

LOVE. TEACH. HEAL.

Our Mission Guided by the Love of Jesus Christ

Holding Reverence

October 30, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today will be a difficult day for Pittsburgh. The President will be visiting. He says his purpose is to express his condolences and support for the families of those who died in the massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue. I believe there is also a rally scheduled for later this afternoon to protest the President's visit. There will be many voices lifted up both for and against these events. In the middle of it all, the Jewish rituals of mourning will continue: washing eleven bodies, burying the dead, sitting *shiva*.



The Mayor has said he will focus on the care of those who lost loved ones in the assault. I ask us all to follow the Mayor's lead. Do not be caught up in the maelstrom of this day, or in bitter exchanges on social media. Let us be quiet. Wherever we are, let us mourn with the living and bless the dead. Let the only words be words of comfort, words of prayer. There will be time for other words. This is not the time.

For people of faith there is no more difficult mystery to bear than the silence of God in the face of cruelty. The Talmud recounts an imaginary moment when Moses is carried into the future to meet the great Rabbi Akiva. Moses is overwhelmed by Akiva's brilliance, and asks, "What is the reward of such learning?" God then shows him the terrible aftermath of Akiva's martyrdom, the rabbi's flesh being weighed on a butcher's scales. When Moses protests, God replies, "Silence! That is my decision." (*Menahot, 29b*).

To bear this silence is to enter into the fulness of human loss and love. It is the silence of the Cross, the mystery of God joined to human suffering without defense or apology. It is there that we meet one another's broken hearts, bind up each other's wounds, and wait for the rebirth of hope. Let us not step away or be distracted. Let us participate in the reverence of these days. This is holy ground. Let us inhabit it together.

Be assured of my continuing prayers for you all, for our Jewish sisters and brothers, and for our beloved city.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey McConnell".

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh

