

## Is Confession God's Call Forward?

"In light of all that has gone on this past week since the senseless killing of George Floyd, I along with so many others could give you my point of view. I could describe how I see those involved and share what I think. Instead, I would encourage you to look to our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and his words. His responses are better than anything I could say.

As I look outward at our world, I see a constant pointing of fingers at other people. I see the shining of light onto their darkness. I get the feeling that doing those things really doesn't seem to be helping nearly enough. We have been doing this for decades, since the time of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I believe that peaceful protests are very important in shining light and pointing that light into the darkness of our world. However, I am struggling because we have been doing this, and in my opinion, not nearly enough change has taken place. Not the kind of change that I believe God is hoping for in this world. Not the sort of change for which Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected.

Please understand I am quick to condemn the actions of any police officer killing an innocent man, but especially a white police officer killing an innocent black man. Or, as Bishop Curry said in his opinion piece, "the callous disregard for the life of another human being, shown in the willingness to snuff it out brutally as the unarmed victim pleads for mercy." I am also in my condemnation reminded of the words of Jesus, who said in Matthew 7:3-5, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." I wonder if God is calling all of us, no matter our color, to a time of confession.

Hence, it is time for my confession. If I am totally honest, here is what I can say (and so much more) and I would be surprised if you wouldn't say the same:

- I am a prejudiced person and need God's power to help me love all people as God loves them.
- I am a selfish person and need God's help to be more generous with the time, talent, and treasure God has blessed me with to help those who need a hand up.
- I am too quiet and need God's power to stand up for those who do not have the influence to stand up for themselves and communicate their basic needs.
- I have no room to point the finger at anyone until God helps me remove the log in my own eye.
- I need God's help to become the person God is calling me to be to love God,

and especially, to love my neighbor.

I would love to tell you that I am not prejudiced, selfish, too quiet, or judgmental. That, however, would be a lie. And as John says in 1 John 1:8-9, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If I and we, and all people, are genuinely going to be different, we must take a deep inner look and see what truly is in our heart. And until all that is violent or apathetic to God's people, made in God's image, is gone, we will keep seeing a repeat of this past week.

It is our call to proclaim this from the mountain top and I would encourage you to take this journey with me. And if you put anything on Facebook or Instagram or whatever instaface app you use, consider putting what a good clergy friend of mine, Skully Knight, said on his page:

As a white man/woman in America, I want to make my confession:

"for those things done and left undone..."

I am sorry. I will do better. I will be better.

I will not be silent.

Black lives matter.

You can figure out how you want to say this or you can even copy my confession. Perhaps if each of us puts something confessional like this out there, it may touch more people in a positive way as opposed to pointing the finger anywhere but at ourselves. We are called in our Baptismal Covenant to "respect the dignity of every human being". I pray you will join me in this spiritual discipline and that God may change our world, one heart at a time. Will you join me?

In Christ,

Ripp Hardaway

Rector