



“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”
Matthew 5:42-44 NRSV

My devotional this week was inspired by the writings of Diana Butler Bass, an American historian of Christianity. She wrote a beautiful and insightful essay this week reflecting on the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol last week and challenged her readers to think about the words “sacred” and “desecration” used to describe what was done to the capitol building. In her eloquent writing she reflected on the life of the late John Lewis, quoting some of his writings. He wrote, “Release the need to hate, to harbor division and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won.” Butler Bass also quoted historian, Jon Meacham, from his Lewis biography that followed shortly after Lewis’ death. Meacham wrote: “John Robert Lewis embodied the traits of a saint in the classical Christian sense of the term.”

Butler Bass’ writing helped me find hope in the events of last Wednesday, the Day of the Epiphany, January 6, 2021. I so hope you will take a bit of time to read and contemplate her essay, “The Sadness of the Sacred.”

<https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/the-sadness-of-the-sacred>

John Lewis also wrote, “The journey begins with faith — faith in the dignity and worth of every human being. . . Adversity can breed unity; hatred can give way to love.” And in his final words he insisted: “You have to believe that. You have to believe that.”

And Butler Bass sums up her thoughts writing, “So, yes. I grieve. It is hard and demands courage. This isn’t going to end for a long time. And my life may end before this struggle does. Yet, in the darkness, I find my faith renewed. Thus, I offer my confession to St. John Lewis of the Rotunda: I believe. I believe.”

It just seems to me that this is what it means to follow in the Way of Jesus, who taught us that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. While I believe that accountability will be important to our healing, I also take seriously the teaching of Jesus and pray that we can all turn our hearts the path of loving God, our neighbors, our enemies and ourselves. May it be so.

Holy One, hear us, we pray. Tear open the gates of heaven and help us. Turn your face to us, O God, our Beloved, and help us and our leaders to make choices that honor you, care for others, and restores us to the people you have created us to be. Amen.

