

Gwynne was asked to do a brief reflection on where the Interfaith Community of Los Angeles finds itself following the Election and address how it prepares for "Times like These".

The Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders
Interfaith Service of Prayer and Meditation
Reflection and Solidarity
Sunday, November 27, 2016
Closing Meditation

"Now More Than Ever"
Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord

A few weeks ago a colleague posted a photo about The Guibord Center's recent Advisory Council Meeting on Facebook. We were all meeting together in all of our colorful ritual outfit and there was a brief description of what The Guibord center does and our mission statement. I have to tell you that I was delighted - until I saw the comment a stranger posted beneath it.

"So what?" he wrote.

"So what?! What do you mean?!", I thought shocked and more than a little hurt.

A thousand different retorts came flooding into my mind. I began ticking them off, but... but I do have to tell you: the more I thought about it - and even *prayed* about it, the more I realized that it was exactly the right response.

"So what?" It's a question that deserves to be asked. And it's a question that we must try to answer.

The Interfaith Community gathers. We talk. We learn from each other, about each other. We share commonalities and discuss differences. And... "So what!?"

"Really? - So what?"

In times like these **the usual** is just not good enough. We have to dig deeper and do better better - MUCH better. How are we to answer the "so what?" "Why gather? Why bother? Do we have a role to play? Can we make a difference?.. a difference that really matters? "

Not, My Friends, unless we are willing to dig deeper.

Personally, I think we in the interfaith community were created *precisely* for times like these because we are privileged to have everything we need to make a difference **but to do so** will take ALL the courage we have and require that we truly live out the inherent mandate of ALL our faith traditions AND support one another in prayer and in deed.

Our unique power and gift lies in the fact that no matter how diverse our theologies we share the common belief that we were all created by **Something Greater than Ourselves.**

We *love* and *serve* **Something Greater than Ourselves.** And we believe that the same Force that created us created us to care about and for the well-being of others.

Love of God and concern for others is at the HEART of every faith.

LET ME BE CLEAR: right now I am **NOT TALKING ABOUT "JUSTICE."**

I am talking about something deeper and far more challenging. I am talking about what *empowers* the drive for justice. I am talking about Compassion - not "tepid commiseration" or "worthless pity".

I am talking about the courageous, conscious, willingness to allow ourselves to enter into the suffering of another human being, to meet them in their pain, to shoulder it, and *feel* it with them.

Compassion is at the heart of every faith.

Compassion is THE antidote to dehumanization, to objectification.

It is not *talk*. It is **action** - the act of opening one's self, of stepping into pain instead of turning away.

In times like these we have to stand up for one another - not for the sake of *justice* - *not for the sake of justice* - but for the sake of humanity - our own humanity as well as the humanity of "the other" - perpetrator and victims alike.

I have been told that Native American people have a legend that one day when the White Man is in danger of destroying himself, he will turn to the Native People to save him. On that day, Native Wisdom will finally be honored, and The People will restore their relationship with all beings and Mother Earth.

Our Indigenous brothers and sisters teach us **that we are all kin**. We are all ONE family. No one, NO ONE is outside of the family. No one.

In times like these we of the interfaith community cannot stand comfortably on the sidelines while bad things happen to others. It's about family. The HUMAN family.

WE, you and I, have to lead. We have to step into the spotlight as dangerous and frightening and uncomfortable as that may be to do whatever we can to speak up for and with to help one another.

We have to be the leaders **through our examples**, careful not to polarize or politicize, (as good as that might feel at the moment) striving to meet fear with faith and determination, cruelty with kindness, **dishonesty** and rumor with steadfastness and truth.

We have to stand together and be willing to shoulder the pain together on behalf of all people who will suffer - and there will be many.

We have to live out the compassion at the core of our faiths as fully as we possibly can. That means practically speaking, that we have to be nimble to be there for one another - quickly, responsibly, meaningfully: to listen deeply, love courageously, care boldly while knowing that we are part of something bigger and more important than ourselves.

We *can* make a difference that matters in times like these by being - with God's help - the caring, generous, compassionate people that the Holy in all our traditions enables us to be.

Now. Now we each have to take the time to prayerfully weigh the measure of our own hearts, of the responsibilities we carry, the places that we cannot go as well as the places where we must.

These are dangerous times. There will be retribution. There will be costs. Let no one tell you what you should be willing to do. No one. This is between you and the Holy and not open to anyone's judgement. Compassion also means letting go of blame, of judgement, for we all have our limits.

We are developing a code of being for ourselves, a mission statement, a set of agreements and expectations.

First, we pray quietly, individually and together, recognizing that this is *sacred* work. We do it *as people of faith*. And we help one another because we cannot do it alone.

That's the truth of it. That's is the "what" of why we do what we do. It is the answer to "so what?" Now more than ever.