

To all God's beloved in the Presbytery of Milwaukee:

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When my three children were younger, I was always careful to separate my two younger boys from one another while worshiping on Sunday mornings. Their older sister, Katherine, was aware of their shenanigans in the pew during worship and dutifully did her best to ignore the persistent distractions they caused. During the passing of the peace one Sunday, I turned to her and exclaimed, "Peace!" to which Katherine slowly shook her head and responded dryly, "If only we had some."

I could use some peace today. I most certainly don't have peace in my heart regarding the circumstances of the world in which we live right now. I have a restless longing and ache to do something at a time when our world is experiencing repeated episodes of gun violence, pernicious racism, and ruinous natural disasters. I am in a state of holy disquiet and unrest fueled by God's own Spirit.

Katherine's response was one that has stuck with me for many years because as a young girl, in the midst of the difficulty caused by her brothers, she became distracted and dispirited. It would be so easy in the aftermath of the perverse and incomprehensible massacre in Las Vegas, and the racist violence in Charlottesville, to become distracted rather than focused; to become dispirited rather than Spirited. If you're weary, please be comforted by Christ's deep and abiding love for you, and draw strength from Scripture and from your fellow Sisters and Brothers in Christ. Together, let's live out the words of the Psalmist whose earnest counsel encourages us to "seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14b).

My prayer for us is that we persevere in seeking and pursuing peace.

May the God of Peace be with you all,

Mary