

Fr. Steve Karcher, M.Div. JD
St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

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We've all had a little time to mull over the recent riot and takeover of the People's House in Washington, DC. As a committed non-partisan and 40 year student of law and politics, the riots at the Capitol leave me both intellectually fascinated and sick at heart. I wish that I was more surprised by what I've seen and read.

If I exercise intellectual detachment, I ponder the security of our hallowed public grounds. I wonder how anyone could imagine that a tiny cadre of people, in a nation of 300,000,000 souls -- which can barely manage to distribute Covid vaccines -- could coordinate the manipulation of a political election, involving millions of paper and electronic ballots, each packed with various candidates and questions, across a dozen states, and hundreds of counties and cities.

My internal political scientist tries to think ahead. I try to sort out the impact of yesterday's shenanigans on political careers as diverse as Ted Cruz's and OAC's, and on Joe Biden's presidency.

If I allow my emotions to run free, I feel sad. Really sad. To see our already challenged institutions, in the midst of a continuing Covid near disaster, raped by a band of unmasked, violent, selfish, undereducated thugs is heartbreaking. At least for me. No excuse for that disrespectful, criminal nonsense masquerading as free political expression.

I have a better idea, now, of what the French might have felt as Notre Dame was burning. It's Holy Ground. I also have a better idea of why our ancestors ransacked the King's ships and filled the harbor with tea, or fought and died on battlefields from Virginia to the Meuse-Argonne, to the Bulge. I recall how I felt as an Okie kid in San Diego, in one grammar school playground battle after another, protecting my little brothers and sisters and our friends, who weren't part of the in-crowd.

Sometimes conflict is the only option. Some things are worth fighting for. But fighting and shooting and guns and sticks have become not the means of last resort, but instead have become, in these sad days, our one and only resort.

What would Roy Rogers say? Where have our heroes gone?

In these times, our differences are sharpened by both careless rhetoric and unthinking social media nonsense, by mind-numbing chatter instead of conversation, by finger pointing and name calling instead of thoughtful reflection. Wherever we stand on the issues, we need to take a breath, and step back from the brink.

This is not the first time that Americans have disagreed about how our vast and complex land ought to be run. These are not our first internal conflicts, and will not be the last. But, let us all remember, that we are sisters and brothers. Whether we are old or young, left or right... Red, brown, yellow, black, or white ... we are precious in His sight.

Adjustments do need to be made. And they will be. But, not by an angry mob disgracing our flag. Not by boys posing as men. Not by phonies wearing camo, and carrying guns like they are toys, in a poor imitation of our brave military men and women - and their families - who put their lives on the line every day. But, rather, our national challenges will be met, by all of us, one-by-one, pulling and working together.

Each of us is responsible for the right use of the gifts God has given us. We must each decide to how we shall live out the gift of our lives. And we must begin that decision-making process now. We have a lot of work to do.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."— Margaret Mead

In His peace,

-Fr. Steve