

It is holy week and I reflect on “Jesus, Dead Man Walking.”

Jesus is on death row. He is on trial both by the state and the religious establishment. He is as an insurgent challenging the established norms and powers of the day. The Roman rule of King Herod, and the religious Jewish elite wanted Jesus gone. They condemned him to death turning Jesus into a dead man walking.

The story is heart-wrenching. Yet, Jesus’ is not the only violent story in the Biblical narrative. Violence plays a huge role in the birth of both Judaism and Christianity. Judaism was born out of the violence that is slavery, and of annihilating natives. Christianity was born out of the violence that is the crucifixion.

Such violent narratives are ancient. They mirror to us our own violent world and call to face, to be aware, to remember the violent and broken reality of our world. Perhaps that is why central to almost all ancient religions is the ritual of sacrifice and bloodshed, now an archetype.

In this tradition also, Israelites offered sacrifices and burnt offerings to Yahweh. The death of Jesus on the cross seems to follow this understanding as well. Blood had to be shed to save and nourish, to restore and set things right. Today, some of us struggle with the question - does this perspective spiritualize violence and make it redemptive? Are violence and suffering good for us?

It seems, even 2000 years after Jesus’ crucifixion, we humans answer that question with a “yes,” justifying the violence we do to one another, rationalizing bloodshed, defending war, carnage and guns.

I wonder why we are so attached to violence, to crucifying one another, to living with fear and blame, to reveling in anger and rage, to holding grudges and getting stuck in sorrow and crucifixion? I wonder why we often embrace the story of crucifixion, continuing to live its violence against one another, even as we neglect the rest of the story – Easter Resurrection!

I wonder why it is difficult for us to embrace Easter Resurrection, second chances and new beginnings, to be open to surprises of resurrection and its possibilities of rebirth and new beginning, of its miracles of love and healing?

This past weekend, appropriately on the weekend of Palm Passion Sunday, we witnessed the parade *March for Our Lives*, organized by our young. Many of them had endured the violence, death and bloodshed of their own friends... Now they are ready to speak their truth demanding and working for an Easter world.

Yes, Holy Week calls us to lament and repent, to weep and turn around; to recognize that in Jesus crucified we see all the crucified bodies of this world, all the violated, abused, emaciated bodies of our sisters and brothers, the bodies on the electric chair, those dying with lethal injection, even with illegal arms and guns.

Holy Week is part of the journey. Yet, it is to guide us to Easter Resurrection. Crucifixion is not the end of the story. It is part, a chapter of the story. It is the path that leads us to resurrection and rebirth, to healing and rising above death, destruction and bloodshed.

Resurrection is the promise that things can change, that violence and crucifixion do not have the last word, that destruction and sorrow are not the end, that life is possible in spite of death. Resurrection is the promise that because Jesus rose, you and I, and the universe can rise also - rise above suffering and sorrow, above violence and carnage, above fear and anger, healing and transforming them into possibilities and surprises beyond our imagining, of new beginnings we never thought possible.

Transformation is the point of the story. The 40 days of suffering and sorrow do turn into 50 days of Easter light and Resurrection. Crucifixion is tuned to resurrection, death to life. It was not the death of Jesus that changed the world. It was the resurrection that did.

We all know the traditional – *Jesus died to save us from sin*. I like to reword that – *Jesus was raised so we can live*. To live meaningfully we must lament Holy Week, see the Light of Easter Resurrection, and rise above the violence of Good Friday. To give life meaning we must heal and transform the cross of Good Friday into the cross of Life and Resurrection. And we have to do so every day.

I wish you a meaningful Holy Week and a Blessed and Joyous Easter Resurrection!

Please announce to your congregations

An Invitation

Meet ♦ Greet ♦ Install

Nayiri Karjian, Associations General Minister

4 opportunities

I am pleased to invite you to celebrate our covenant together at gatherings around our Associations. These celebrations were planned intentionally for convenience, to help us meet one another in different regional areas, so you can attend the one closest to you, and I could be introduced to our churches and members in different parts of Ohio.

Each gathering will include 45 minutes to meet and greet, followed by a 20 minute liturgy of installation.

- Saturday, April 7 ♦ 10AM ♦ [First Congregational UCC](#) (47 Aurora St, Hudson)
- Sunday, April 8 ♦ 2PM ♦ [St John UCC](#) ([516 N Wooster Ave, Strasburg](#))
- Saturday, April 21 ♦ 10AM ♦ [First Congregational UCC](#) ([36363 Center Ridge Rd, North Ridgeville](#))
- Sunday, April 22 ♦ 2PM ♦ [Pilgrim Christian Church](#) ([202 S Hambden St, Chardon](#))

I am grateful to the churches that have agreed to host and offer hospitality. THANK YOU!

Red stoles or ministerial gowns are not required.

I look forward to meeting and greeting you, and celebrating with you!