

In a recent email to the Home Pray-ers group, Betsy Adams passed along a powerful note from a friend of the parish, Ravi Aurora. It was a brief story. *During World War II, a group of people would stop whatever they were doing at a certain time each night to pray for peace, safety and security of everyone. They did this every day and it was as if the city stood still, such was the power of prayer. The result was so overwhelming that the bombing was stopped after a short time! Now again some are organizing, a group of people globally, to spend a minute praying for the security of our countries, for an end to the problems that oppress and suppress us, and for God to guide the decisions of our rulers. We will meet at the following times: (The list follows at the end of this note).* It was sobering to see all of the countries listed. It was also heartening to realize people offering prayers daily for peace in those places and for all people.

I suspect given the news that we hear on a daily basis, it is easy to lose heart. The overwhelming needs of the world and the myriad problems that impinge upon us, our communities, nations, and the world seem overwhelming at times. Lord knows, we need to pray. And yet, perspective is critically important as well. During a podcast this week, I heard one interviewee reflected on the reality that since 1860, the life expectancy of people in the U.S has risen 40 years. Even with all of the problems in the world, we have a quality of life that is largely unknown (and equally incomprehensible) to most of human history.

Of course, this is no excuse for a Pollyannaish worldview. We can't stick our head in the sand. Such perspective, however, offers a helpful reminder to us of the gift that we have, the amazing reality that we occupy in this moment in history, and inspiration for how we live given such a perspective. This perspective also challenges the aspects of life run counter to the blessings we are cognizant of. Basically, they need not exist in a world that teems with such wonder, beauty, grace, and gift.

This weekend we will face the harsh truth of poverty in a country that overflows with wealth., Matthew Desmond's *Poverty by America* is an important reminder of the interconnectedness that exists in our country, while also making us acutely aware of the discrepancies between those who have and those who do not within our society. Inherent in the truth of interconnectedness is a responsibility that we possess for building our lives and supporting the life of others. Furthermore, we must recognize how elusive the control over our lives truly is. None of us chose to be born where we were born. None of us were able to change the variety of circumstances that shape our lives, benefiting us without even knowing it or diminishing life without even knowing it.

It's interesting that we are discussing Desmond's work on the Sunday that we read a text about Jesus as the vine, and we are the branches. In essence, branches receive sustenance from the vine. The branch does not possess agency. It doesn't decide that it's going to be a strong branch or a weak branch. Our life is utterly dependent upon the vine. And I think, at some level, that is what Jesus is talking about. None of us is our own master. All of us are dependent. When we understand that dependence, our need of something outside of us to sustain us, and the serendipity or tragedy that can follow us, perhaps we become a bit more compassionate toward others and the world around us.

I am acutely aware of all of the opportunities that were created for me, and of which I had no hand. I did not make myself. I am, at a profoundly deep level, made. This mindfulness reflects the pausing to pray for peace during World War II of individuals for the countries that were listed. Indeed, such mindfulness is central to the practices of religious traditions. Pausing to acknowledge the gift of the moment and the needs within it keep us alert to the fullness of the holy in our midst. Understanding our dependence gives us a sense of our connectedness, compassion for all who, like us, stand in need, and hope that in humility we can, one step at a time, participate in God's healing and movement to wholeness of the creation in our time and throughout time. Those moments where we will be overwhelmed by the needs and concerns of the world will continue. However, hopefully, there will be many more moments where we understand how precious our life is, how precious the lives of others are, and the gift of being grafted to the vine which feeds us for lives of mercy, compassion, and grace.

Here are the countries that were a part of Ravi's story:

India 9 pm

Germany 4 pm

Austria 4 pm

Spain 4 pm

Portugal 3 pm

Canary Islands 3pm

Costa Rica 8 pm

Colombia 7pm

Nicaragua 8pm

Ecuador 7pm

Guatemala 8pm

Mexico 8 pm

Panama 7 pm

Honduras 6 pm

El Salvador 8pm

Venezuela 6 pm

Uruguay 5 pm

Paraguay 5 pm

Brazil 6 pm

Argentina 5 pm

Chile 5 pm

Italy 4 pm

Australia 2pm

U.S. 1pm

Canada 12nn

Singapore 9pm

Thailand 9pm

Korea 9pm

HK/ Taiwan 10pm

Philippines 11pm