

Reflections on the SNL Procession to the ICE Office

By Charles Tazzia

The silent procession on Monday in Detroit to support immigrants and asylum seekers was the most recent of many demonstrations and protests that I have attended since January. I was struck at the difference between this procession and everything else that I have attended. Every other event has felt like it was primarily fueled by fear and outrage, both completely justified based on the times we live in. Angry shouting, expletive-filled chants and signs with inflammatory messages have been the norm. They have been emotionally-charged events filled with anger, if not downright hatred, over what this administration is doing. There is a place for all of that, and people have the right and the need to express what they are feeling and experiencing. God bless them for coming out! We need them and many, many more people to stand up and speak!

The silent march felt completely different.

Outrage was probably there, but that was not what compelled everyone to show up and walk on a Monday morning. Instead, I think it was hundreds of people and dozens of clergy members trying to live the actual words of Jesus, and not some twisted interpretation concocted to support a political and economic agenda under the guise of religion or Christianity. The fuel for this march was a quiet and powerful energy among the people, coming from a deep love and compassion for the immigrant community.

It's ironic that this administration that has sought to divide us and turn us against each other has instead started unifying the Christian community. I've wondered for years why Christianity separated itself into denominations in the first place. We all worship the same God and we all mostly try to live the same way, based on the teachings of Jesus. On Monday, there was at least 30 clergy members from multiple denominations and faiths that came out (along with their congregations) unified on this one issue: we are meant to love all people and treat them with respect, kindness and dignity. We are meant to welcome the stranger.

Many days of the past six months, I have felt that the United States and the entire world is on fire, burning out of control. What I saw Monday made me consider that perhaps this inferno is refining the faith community. Burning away the impurities and the petty differences that separate us and leaving behind the essence of God's message (or Allah, Jehovah, etc) and the teachings of Jesus.

There aren't many things I know for sure, but here are a few that I am certain of. Not a single human being in history ever came into this world with hate in their heart. We were born of love, and to love. We either learn hatred from our experiences or it is taught to us by people in great spiritual pain, and love is the only remedy for it.

Maybe the tactics of resistance need to change in America? Perhaps people have gone numb to the outrage they feel, much like we have gone been anesthetized to the horror of mass shootings after seeing hundreds of them. Instead, maybe we need to appeal to people's better angels with events like the silent march? To remind people of who we really are. To touch their innate spirituality and decency instead of appealing to fleeting emotion and outrage. In the end, love is stronger and has more staying power than anger and hatred. Love wins.