

Ann Warren Reflects CTK

On May 25, 2020, millions of us watched a video of the murder of George Floyd. I do not know about the rest of you, but I sat there with my mouth wide open not believing what I was seeing. Mr. Floyd was slaughtered like an animal in the street. Tears started flowing from a deep, dark place within me. Anger was flooding my mind and heart.

I watched the news as the outcry for justice grew. Protestors chanted “No justice, no peace.”, and “Black Lives Matter.” The rioting and looting grew intense. Didn’t these people remember what Martin Luther King said in his I Have a Dream Speech? “In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. ... We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again, and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.” I guess he was saying, Protest, yes, but do no wrong.

In some ways I understood the anger, especially when a prosecutor cast doubt on the officer being found guilty of killing Mr. Floyd. What about justice? Yes, the officer who murdered Mr. Floyd and his accomplices were arrested but did that change the pattern of police brutality where the police judge by what they see? Was justice served? Politicians quickly began enacting policing reforms to quiet the cries for an end to police brutality. Is this really justice? Why am I feeling an emptiness about this justice?

No law will ever eliminate racism or the damage it causes. Racism or any type of discrimination tries to strip a human being of their God given dignity. Racism is the abuse of power that controls another for one’s personal gains or entertainment. Racism humiliates. How do we end racism without finding the appropriate healing for the one who discriminates?

[Last summer I attended a silent retreat with about 100 participants, I recall four of us being African American. One morning I attended Mass as usual and at the sign of peace extended my hand to everyone around me. I extended my hand to an older woman who did not shake my hand. I tried again as I watched her shake everyone's hand around me except mine. I tried one last time and she turned her back on me. I sensed others around me noticed what happened. I was stunned, humiliated, and hurt. It took all my strength to hold back the tears. I think it hurt so much because I was with fellow Catholics at mass. I can still feel the sting of rejection.]

The servant of the God that the prophet Isaiah speaks of brings restorative justice and righteousness to God's people. Restorative justice is more than finding guilty one who has done wrong. Restorative justice seeks reconciliation. Filled with the Spirit of God, all will be made anew, restored to the original beauty found at creation. This vision speaks to my heart and quiets my soul. I long for the world where enemies live side by side in peace and I hope for the day when all will be filled with the knowledge of our loving God.