

6/12/20

Friday blessings, People of God!

A colleague in my doctoral program would address those he met with this beautiful tag line: “Good morning, Peter of God! Hello, Nannette of God! Debi of God, it is good to see you.”

At first, I thought this was goofy; then quirky but sweet. Then I began to look forward to hearing his greetings, and was secretly disappointed when he didn’t add a spiritual surname when he spoke our names aloud. I had come to treasure the experience, the reminder, the invitation.

To see each other with God’s surname, to speak such naming aloud and hear it spoken (of one another and of myself!) was to be reminded of our humble, touching, true identity. If we are not children of God, what are we? God’s children are exactly what we are—and yet, how easy it is to forget, or to ignore, this.

There are people in our world who are unused to and uncomfortable with the phrase, “Black Lives Matter.” Hearing it feels uncomfortable. People ask, “Don’t all lives matter?” The answer of course, is “Yes!” All lives very much matter. And, if we truly understand and believe that all lives matter, we act as if this is so. Our policies and practices evidence this. Our educational system tells this story. Our employment and achievement records bear this out. In a country in which moms and dads of brown and Black-skinned boys sit their sons down when they grow to be four feet tall and talk with them about how to keep themselves safe and alive when police officers stop them, where the life expectancy of those living in zip codes populated by people of color is years shorter than that of those living in majority white zip codes (respiratory disease, diabetes, and infection being three leading causes, and their numbers are astronomically higher than those of wealthy white suburbs), or where Black children graduate high school at lower rates and go to prison at statistical rates much higher than their white counterparts, there is heartbreakingly little evidence that Black lives matter (equally to other lives) in our society. It hurts the heart to look at the numbers.

The more I learn and become aware (How did I miss it for so long before I began to notice?) of how grievous the disparities are between those born with pink or beige skin (and its cultural privileges) and those born with more melanin, it makes my stomach sick. While I did not personally create these disparities, people who look a lot like me have. It turns out, people who look a lot like me have been intentionally planning for and maintaining these cruel imbalances for generations (How did I not know?).

Historical and contemporary research that was long kept away from the white mainstream eye bears this out with great clarity. I have unknowingly, and without my consent, benefitted from generations of suffering that was invisible to me.

The more I learn, the more I am humbled, and amazed, by the courage, tenacity, and heart of my African American siblings for the ways they have continued to persist...to live, love, create, speak truth, achieve, and grow...under such a heavy mantle of unwelcome for so long. What character, capacity, generosity, and grace. To me, it is astounding.

What makes it so easy to overlook the sacredness in another? Is it that it is so daunting to see sacredness in ourselves? Or that if I acknowledge your sacredness, I fear there will be less to go around?

Our nation, our community, and the world have taken to the streets again, in greater and greater numbers, crying out for recognition and protection of the value, the sacredness, and the safety of each Black child of God. Black lives more-than-matter to God, and God calls us to live and to love as if Black lives more-than-matter to all of us. Black lives are sacred, beautiful, and needed. They are, as we all are, the children and image of God. May God bless us to love our neighbors as the children of God we all are. Much love and many blessings on the journey,

Heather