



Praying to the Saint of Tragedy

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I don't know if there is an official saint of tragedy. I missed the day in Sunday school when they taught us about all the saints of the church. From what I can tell, there seems to be bits of tragedy woven into all the saints' stories: Bridgid was born enslaved, Teresea suffered migraines, and Dymphna was depressed. I find myself wandering over to the aisle of any store that sells votive candles with images of saints. I am drawn to the face of God I see decorating the glass candle container, almost as if the saint depicted there is whispering my name, inviting me to be a light in the world.

I don't know what it is about a candle, but something about its flickering flame gives me hope, even if I am only borrowing hope for an hour or two. Many candles burn in our world today. As the wax from the candles melts and the wicks burn down, I wonder: are we any closer to peace?

Even though prayer alone may not do much good in the world, it does seem to play a role. Just as a pumpkin pie needs both the crust and the filling, we need prayer and action. Perhaps prayer is the pie crust, the dependable container to hold all that is within. And action is the pie filling, giving us something to do, to be, to taste, to see, to know who we are in a world filled with unending tragedies.

Many people this season will light candles. Others will eat pie. Some will pray. May it be that all God's children find ways to act that supports lasting peace in the world. The world needs the light of hope to shine, communion to be shared, hearts to unfold with prayer, and for lives to be guided by peace. These are simple things: a candle, pie, prayer, and peace.

What if we created altars in our churches and homes where we continually held vigil to the Saint of Tragedy? How might we encourage the naming of our collective trauma, releasing it from our bodies/minds/spirits, and transforming pain into power through rituals of communal meaning-making? How might this way of coming together in community

strengthen us in the intergenerational work of creating a more just world for all? Can we pray, make pie, eat pie, and work for peace together?

One of the greatest tragedies is that we have forgotten God's original blessing for Creation, or maybe we've lost track of God's blessing in the shadows of greed, war, and guns. It is time to put down our guns and turn together toward divine light, to the saints, with prayer on our lips and pie on our plates, and hearts ready to do the work of justice. Church, this is a season of blessings. Let us take our fill and then share it with the world.

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