

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA



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The Temple in Atlanta

Reflection on “Repairing the World: Our Shared Responsibility”

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Thank you once again for being a part of this. All of the people who are here represent a great sign of hope for this local community. I am honored and privileged to know that the Catholic and Jewish community here in Atlanta continues to grow closer. That is a great grace for all of us; to be together as neighbors and friends, and brothers and sisters.

A couple of thoughts about both the theme and some of the things that were said this evening, “Repairing the World --” I think one of the things that frightens us is that some people don’t realize that the world is broken because of their own vision. Some think it’s broken because it has moved into a new era of dialogue and an awareness of our multi-racial, multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-religious identity. Some people think that that is the brokenness of the world...that if the world would go back to what it was a generation or two ago then the world would be made whole. The brokenness for some people means that the world is moving forward in a way that frightens and threatens them. We believe that it’s broken in so many ways because the people in the world are estranged and frightened and that’s the healing and reparation that needs to take place - the bringing together of the many different peoples, faiths, cultures and traditions that share planet Earth. We only have one planet to share. We truly have to look at this one planet that is our common home as a joint and shared home.

Listening to the speakers this evening, we hear how we have all been the object of scorn. Every one of us - all of the speakers -- in so many different ways shared their experience of being scorned for being who they were. I don’t like to use the word victim because it means that somehow we are not capable of responding. The term victimization might mean that we have no response, but we have all experienced scorn. That is we have become the object of other’s scorn because of race, gender, age, religion, culture, language, you name it. People have been able to make us the object of scorn. However, as a number of people have said, the response to scorn is to forgive. That’s the only antidote to scorn - forgiveness. I could not help but think this evening that we represent the three great monotheistic faiths. Abram is a patriarch for all of our faiths. Abram represents the oneness of God in his trust in hearing God calling him from his homeland in

the Ur of the Chaldeans to this Promised Land. We're still looking for the Promised Land.

Some people said when I was appointed to Atlanta that I had been placed in the Promised Land. After almost 13 years I believe them!

Abram is a foundation for all of us: Jews, Christians and Muslims and we should look more into the person of Abram in his struggle and his willingness to listen to God even when it cost him. Even when it cost him his security. He was a wealthy man in his land. God said, "Give it up, I got something better." Abraham was willing to listen.

That willingness to listen to God and to risk is perhaps one of the most important things that we as people of faith can share.

I am grateful that these evenings occur, I said at my table and I will say to all, "I am preaching to the choir." You know, people who are sitting at these tables have open hearts, they have a desire for peace, they have a longing for a sense of unity; I am preaching to the choir, but even the choir needs practice. It is important that we come together. There are some projects that I hope will be generated from our conversation.

The most important effect of tonight, or the most important outcome for tonight, from tonight, is a renewal and deepening of friendships. So wherever you might call home in this metro area from now on as Catholics, you have Jewish friends and Muslim friends, and as Jews you have Catholic friends, and as Muslims, you have Jewish and Christian friends. Those kinds of interrelationships and expressions of unity are the most significant benefit of coming together on an evening such as this. In addition to the delightful meal that we shared and the good conversations, it's the friendships for tomorrow that are really the grace that God pours out on us. It will continue to strengthen us in all of our tomorrows.

Let's pray. It's now 8:35 – rush hour should be over. The operative word is "should!"

Let's ask the Lord to bless us as we take leave.

Gracious and Loving Creator, we thank you for the gifts that you shower on us. We thank you for life, for faith, for friendship. We thank you for allowing us to be a part of this wondrous community. Help us always to strive to make it stronger and more loving, more companionate, and more generous; give us safe

passage to our homes and to our loved ones. May we reflect your goodness in what we say and do always. Amen.