



Ramallah Friends Meeting

Easter Meditation 2016



Do not weep for me. No! Weep for yourselves and your children.

This week, the worldwide Christian fellowship will turn its attention to the last days and hours of Jesus' earthly life. Many will travel here to Palestine as pilgrims to participate in our spiritual observances. Once again, together and wherever we may be in the world, our thoughts will dwell upon his suffering. We will undoubtedly be moved by compassion as we allow ourselves to enter into both the horror and the wonderment of this experience.

Even as he carried the cross toward his death, Jesus spoke out to us. His words, his demands were so matter of fact, so persistent, that a brief or cursory response on our part is simply not enough. Much more is required. What Jesus wanted then and desires from us today is a change of heart, a change of direction in the quiet depths of our being. He is not interested in our distance, our pity and sorrow.

As we carefully re-read the story of Holy Week, incident by incident, we are struck by the hard reality that more than two thousand years have not made much difference to humanity. The changes are surface, if at all.

The cross cannot be observed in objectivity or from a position of detachment. To be there at the cross, requires our presence. To be present requires our involvement. To be involved implicates us -one way or another.

"A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they

To Be Passionately Engaged in the World

Forty years ago my only brother Hanna was among the disappeared in Lebanon. Less than two years later my father suffered multiple strokes. As he passed away, he called out my brother's name, "Hanna!" All the relatives and friends who were present cried with us that day, as we lamented the loss of both our father and our brother.

A few days later, my mother was reading the words of Henry Nouwen in The Wounded Healer and shared this passage:

"...no one can help anyone without becoming involved, without entering with his whole person into the painful situation, without taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or even destroyed in the process...[without a willingness] to make one's own painful and joyful experiences available as sources of clarification and understanding...The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there."

Throughout these past 40 years, I have continued to reflect on these words and I wonder: "What would my brother ask of me?" My brother, Hanna, was not interested in pity. He wanted us to get involved. He wished for us to see clearly all the wrongs and injustices of the long human story, while simultaneously being one with the agony and grief of our collective humanity. We are not to be content to engage in religion as an exercise for the improvement of our souls. Rather, we shall only truly experience the passion of Jesus when we are willing to be involved passionately in our world.

We should go beyond being aware of the suffering of the hungry, the oppressed and powerless. We must be one with it; we must know as our own the sufferings of this world and do so in light of the crucifixion. Here, in this one single event, every human evil is focused.

Today, Palestinians and Middle Easterners are crying out from the depths of Gethsemane. Our contemporary Golgotha is the daily humiliation and denial of our basic rights. The wars, militarism, the hunger and poverty, the situation of millions of refugees is appalling. We must ask ourselves, "Can this be the will of God?"

*will begin to say to
the mountains, 'Fall
on us'; and to the
hills, 'Cover us.' For
if they do this when
the wood is green,
what will happen
when it is dry?"*
+Luke 23:27-31



Move ahead together and you will find unexpected openings.

What else might the Easter story teach us? What might it teach us about women and our roles in society? In the Gospel narratives, we read of the women who stayed with Jesus during his last hours and while he was dying on the cross. They went early in the morning to visit the tomb to anoint his body. They were worried about who would help them roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. When they arrived and looked around, the stone had already been moved. Likewise, today we must ask ourselves what we might do to remove the stones that stand in the way of equality, justice and peace.

Easter prepares us for a life of living in that moment of expectancy. Do not give up, my Friends! Take action toward solidarity, action for justice and for love. Move ahead together and you will find unexpected openings. That is our promise.

For Palestinians in the Holy Land, Golgotha is not a sad, distant memory of 2,000 years ago. It is not in the past. It is part of the everyday indignity and oppression which we experience along with the many other oppressed peoples of the world. Our Via Dolorosa is no mere ritualistic procession through the narrow streets of the Old City of Jerusalem. It is our fate as a result of being subjected to humiliation and stripped of our rights in our own land.

In his Easter message of 1991, Pope John Paul II said, "Lend an ear, humanity of our time, to the long-ignored aspirations of oppressed peoples such as the Palestinians, the Lebanese, and the Kurds, who claim the right to exist with dignity, justice and freedom."

Taking a Deep Breath: The Spirituality of Sumud

Many of the aspects of the praxis of justice and reconciliation are found within the Palestinian spirituality of *sumud* (steadfastness). This spirituality begins with an experience of affliction and is situated firmly in a relational theology that seeks justice and peace.

The simplest meaning of spirituality is the life of the spirit. The life of the spirit is an energy-grounding hope which links directly with the divine - the universal spirit of life that is shared by all faiths. In the Palestinian experience, we are united with others in the breath of the spirit which grounds us and affirms us in a living hope. This being so, we practice *sumud* and remain steadfast.

Taking a deep breath brings the gift of living peacefully when there is no peace. This means exercising a type of imagination that calls us to live out of a new reality: a reality that exists in every act of non-violent resistance, of giving thanks, of simple kindness, and in moments of joy and beauty. Strength is drawn from ancient traditions that form Palestinian identity. Identities such as hospitality and our love of the beauty of the land. We honor the feasts, the art, the poetry, and the music that celebrates Palestinian life and culture. All of this is part and parcel of a spirituality of *sumud*: perseverance and affirmation of life in the midst of darkness.

I would like to end my message by greeting you as sisters and brothers, thanking you for your visits, for your solidarity, for worshiping with us, for your contributions of all kinds, which enable us to form these communities of hope which stretch, with steadfastness, around the world.

If after a death as cruel as that which Jesus experienced, there came resurrection, then surely there is no situation without hope.

Yours in friendship and peace,



Jean Zaru
Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy spirit.*

+Romans 15:13

**Everyone is welcome to unprogrammed Meeting for Worship,
Sundays at 10:30 am.**

**The Meetinghouse is located on Main Street in downtown Ramallah,
across from Rukab Ice Cream and one block from Al Manara City Center.**

Contact Us

+ 972 02-295-2741

jeanzaru@gmail.com

www.rfmq.org

www.facebook.com/RamallahFriendsMeeting

DONATE