

"yes" to that, what do we as North Americans have to do to clean up our bloody hands? Rightly or wrongly, the Sandinistas did what they had to do. But what of those of us North Americans who join the Nicaraguans and other struggling people in the quest for self-determination? From our side of the border, what are we to do? What can be learned—about democracy, economics, and faith—from liberation movements in the Third World? How can we direct our energies in ways that truly break the cycle of violence which the United States propels by its inflated self-image and perverse foreign policies and domestic priorities. How do we take sides and still love our enemies? (You mean I must love Reagan?) Are we, too, so blinded by our riches that we will not listen to one who has risen from the dead?

We both say that our conclusions come, in the end, from our faith. You challenge me not to be apolitical. I challenge you not to become too invested in effectiveness. I would hope that we both—and all of our friends who share these questions—will learn more and more to live creatively with the tension between patience and zeal. You have taught me a lot about responding with abandon to the urgent call for justice. I hope I have helped you to remember the part of revolution which is patience.

With affection and respect, I close with excerpts from a letter between two friends who no doubt shared aspirations and questions similar to our own. Thomas Merton, Trappist monk and prolific writer on prayer and peacemaking writes the following to James Forrest, now secretary of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation:

Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea,

you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything. . .

The big results are not in your hands or mine, but they suddenly happen, and we can share in them; but there is no point in building our lives on this personal satisfaction, which may be denied us and which after all is not that important.

You are probably striving to build yourself an identity in your work, out of your work and your witness. You are using it, so to speak, to protect yourself against nothingness, annihilation. That is not the right use of work. All the good that you will do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used by God's love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself, and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it.

. . . If you can get free from the domination of causes and just serve Christ's truth, you will be able to do more and will be less crushed by the inevitable disappointments. Because I see nothing whatever in sight but much disappointment, frustration, and confusion. . .

The real hope, then is not in something we think we can do, but in God who is making something good out of it in some way we cannot see. If we can do His will, we will be helping in this process. But we will not necessarily know all about it beforehand.

Yes, enough of this. We must either be willing to take on suffering or keep our pens silent and our mouths shut.

Shalom,
MJB