

To the people of Huron

June 8, 2021

Dear people of God in the Diocese of Huron,

After fifteen months of loss due to a new virus (SARS-CoV-2), after a century or more of loss in Canada's Residential School system due to an old virus (racism), and after yet another outburst of appalling, murderous violence carried out on an innocent Muslim family, it is clear that the viruses of hatred and sin are still attacking us, as well.

In faith, we respond with weeping, confession, and resistance. Love is the vaccine in this kind of pandemic. In faith, we act strongly and persistently to undo and overwhelm hatred with the love of Christ. We commit ourselves to this Spirit-driven work knowing that God will overturn all the trouble of this world.

The four people who died in London were intentionally hit with a vehicle and were targeted because of their Islamic faith. This is a form of terrorism. The purpose of terrorism is to put people in a state of fear, to make them feel totally unsafe, and to somehow gain power over them. This is why our first response must be to surround the targeted people with our love, putting our bodies in the way, literally and figuratively, praying that God will give safety to the vulnerable and life to the dead.

We are praying for the peace and safety of the Muslim members of our community, and for all of those who are regularly targeted for how they look or how they love. We pray that God, our Creator, will shower mercy upon the family murdered in our city, bring healing to the hospitalized child, and shelter and comfort to all those who are fearful and hurting.

A friend helped me find this beautiful passage from the Qur'an. It speaks well to all of us about our unity, even in diversity, *"People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware."* -translated Syrah 49:13. This resonates so well with much of our own scriptures, our Christian beliefs, and the God who not only creates this diversity but the One who comes with power on the Day of Pentecost.

I invite each of you to find ways to constantly demonstrate that hatred will be overwhelmed by love. When facing racism, sexism, homophobia/transphobia, religious persecution, and more, we work to disable the structures and systems that support such sin. We also commit to learning how, where, and when people are radicalized to hate so that we can root out those avenues to death. We are people of God's light and life. I pray that we will re-double our efforts to learn these good ways.

(Tonight, I will be participating in the Vigil at London Muslim Mosque at 7:00 pm to mourn and honour those who died. On Friday at 7:00 pm, I will walk with what I pray will be a huge number of people to demonstrate our resistance to hate.)

I encourage you to publicly express every act of sympathy, friendship, and solidarity you can in the wake of this horror. As the Bishop of Quebec reminded me, from their own experience of this, “No gestures are too small, because like mustard seeds they can bear important fruit.” I pray for you in this good work.

Peace,
+Todd
Bishop of Huron

The Quran:

Whosoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind,
And whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.
Qur'an 5:32

Respect and honour all human beings irrespective of their religion, colour, race, gender, or language...
Qur'an 17:70

Whenever you give your word, say the truth
Quran 6:152