

We Must Speak Out

Reflection by Beth Garascia

According to Elie Wiesel, “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” The question of when and how to speak out against injustice has been with us since Biblical times. Moses worked continuously to bring God’s people back to God. Other prophets called people to care for the poor, the widow, the orphan and the marginalized. Elijah, Deborah, and others spoke God’s word to a rebellious people and Daniel worked in the court of Babylonian emperors.

We also have the witness of our founders as well as various Marianist Family members who are working or did work for justice in their daily lives and speak out in so many ways. Adele worked with prostitutes, NACMS offers a wealth of resources and programs, and active members of MSJC teams have participated in demonstrations, sponsored conferences and retreats, and written articles.

Marianist prophets as well as others convey challenging messages or speak great religious truths, so ordinary Christians at times feel it’s overwhelming to take on this mission. However, when we see injustice and it breaks our hearts, taking a side is what we are called to do. It doesn’t necessarily require challenging emperors or making public speeches but can be a small act of making it clear to those around us where we stand. Two recent events in the news reminded me of the importance of doing this. The first story is that of the four women in Colorado who on February 11 wore rainbow-colored masks to services at All Souls Parish in Englewood and were [refused Communion because they did so](#). The women wore masks to show their compassion for Maggie Barton, who was fired from her teaching job at All Souls School by the Denver Archdiocese because she was in a same-sex relationship. However, according to [Canon 912](#) of the church’s Code of Canon Law, the only reason a person should be denied Communion is for ‘obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin.’ It would be difficult to defend a position that wearing a mask is a grave sin. In addition, receiving the Eucharist is healing and unifying act to us as believers in Jesus and should not be weaponized. Who would have predicted that such a simple action would trigger the unwarranted response of the refusal of the gift of the Eucharist?

The second instance did involve a speech, one by openly gay Missouri lawmaker Ian Mackey on April 11. Mackey’s impassioned response was due to a colleague who proposed a measure that would ban transgender girls from competing on girls’ sports teams. Mackey stated that he responded as he did because he wanted transgender children in that state to know that someone supported them. He shared his experience of growing up in Hickory County, Missouri, and being afraid of persons who were hateful to LGBTQ+ persons. [As part of his speech](#), he said that even though he predicted that the legislators would win because the bill would pass that day, ultimately, they would lose. Speaking out in favor of a marginalized group which one perceives to be the victim of injustice is not easy; it takes courage. It may or may not change hearts, but silence will never bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

So, my suggestion is to take time to ponder these questions: What is breaking your heart? What side are you called to take? Is there an action you can perform or a story you can tell? Finally, what injustice can you no longer be silent about?