

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Three years ago a hate crime took the lives of William Corporon, Reat Underwood, and Terri Lamanno outside the Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom in Overland Park. Since that time surviving family members Mindy Corporon and Jim Lamanno have summoned the people of Kansas City to counteract such crimes with acts of goodness. Each year they have sponsored a weeklong program called Seven Days: Make a Ripple, Change the World. Jim Lamanno visited St. Anthony's on St. Joseph's Day last month. This year for the first time Seven Days is bringing one of its events here to St. Anthony Catholic Church, and the first time that one event will be bilingual. On the Friday after Good Friday we will host the only night at which Mindy Corporon will speak, and the only event when her 18-year old exchange student from Spain, Saúl Cordero, will give a simultaneous translation of the presentation into Spanish.

Many of you have suffered violent crimes in your families and in your home towns. All of us have experienced hatred in our city, at work, at schools, in politics and in our own homes. We have felt the temptation to respond to hate with hate, but there is another way. Mindy will speak about her experience of losing both her father and her teenage son in the same hate crime, and she will promote organ donation.

Throughout his lifetime, Jesus Christ confronted people filled with hate. Eventually they put him to death. Yet on the cross, he did not condemn them, he died for the sake of sinners. His disciples did not respond to his death with more hate; instead, they spread his message of love.

The prophet Isaiah foresaw these virtues in the passage we hear as today's first reading. Isaiah suffered abuse, but he did not retaliate. He writes, "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting." Where did he get the strength for such nonviolence? Isaiah continues, "The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced.... I shall not be put to shame." God gave this prophet "a well-trained tongue," and he used it as an agent of peace.

My brothers and sisters, there is hatred in the world. Sometimes it turns violent. Hatred continues to win every time we respond to it with more hate. There is another way. We can pray for our persecutors. We can show charity. We can use our well-trained tongue. We can turn our backs on those who beat us and turn our faces toward the compassionate gaze of Christ on the cross.

Sunday, April 9, 2017