



CHURCH OF NORWAY

Bishop of Hamar

Bishop Solveig Fiske's Memorial sermon

July 22nd 2012 at Hamar Cathedral

Preaching text: John 1,5

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not defeated it.

The day turned so heavy and dark July 22nd last year. Throughout the afternoon, evening and night, it became even heavier. It was dark.

Heavy are the roads that man on earth must walk.

.....

Desert trails, moorland paths, mountains high.
Where are the little flowerpickers,
from whos trail will roses grow, where are those,
who will sprinkle flowers across the heavy roads?

Selma Lagerlöf wrote this in "The saga of Gösta Berling". She captures the burdens of existence and the many "what`s" and "why`s".

Oh no! What is happening? Acts of terrorism here, in our country?
Many of us experienced such feelings and thoughts on July 22nd of last year. We found ourselves deeply related to each other and to everyone living in terror and fear.

The horrible actions that struck the young people at AUF`s summer camp and our central government, challenged us to react with human dignity, solidarity and care. Facing the inhuman and the incomprehensible, we all reached for the life- giving that has many names. Those names that can be gathered in the words Faith, hope and love.

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We need hope and love to handle the chaos created by such horrible actions.
We need room and fellowship to cry, to grief, to be angry, to be vengeful and desperate.
To scream out in anguish and despair. To reflect in silence.
To see each other, support each other and to light candles.
To light candles for those who died, for the wounded and for the grieving.
To light candles to carry the grief and the loss.
To light candles for each other and for the future. For the courage to speak truthfully about what once was and what still is, and to hold on to life, in truth and in love.



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Arnold Eidslott says in his poem, “The handshake”:

It is birth
when two hands meet
.....
Each handshake gives birth to a star.

Through the grief, we experienced the enormous mobilization in cities and villages, where people gathered in the streets to fight for more openness, love and democracy. This was the light in the darkness, the light that persists life and the future beyond the darkness.

The cruel actions of terror affected us all. We cried with the families and friends of those who died and the young members of AUF. Regardless of political views, we stood proud and felt proud of our monarchy and our political leaders. Despite their own grief, they stood up and gave us our much needed comfort.

Many questions are left unanswered after such events, especially existential and theological questions. Many people ask -Where was God? Why did God not prevent this enormous suffering?

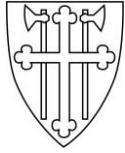
It is important that these questions be raised. They can also be directed to God. The Bible is full of laments and painful cries to God. The language of prayer does not merely hold pleasant and polished words.

Many people turn to the Church as a place to meet in the middle of chaos. A sacred place that may absorb the various emotions we hold: Sorrow, compassion, disappointment and anger, but also the feelings of unity and love. Sorrow, reflection and prayer fill the church halls. In a distinctive way, there we can encounter God`s blessed peace that shines upon us.

When facing tragedy, we seek answers. Evil is a painful part of the world, and evil is also a mystery that eludes explanation. Neither the Church nor the Bible can explain evil, beyond offering the comfort of God`s solidarity and compassion with all people.

This is a thought, a theology, a faith that gives courage to speak truthfully about life. This implies an intimacy between faith and life. It will challenge and inspire to act and speak of human dignity in a clear voice. Inspire to speak up when the sanctity of life is violated.

Jesus spoke clearly about acting oblivious to our fellow men and taking control over them. Unfortunately, we have too many examples on such actions throughout history. The hardest part is seeing people evoking God and God`s will in exercising power. After great tragedies,



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it is more important than ever to highlight the radical message of Christianity, the message of equality and human dignity.

Last year, we experienced the need for unity and people who dare to encourage and live out dignity and humanity. We still do! The Romanian nun Mother Theresa, who worked in India, often pointed this out. She said:

Every human being is a child of God. Created in his image. This is what counts.
Our mission is to serve the poor among the poor.
The love of God is eternal, full of affection, full of compassion.
God loves the world through us, you and me.

We find an incredibly important mission in the words of Mother Theresa. We believe in a God who suffers with all people, who sees all those affected, and who carries them through life. But this does not lessen our responsibility as fellow human beings, we are challenged to act. Everyday heroes are found all around the world. They stand for their fellow man and they reflect God`s love by serving those in need. The light shines in the darkness.

With his own life and death, Jesus was the revelation of God`s love. He came to serve and to reach. In Jesus` resurrection, we have, above all, a hope that carries us, a living hope that love is stronger than death. That the darkness will not win.

We are called to bring hope, to be makers and carriers of peace, to be little flowerpickers, to care and nourish, so roses can grow and flowers can be sprinkled across the road of life for others and for us. This will give a glimpse of faith, hope and love, and the profound truth that:

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not defeated it.

Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.