

"It does not matter that we may be personally innocent of acts we perceive as unjust. Our institutions do our sinning for us. We must therefore examine our consciousness more than our conscience about apathy in the face of human destruction."

That's a quotation from an American nun, Sister Mary Evelyn Jegan. In a couple of years in vaulted from an obscure appearance as a filler in a Ten Days For World Development publication to an ubiquitous appearance on posters and in editorials across the country.

These are not times in which it will be a pleasant thing to examine our consciousness more than our conscience. We are having enough trouble surviving ~~without~~ without increasing our consciousness of how our institutions do our sinning for us. One is overwhelmed even trying to list the more obvious occasions.

The uppermost ^{occasion} ~~one~~ at the time of writing has to do with the institutions at work keeping the peace of the world. We in Canada have enjoyed an extended period of peace. Among the things that have kept the peace is the balance of power between two massive capabilities of nuclear destruction. It was never a pretty institution, but as the heat of the conflict accelerates and more chaotic factors are added it becomes impossible to believe that the balance of power can save us.

Herein, it seems to me, is our most serious call to ministry in the church. Without God there is no way we are going to be able to face our world and take any responsibility for it.

There are lots of things we can undertake while ignoring God. We can cheer each other up. We can generate a feeling of light minded fellowship. We can reinforce our own righteousness and white-wash our condition. We can scold the unrighteous and pass judgment on the

world's evil systems while we wash our hands of them.

Of course, if we ignore God in these undertakings we will be neither safe nor helpful, but it will look like a reprieve.

However we cannot face our distressing world, without having to harden our hearts, unless we draw nearer to God and God to us. God alone can empower us to call those institutions ours that do our sinning for us. We are all battered and bruised by living in a world that is disintegrating and from which we are alienated. Most of us are counting on some up-coming relief from the blows and demands of life not the addition of responsibility for the injustice of our collective ways.

Have you tried to take some small part in righting any of the world's enormous wrongs? There is no way you can do it with clean hands. The zeal to be blameless can only turn you away from the world.

I think there is no more serious call to ministry in the church than the call to mediate God's own love of the world. No substitute will be either safe or adequate. Only as we come to know the genuine grace of God can we be even partly up to it.

But that is why we have been given to each other:- so that we can receive the reality of God from each other.