

Response to Christchurch Shootings. Lent 2.

We worship with our doors open. This happens to be safe to do as Christians in Oak Park, but if that ever changes, we will still worship with our doors open. We would of course find ways to keep our children safe, but we would not let concerns about our own safety impair our welcome. There is something about the invitation of Jesus that is claustrophobic, something about the Holy Spirit that cannot be contained. For many, many people—and especially in communities of color and among religious minorities—it is not safe to worship with doors open. We have seen too many reminders of this in recent years: Mother Emanuel AME Church, Oak Creek Sikh Temple, Tree of Life Synagogue, now the mosques in Christchurch, and plenty more.

Each of these specific examples were people of faith, murdered by white supremacists while at prayer. We feel in our guts that there is something particularly heinous about murdering people in their house of worship. And white supremacy should horrify us especially, because it is the original sin of our nation and lies about each and every one of us: either denying our dignity in the image of God, or drafting our very selves into a perverse lie about the whole world.

The thing about white supremacy is that it ends in mass shootings, lynchings, and genocide, but it begins much earlier. It begins even here, in nice Oak Park, among our non-fascist, generally unhateful friends, children, and selves. In our well-funded schools and public services. A terrorist mass shooting in New Zealand feels very far away, but hatred of Muslims, immigrants, refugees, and anyone who isn't a white Christian is very very close.

We fight white supremacy and terroristic fascist violence because it is wicked, because it denies the stamp of the divine image on people God created and loves, people God calls us to love. We fight it by telling the truth, that this world is God's beloved work, as are all the people in it. That we are called to move more deeply into love and vulnerability, not to cling to the dangerous convenient lies of nationality and race. Fighting it will not make us popular and may even be dangerous—even here in nice diverse Oak Park.

We do it anyway because it is work to which God calls us. When danger or opposition comes, we draw on the example of Jesus. In today's gospel, he was told that the government planned to kill him. He does two things in response. First, he tells the truth about the violent authorities: Herod is a fox, a scoundrel, a rascal, sly and untrustworthy and unadmirable. And second, he commits to continuing the good work that was his to do: delivering people of their demons and healing the sick. Today, we are mourning, and that is right and proper. And tomorrow, we return to what we are called to do: telling the truth and helping those in need, even when it is hard or dangerous. Our faith does not guarantee us safety; it calls us into risk. Amen.