

As of today, the war in the Ukraine has been going on for 919 days and counting.

As of today, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been going on for 329 days and counting.

The violence and the suffering continue unabated and unfortunately will continue and sometimes it seems like we've moved on. It's somewhere in the background of our media and therefore in the background of our lives, even if we still feel the occasional twinge of conscience for what those people are going through. And that's understandable- we have more than enough going on in our lives, and much of it so difficult to navigate and to bear. But we should still be as outraged about these conflicts as we did when they first happened- outraged that such suffering is still going on, regardless of what side you are on.

And it's not like the suffering is restricted to overseas- as you well know, we have more than enough tragedy going on in this country that we should be outraged at- hunger, poverty, gun violence, abortion, the way the immigrants and refugees are being treated, and the list goes on.

I'm sure you're thinking what a downer this is on a Saturday morning, and it's not meant to be. It's simply to say that just as we humans can be so cruel to one another, we can just as easily show the beautiful and divine part of ourselves to one another, and we all have both capabilities within us.

The impulse to make peace and to be there for one another- to love one another- co-exists with the impulse to create violence and to ignore the needs of one another. And so we appeal to the "*better angels of our nature*", to quote Abraham Lincoln, instead of the lesser angels of our nature, the ones that mess things up for everybody.

Today's Gospel reading, as you know, is the Beatitudes, from the Sermon on the Mount. It is essentially Jesus' promise of a better world and what the Kingdom of God will look like,

when the world will finally be as God wants it to be and when love and joy and peace will be what defines the human condition, not pain and suffering and the many and varied trials of life that we all have to endure.

So not how the world is now, but how it should be and how it can be and how it is becoming every time we act in love and justice and equality and respect, instead of acting in selfishness and apathy and the illusion that some people are better than other people; more important than other people; deserve more than other people.

And how do you get to this place? Well, you're already on the road there. First, we have to build up ourselves spiritually- committing ourselves to prayer- however way you pray because it's all good; the sacramental life; the reading of Scripture, even just a chapter or two a day; silence. All this cleanses our perception and we see things more clearly and we see things as they are, and not as our prejudice or our culture or even our personal history has trained us to see.

We see things as they truly are- we see things with the eyes of God and therefore we can more easily express the love that is within us. And then what that looks like in action is up to you- as you well know, God doesn't value the actions and the projects that get all the attention more than the good act that is hidden and obscure and will never get noticed, let alone celebrated. If it is done out of love and a desire to bring peace to another person and to the world, then it is just as holy and just as important than anything Mother Theresa or St. Francis or St. Damien of Molokai, or even Jesus has done. They're all participations in the work of Jesus anyway, and who is doing the good is almost irrelevant.

Let's not so easily allow the lesser angels of our nature determine how we act and how we live in the world- let's allow the goodness of Christ that is already within us do its work and bring about the Kingdom. We will get there, and I can't wait...