
2019 MONITOR PASSPORT PRIZE – Winning Essay

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I Can Love Because God Does

"[L]et us labor to dissolve with the universal solvent of Love the adamant of error . . ." (Mary Baker Eddy). I have to admit, praying for the world was not something I had made a part of my daily routine before we were encouraged to pray for the world in our National Leadership Council curriculum. I have been diving deeper, trying to learn more about prayer over the last year, but when I prayed, I usually prayed for others and myself on an individual scale. I tried to keep an uplifted thought about events I would hear about on the news but never really considered praying for the world to be my duty as a Christian Scientist, nor did I fully know how to do it. It is so easy to be tricked into thinking, "How could my small prayer reach someone thousands of miles away or fix a major global problem?" My NLC Mentor shared a quote with me -- a quote that was the spark that inspired me to start my journey of expanding my prayers to the world. Mrs. Eddy once said to her students, "There are enough people in this room to heal the world, if you will do the work." To me this is a call to action to Christian Scientists everywhere. I feel infinitely blessed to have been raised in Christian Science because it has given me the tools to do the work Mrs. Eddy spoke of -- the healing work the world needs us now, more than ever, to do.

Since the beginning of high school I made following the news a weekly habit. I used to record the Daily Show with Trevor Noah and listened to NPR on my drives to school. But however engaging the mainstream media headlines were or how much humor Trevor Noah added to the presidential race, I usually walked away feeling disheartened and weighed down, not only because so many of the stories focused on negative events but because the bias and division we see in our country was instigated right there in the newsrooms.

One of the biggest takeaways from my journey to pray for the world so far, has been learning to take in news in a more productive way without being distracted by the sensationalism. A practitioner explained to me that while it is good to be informed, it is important not to be mesmerized. I now view the news as a road map of what to pray about rather than something to get upset and argue about. I love using The Monitor as my news source because I feel that it does just that. I especially love the "Points of Progress" section in each copy because it highlights the infinite good happening continuously all around us that many news sources overlook. The

Monitor lays out the facts without sensationalism and paints humanity, the way that God sees it, as inherently good. In each Monitor article I read I see the author perfectly illustrating Mary Baker Eddy's mission statement for the paper, "To injure no man, but to bless all mankind." This new approach at taking in the news is more productive, uplifting, and constructive.

As I have deepened my study through praying for the world, it has occurred to me that one of the most difficult things to do is to love those who most need our love. Early last November, while sitting through a lecture in my Oceanography class, my professor mentioned something about a mass shooting that had taken place in Sherman Oaks, CA the night before. Unfortunately, mass shootings have grown increasingly common in my lifetime, so I wasn't shocked by the news but saddened, confused, and angered. From reading about it in The Monitor, I later found out that the shooting took place in a bar in the Sherman Oaks area near several colleges. The event left 13 dead including the gunman, a 28-year-old former marine who suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Shortly after learning this I heard that one of my friends was at the bar at the time of the shooting and had narrowly escaped. Although it was one of many incidents of its kind this year, hearing this made the issue of gun violence really hit home and I realized that the correct way to view the situation was as an opportunity to pray. I think the hardest part of this issue is how confusing it is because it is impossible to understand what these shooters gain through their actions. The Mainstream media has a tendency to cast labels onto people by categorizing them as criminals, terrorists, or lunatics. These labels increase division and discord. I have noticed that in The Monitor's quest to "injure no man," authors do their best to avoid these negative labels and bring the narrative back to the truth, that we are all just people worthy of God's Love.

During our service summer in the NLC program, our class traveled to Alaska, where we did construction work and property maintenance for an organization that helps veterans with PTSD assimilate into civilian life. At Camp Battle Dawgs, I gained a whole new respect for our armed forces, and as a class we worked hard to know that these men and women could not be punished for their selfless service. In the case of this shooter, it felt nearly impossible to feel love or anything else, for that matter, other than anger, animosity, and abhorrence toward him. However, as a person in this world, no matter his faults, God's Love is his birthright. If I am the reflection of God, then I am fully equipped to love him as God does. On that same trip to Alaska, our C.S. practitioner taught us about the difference between Agape and Phileo love. Phileo love is the type of love we feel for our close friends. This love is companionable and relational. It's the brotherly, friendship type of love. Agape Love, on the other hand, is the way that God loves us. This Love is kind and generous. It continues to give even when the other is unkind, unresponsive and seemingly unworthy. It only desires good things for the other and is compassionate. Because God loves with that Agape Love, we have the power to love in that way. It's easy

when we see heinous acts to want to condemn the actors as evil or undeserving of our love. We don't have to agree with their morals or actions, but these people are deserving of Love too and may need it most of all. By finding Agape Love for this man, I was able to forgive him and heal my thought. Because God loves all mankind, so can we. And this Love heals the world.