

For the people of St. Philip's  
April 22, 2007  
Year C, Easter 3  
Maria Hoecker, preacher  
"Picking up the pieces"

My goodness this has been an upsetting week, hasn't it. How many times in the past several days have our hearts and minds been called back to the tragedy in Virginia. It was almost too poetic. While people's lives in Virginia were being blown away, a good number of our trees here in Brevard were also being blown away. Lights flashed on and off. The wind howled.

A mighty wind blew through us this past week. We're all still picking up the debris. As happens after a terrible storm, we are left with broken bits of emotions strewn everywhere and we wonder if we'll ever get it all put back in order. Suddenly we become aware that all that surrounds us can shatter, topple, blow away. It's an uneasy feeling, being reminded of our vulnerability in the storms of this life.

I've been returning to scripture this week. Returning to prayers. As I heard the events unfold on Monday my thoughts kept returning to a single phrase. God help those holy innocents. "Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims." as it says in the BCP. (page 238) Our collect refers to the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem that were slaughtered by King Herod. But the prayers still speak to the events of our day. God be with the innocent victims and their families. Help bind the wounds.

And yet I have to say it again., I see this Paschal candle burning and I have to say it. Alleluia! The Lord is Risen. Indeed! The risen Christ is the *wounded* Jesus. If you want to KNOW that Jesus is alive and at work in the world you *have* to look for the wounds. The wounds are the surest sign that this stranger in our Gospel reading is really our risen Christ cooking breakfast.

Remember that Thomas the twin knew what to look for... He showed that he'd know the risen Christ when he touched the wounded Christ. That truth grounds us as we go out into a dangerous world. We have nothing to fear.

All of us, along with Thomas, can touch the wounded Body of Christ. Every time we take someone's hand as we exchange the Peace, we touch the risen, living Body of Christ. All of us carry wounds, seen and unseen. All of us are victims and aggressors. All of us inflict wounds, seen and unseen. I think some of the most violent aggressors were themselves victims with unseen wounds that festered for too many years. These wounds can only be healed by being in contact with each other in Christ--- the risen, living Body of Christ.

With each exchange of the peace we are healed and sent out as disciples into the streets, thrust out into the world's brokenness to bring the good news of the healing power of Christ to those who are hurting.

It's not easy. Moving out into a dangerous world. As disciples of Jesus, we know that we must leave the rooms we lock ourselves in because of fear. We have to jump out of our boats into the water. Thomas and Peter and the disciples did it – we too have to jump into the dangerous waters. If we try to sequester ourselves and our children away from the world's pain, we are hiding them and ourselves from Christ's healing wounds.

Blessed are those who mourn. Those who mourn are blessed. We are called to be touched by the wounds that are inflicted upon this world. We are called to proclaim and participate in the reconciliation and healing that is Christ's work in the world. Again and again we return each week to the table for sustenance. Jesus Christ stokes the fire in anticipation of our recognition of him on the shore.. Again and again, each one of us returns to gather at Jesus' table where bread is being broken in remembrance of him .

Then we get back out and get back at it picking up the fallen limbs.

(intro to watching the author of this poem read it to a coliseum full of grieving VA Tech community.)

[We are Virginia Tech](#) (read at a rapid, upbeat tempo)

We are Virginia Tech

We are sad today

And we will be sad for quite a while

We are not moving on

We are embracing our mourning

We are Virginia Tech

We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly

We are brave enough to bend to cry ...

And sad enough to know we must laugh again

We are Virginia Tech

We do not understand this tragedy

We know we did nothing to deserve it

But neither does a child in Africa dying of aids

Neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by a rogue army

Neither does the baby elephant watching his community being devastated for ivory

Neither does the Mexican child looking for fresh water

Neither does the Appalachian infant killed in the middle of night in his crib in the home its father built with his own hands being run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized

No one deserves a tragedy

We are Virginia Tech

The Hokie nation embraces our own and reaches out with open heart and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds

We are strong and brave and innocent and unafraid

We are better than we think and not quite what we want to be

We are alive to the imagination and the possibility

We will continue to invent the future

Through our blood and tears

Through all this sadness

We are the Hokies

We will prevail

We will prevail

We will prevail

We are Virginia Tech

-- Nikki Giovanni, University Distinguished Professor of English,

So much death. Such deep wounds. And yet. And yet. AND YET. And yet we proclaim the Good News of

Easter. Christ is here among us, despite our locked doors and our security systems. And there is life, and peace. In Christ and through Christ and with Christ, all of Creation is being redeemed, coming to new and abundant life.

What can one person do to heal the world's wounds? I don't know. But I know what Jesus can do. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be given all that we need to go out into this broken world. We can go in peace to love and serve others in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

"Don't Tell Me of a Faith That Feels" (author unknown)

*So let the gospel come alive  
in actions plain to see  
in imitation of the one  
whose love extends to me  
I need to know that God is real  
I need to know that  
Christ can feel the need  
to touch and love and heal the world  
including me*

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The risen, living Body of Christ is in this broken, wounded world – breathing peace, stoking the fire, preparing the feast, bringing healing, and sending us forth, in love and in power.

(Sources for this reflection: Wendy Dackson, Susanna Metz, Sarah

Dylan Breuer )