
WITNESS for JUSTICE

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Holiday Spirit

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I recently had a conversation with someone lamenting the powerlessness she felt in the face of recent events. Terrorist groups are committing horrific acts of violence all over the world. Some have responded to these events with compassion, but it seems that so many more spread hateful messages and fear. Our leaders are willing to sacrifice the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees to win political points. Countries are at war. We continue to see stories of the hundreds of black lives extinguished at the hands of police. Student protesters are threatened and condemned for defending their rights and the safety of their classmates. Thousands of people somehow misconstrue a red cardboard cup as a full-frontal assault on Christianity.

It feels as though the world is falling apart and it's completely out of our control. Our elected officials don't always make the decisions we ask of them. It's easy to feel like our voices are lost in a cacophony of competing interests and demands. We don't quite know where to begin.

But if I know anything about the Christmas story, it's a testament to the power one person has to quite literally change the world forever. I can't stop ISIS. I can't wave a magic wand and eliminate racism and Islamophobia. I can't change hearts and minds overnight. But I can be gentle and kind with my neighbors. I can be patient with cashiers and sales clerks who are overwhelmed by the holiday rush. I can donate my time and money to organizations whose causes I support. I can stop and chat with the stranger on the street. I can focus on making just one person's day even the slightest bit brighter.

As we enter into this holiday season, let us all reflect on the small and simple acts of kindness over which we do have control. Let us respond to

God is still speaking,
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desperation and despair with Hope. Let us respond to violence with Peace. Let us respond to hatred, racism, Islamophobia, sexism, and vitriol with Love. Let us respond to lament with Joy. I believe that if all try just a little bit harder to show kindness to those we encounter every day, we will see that this world can, in fact, be a better place.

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