

Soul-wrenching prayer provokes soul-filled action

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Recently, I walked on a Peace and Prayer Pilgrimage with Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden, Spiritan Father Evod Shao and the good and holy people from St. Edward Catholic Church. Nestled behind the sacred edifice of St. Edward's on Poplar Grove Street was a cacophony of dilapidated and run-down homes that stretched from block to block, and from side to side of the street.

My heart was low, my prayer was deep.

On one particular block, all 50 prayer walkers witnessed houses falling down in such a manner that one could see right through the upper and lower levels. Both sides of the street were crumbling masses of bricks, wood, glass and plaster, evidence of long-lost and forgotten hopes and dreams.

Then there is the unseen damage inflicted on the lives and psyche of those who remain or once lived among the ruins. I heard once that dilapidation brings depression upon those who must witness it every day. As we passed home after abandoned home we came upon one that was equally in poor condition but a family occupied it as many children's toys adorned the patch of earth that was the front lawn.

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As we moved along, people greeted us. We welcomed them to join in prayer and witness. Some did. In our travels, I thought about the many times, 55 years ago, when my siblings and I walked down from Hilton Street to Ellicott Drive for piano lessons. My memory was filled with the many adventures that were made to inviting

places such as the Hauswald bakery that sent such a teasing warm aroma throughout the neighborhood.

Oftentimes we would make some family visits on Ellamont Street to the Williams family, or on to Brighton Street to our father's dear friend, George Cooper, with our last stop often being to our Neale cousins' home on Baker Street. There was such joy, peace and beauty as we travelled through the Poplar Grove promenade in those days and times.

Those memories were jolted at the scenes by which my eyes and heart beheld. How did such devastation happen so swiftly? How is it that little improvement appears to be on the horizon? Where is the plan of renewal from Baltimore City? This is a place in need of healing. So much needs to be redeemed.

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Once arriving home from the walk, the news continues to blast the tragic story of Trayvon Martin's death. How is it that in 2012 that certain people cannot be caught in certain places of America with the skin that God has gifted to them? Justice needs a new face.

I can vividly remember my mother's cry for Emmett Till in 1955 and over the years how too many mothers have needed to cry for other mothers' children. My heart and my prayer began to reveal that we all must do what we can at the appointed time to bring about justice, to attack poverty and its violent vestiges that prey upon a whole community and its people. Lord, help us to be an instrument of your peace!

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once spoke these words regarding the struggle of civil rights: "I know you are asking today, 'How long will it take?' I come to say to you this day, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to the earth will rise again. How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long, because you will still reap what you sow. How long? Not long. Because the arm of the moral universe is long but bends toward justice. How long? Not long, 'cause 'mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.' "

God is able. We must join our God in the work for peace, in addressing the poverty and erasing the evil that perpetuates injustice.