?

Lord, let us allow ourselves to love you, with all our heart and mind and spirit. Yes, O God with all our being. And to love all, not paternalistically, as "other," but as we love ourselves. Teach us lord, to love ourselves not just with intellect but deeply with heart and spirit too. So, to love all with not just a triggered response but with a Christ mind, Godly spirit and an unconditionally loving heart.

Ever present Lord, we prayer for a quietening of our constant analyses. Let us rather rest prayerfully in your presence to be empowered as activist disciples of peace, hope and justice.

O parent God, strengthen us to do justice, no matter the cost, to love mercy, that it oozes from our beings, and journey humbly with you.

Amen

We share the prayer for Africa

**God bless Africa
Guard our children
Guide our leaders
And give us peace
For Jesus's sake
Amen**