

In the wake of the 2 Supreme Court decisions this week-expanding access to guns and denying women control of their bodies and reproductive choices, I know I am not alone in my grief, shock, anger, and fear for this nation. In my sense that I am living in a country that, frankly, horrifies me. And that we have seen yet another demonstration of just how divided this country is and how we are locked in a minority rule situation. How our northstar is not "liberty and justice for all". And that we are a nation in which mercy, at every level of our common life, is lacking.

How, in a nation founded on religious freedom, one particular religious view has been imposed on all of us. Because not all religious traditions, not all Christians, agree on when a person becomes a person- becomes ensouled. And despite what some would have us think, what we call the Bible does not offer clarity on the issue either. In Genesis, our foundational myth designed to tell why the universe came into existence, why humans *are*- we read that Adam became human when God breathed into him. Not, with all due respect to Michaelangelo, when God touched Adam, but when God breathed into Adam's nostrils and Adam breathed in. So, at least in this story, it is at the point that we breathe that we become human. In Exodus 21, the penalty for causing a miscarriage is far less than the penalty for harming a pregnant *woman*. Preference is clearly given to the

woman and not the fetus. And in Numbers 5, if a woman is found to have become impregnated by someone other than her husband, her priest essentially performs an abortion- giving her something to make her miscarry. So the biblical witness is far from purely anti-abortion. As on most issues, it is a mixed bag and a lot depends on who is reading it. So, I would argue, along with Dr. Durrel Watkins, that not just freedom of autonomy was lost on Friday, freedom of religion was damaged too because one particular religious interpretation and view was imposed on all of us.

I am not alone in my fear for, my pain for, all the people of this country. Because, make no mistake, the violation of the human dignity of any person or group of people is a violation of the human dignity and rights of all of us. But especially now I pray for all women and trans people with uteruses-especially those who are poor, or those who are Black/Brown/People of Color. Because they will be disproportionately harmed by this decision. And I know many of us are reeling-feeling a range of emotions from anger, to grief, to despair, to numbness, some are rejoicing. Whatever it is you are feeling, you, as a beloved child of God, are entitled to feel. You do not have to feel what your neighbor is feeling. You do not have to “get over it”. And, specifically with anger, you are not called

to repress it. Too often Christians have been told that anger is wrong. That we are supposed to be nice to everyone. That we are supposed to move quickly to forgiveness-the half forgiveness of just pretending an offense or injury did not happen. Well, I am here to say that is just plain wrong. Anger is a holy emotion. It tells us something is wrong. It tells us that we are under threat. It can spur us to action. When unexpressed it tends to turn in on us-leading to depression and a whole host of unhealthy things. So, no, being a Christian is not about being nice. Jesus yelled at people. Jesus threw over the tables in the Temple. For the Christian, however, anger can never be about vengeance- it must be about crying out our pain at an injustice- and our desire to address it. And it must be rooted in love and respect for the dignity of all. It must be, lest it run amok.

Anyway, in my anger, grief, and confusion, I did what I often do-that is look to Scripture and to the Church to pour out my heart and look for strength. I hear the lament of the psalmist crying out of the deep, asking God to show up and give relief from distress. I sit with Job and wave a scabby fist at the heavens, angrily asking how this could happen. And I hear one of the most consistent voices in Scripture, beginning with God creating all that is, through Moses' answering God's call to lead the people out of enslavement, to the prophets, to Jesus, and to Paul, I hear the consistent

call to respect all that is, to “*do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God*”. The essential call of the Church, the essential call of the Christian, is to do justice. To respect the dignity of all human beings- without exception. And so when we see justice thwarted, when we see peoples’ autonomy harmed or taken away-whether that is by the Supreme Court, by poverty, by addiction, imprisonment, or whatever it is, we are called to act. And we start by doing what we are doing right now and what we did yesterday here in church. We gather, we mourn, we pray, we get strength from each other and from the Eucharist- from taking the body of Christ into our being thus becoming the hands and feet of Christ in the world. We remember that as Christians we have been given specific work to do; the work of respecting the dignity of every human being and of seeking and serving Christ in all people. The work of raising our voices and insisting that every single blessed person is a child of God and, as such, has autonomy over their body. The work of raising our voices with Oscar Romero and all the liberation theologians insisting that, if God takes sides, God always sides with the poor, the oppressed and the vulnerable. The work of never making peace with evil, or giving in to voices of hate. The work of following the One who was willing to die rather than meet hate with hate, violence with violence, or to capitulate to the power mad systems of the world. This is

hard, hard work. It takes courage and strength- and remember that having courage does not mean not being scared, as Dorothy Bernard writes, courage is just fear that has said its prayers. In the coming days and years we will find ourselves tested in ways we may not have thought we would be, and called to do things we did not think we would have to do. And we will find the courage and strength to do this work together-grounded in God and leaning on each other.

Exactly what that work will look like for you I don't know. I have enough trouble managing myself. But I do know that each of us is called to take care of ourselves first. To breathe. To remember that you, *you*, your flesh, is sacred, and worthy, and possesses intrinsic dignity. Then we are called to remember that so is every other living thing. Then to let our feet march towards justice. And to raise our voices to defend the dignity of all people. We, the people of God, we, the church, simply cannot be silent. Silence is complicity and if we are silent in the face of injustice, we lose our soul.

I am not sure there has ever been a time in my life when I have been so clearly reminded that we live in a broken and unjust world and that we who follow Jesus need to act on our call to do justice-to get into good trouble.

May we know that God is with us even in this wilderness. May God give us strength and courage, in the face of a world that deals in death and

injustice, to practice resurrection, to be people of justice and mercy, and to walk humbly with God.