

Our Lord Jesus Christ the King of the Universe

A number of years ago Father Ambrose Karels lived in the attic of the rectory across the street when this building was still known as Assumption Church. Today he is in the memory care unit of a nursing home, where I visit him from time to time. Through my friendship with Father Karels I met a number of interesting people, including Daniel Hantai, a doctor from Paris who worked a brief time in Kansas City at the hospital where Father Karels served as the Catholic chaplain. Earlier this year Daniel contacted me because he was planning a trip to Kansas City and wanted to visit Father Karels. He then came with his mother and another friend, and the three of them participated in the Saturday afternoon mass here at St. Anthony's before going out to the nursing home.

After the terrorist attacks in Paris last week I emailed Daniel to make sure that he was all right and to assure him of my prayers. He was grateful for the contact, said that he and his family were safe, but a friend of his sister's was in the group at the concert hall and was among the first to be shot and killed. He leaves a wife and two children who are classmates of Daniel's sister's kids. I told him we would include his sister's friend in our prayers at St. Anthony's this weekend.

Meanwhile on the internet, some Mexican Americans expressed sorrow over the losses in Paris, but pointed out quite accurately that there is terrorism aplenty in parts of Mexico, and this does not get the same attention as attacks in places such as Paris. We don't respond with the same compassion when violence happens in other parts of the world including the Middle East, Nigeria and Somalia. No matter where terrorism takes place, and no matter how few or many people it kills, it is horrible and deserves condemnation. Violence breeds violence, and the spiral disheartens those who envision a better world.

On the campus of the University of Missouri in Columbia, a hunger strike and an athletes' strike forced a change in leadership to address concerns about racism on campus. By comparison, this was a peaceful way to request reform.

Here in Northeast Kansas City, the Northeast Community Center is trying to build a more peaceful society through a program called Harmony Project KC. It offers tuition-free music education for children aged 6-12 who come from low income families. Research shows that children who study music perform better in school, stay longer in school, and avoid gangs. It's one sign of hope that neighborhoods like ours can be places where respect and happiness flower.

Today we honor Jesus Christ under the title of king of the universe. The Prophet Daniel predicts that all peoples, nations and languages will serve the Son of Man, and that his dominion is everlasting. His kingship shall not be destroyed. Whenever we hear news of violence abroad, we sometimes discover it touches people we know. It makes us reach out with compassion and to pray for those who are afflicted. It also makes us think about how we retaliate when someone offends us. Do we strike back? Or do we try to build a nation, a neighborhood and a family that listens to grievances, resolves problems, and places its values under the direction of the one ruler whose wisdom can guide us to ways of peace: Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe - and your king?

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