

The fierce urgency of now - Reflections for February 2021 for St Paul's Cathedral

Week one: The fierce urgency of now

In New York City where we live, there was a blanket of crisp, white snow this morning as far as I could see, much more than I could do anything about, but I did my small part. In this city, you don't own the sidewalk, but you are responsible for keeping it passable for others. My task is to clear a path from the front door to the street for our personal use and deliveries. I went out and cleared my section of the path whenever about six inches of snow piled up outside. Then I clear a path across our few feet of sidewalk, our part in keeping walking paths passable on our street. They say the road is made by walking.



I find snow removal is manageable about six inches at a time, after that it's just too heavy for me. In our country it feels as if we have had at least six inches of weight piling up almost daily for four years, crowning hundreds of years of building an economy and national identity on the exploitation of the land and many of our own people. The weight is far too much to bear.

This political moment in the United States is really a spiritual reckoning, theological if you believe in God. What might a right ordered society look like here in the United States? What would a blessed Union mean for this piece of land, for these people? What is justice? What if we cannot bear the demands of truth? Are some of our lives of more value than others?

The reckoning is as shattering as the uprising we saw at the Capitol intimated. The civil veneer of America, Christian America, is a thin, cracking veneer of a polite civic Christianity pasted over the death-dealing decay of slavery, genocide, and ecological devastation, on repeat for hundreds of years. Stamped as Christian, God-given, white, a chosen people. You might know something about that.

It is so clear in this moment that we are called to upend these systems, turn them over, imagine and build anew, with urgency. I pray that we find ourselves with our hand at the tools, those familiar tools of organizing our common life, taking our part. I worry that for those of us for whom these ways have worked just fine, that the fierce urgency of now might not have quite set in. For them, for us, I would say, plow your three feet or so, make the way clear to the street, do the good directly in front of you. It is not nearly enough, but may be just enough room for the Spirit to stir in you, maybe drop off something you weren't expecting. Or maybe it's about making a way for someone passing by to another place, a little bit more of that road we make by walking.

Revd Winnie Varghese