

AFTER THE BURNING

Two weeks ago I sent out a Friday Reflection urging us never to forget the Holocaust and the millions of people who were brutally slain between 1933 and 1945. Quite a few people responded to the reflection, some with truly remarkable personal stories, which moved others and myself here at Starcross deeply.

However, there were those who wrote that remembering such horrors, and especially teaching them to young people, could encourage major problems facing us today such as depression, anxiety, and similar issues that have caused up to 30% of the students at some colleges to drop out.

For myself, I do not see any inconsistency in remembering disasters such as the Holocaust and a questing for a well-balanced life. In fact, I personally feel it's necessary to have both.



Soon I will be facilitating a workshop on “Walking Meditation”. In which, I will be relying very heavily on the concepts of the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (1926 –) toward inner peace and mindfulness. He was also a peace activist in the midst of the Vietnam War and his attitude is reflected in the title of his famous book, *Lotus In a Sea of Fire*. He was an important delegate at the Paris peace Conference and coined the phrase “*Engaged Buddhism*.”

To me awareness of where we went wrong and the quest for inner peace are two tributaries of the same river.



Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini both died this month 73 years ago and most people assumed that fascism was finished. But, it has been popping up around the world recently and an increasing number of people, including Americans, are worried about it. Is fascism, in fact, being hatched, in our own divided nation?



A few days ago 80-year-old Madeleine Albright, who served as the American Secretary of State from 1997–2001, wrote an *op-ed* piece in *The New York Times* in which she argues that the return of fascism is a more serious threat now than at any time since the end of World War II. She puts the responsibility for some of that on the present occupant of the Oval Office,

Mr. Trump has attacked the judiciary, ridiculed the media, defended torture, condoned police brutality, urged supporters to rough up hecklers and — jokingly or not — equated minor policy disagreements with treason. He tried to undermine faith in America's electoral process through a bogus advisory commission on voter integrity. He routinely vilifies federal law enforcement institutions. He libels immigrants and the countries from which they come. His words are so often at odds with the truth that they can appear ignorant, yet are in fact calculated to exacerbate religious, social and racial divisions.

Strong words from a strong and talented woman. Her piece was entitled *"Will We Stop Trump Before It's Too Late?"*



So what do we do? Albright urges us to put a priority on very basic things: defending the truth, a free press, no one is above the law, registering new voters, listening respectfully to those with whom we disagree, knocking on doors for candidates we support, and discarding the idea that nothing can be done. Like most of us, she was

inspired when she saw *"young people coming together to demand the right to study without having to wear a flak jacket."*



Trump's program seems to divide this country again and again. I'm especially concerned about matters involving migrants, people coming from other cultures or adhering to minority religions, or having different

shades of color. It was 50 years ago when a very tired Martin Luther King Jr. addressed a packed audience one stormy night in a Memphis, Tennessee church. He said, *"I may not get there with you, but I have seen the promised land!"* The next morning he was murdered by, to use MLK's words, *"one of our sick white brothers."* Well, we still have plenty of sick white brothers around!

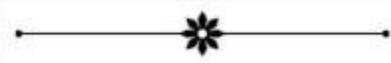
What good does it do for me to write about things that people already know about? Everybody knows the mess we are in and everyone knows it's more serious than messes we've been in before. Yes, we can do the things that Madeleine Albright suggested, but where are we headed?



I've lived a long time and it feels to me like people will not be free of the faults of the oligarchy that now rules without some very drastic change. I've seen revolution from what was called "velvet" to situations that were harsh and destructive. I've watched the military "save" a nation with the result that life became worse than before. I've been and worked in nations after the collapse of the Soviet Union or the fall of apartheid. I've watched the promise of a glorious new day destroyed by corruption followed by brutality. Do I think this is the road were on? I have no idea.



Recently I had a conversation with a young person along these lines. I found that the only thing I could authentically say was that I sense a great pile of wood has been assembled. All it needs is a match to set it off. I don't know what it will burn. What I do know is that history is not requiring that the young people of today strike that match and light that fire. What is required of them is to be prepared to build a better world after the burning stops.



I realize this is not the most inspiring Friday Reflection that has appeared here. By the time it arrives in your inbox the world may have shifted again in significant ways. I promise you that the next reflection will be along the lines of increasing our awareness of the wonders of this beautiful and precious little planet of which we are currently stewards.

Brother Toby

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