

July 30, 2025

Daily Reflections



CONVERGENCE

By Julie Mussché

A Quote

“We must not see any person as an abstraction. Instead, we must see in every person a universe with its own secrets, with its own treasure, with its own source of anguish, and with some measure of triumph.”

ELIE WIESEL

Reflection

Over the past month, several video features have crossed my path. “Zone of Interest” was a film that received an Oscar in 2023, and told the story of Rudolph Höss, one of the commandants of an Auschwitz camp, and his family. The family was portrayed as well-off, living in a beautiful house cared for by service staff and situated on the edge of a large concentration camp. The movie subtly contrasted the pastoral ideal of this family living out an abundant

existence filled with outdoor activities, recreation and celebrations, and full tables of food and drink, with belching smokestacks visible over a dividing fence and the sound of guns and barking dogs punctuating the background. A spiritually and ethically riveting film.

Not too long after, I happened upon a *60 Minutes* program about a photo album owned by an SS Officer at Auschwitz, I believe the same person depicted in the previously mentioned film. Again, photographs recorded celebrations, vacations, and the day-to-day lives of some of the most notorious mass murderers of the 20th Century. As the commentator noted, everything seemed so normal in the middle of significant acts of evil.

Finally, a documentary, “Hannah Arendt: Facing Tyranny,” caught my attention. A leading and sometimes controversial philosopher and political theorist of the 20th Century, Arendt explored and wrote extensively about totalitarianism and introduced the idea of the “banality of evil.” She was widely criticized for her proposition that ordinary people could perpetrate evil acts while conforming to social expectations and standards, committing crimes against humanity by “just following orders.” In looking at previous writings from Arendt, a contextual aspect of this proposition is germane. She noted that some attributes of totalitarianism distinguish such systems from others -- terrorizing citizens and accepting or encouraging overt racism. Fear and exclusion are compelling factors in human behavior.

My reflective integration of this storytelling of historical experience led me to consider the time and circumstances we find ourselves in today. What is our moral footing when we are aware of masked law enforcement agents descending on and indiscriminately rounding up people who are designated as immigrants? Do these not seem like acts of terror and racism intended to frighten people into submission or numbed indifference? I pray we keep our eyes, ears, hearts and spirits wide open to the reality around us.

In prayerful consideration while writing this reflection, the image of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness emerged. What were the lures, the temptations? Comfort without sacrifice, pride and power, all of which can overwhelm the call to serve God and live in accordance with God’s word. Here seems to be a moral and righteous convergence.



To Seek the Light in Darkness
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- What does “lead us not into temptation” mean to you in the context of ethical and righteous imperatives?
 - How does prayerful discernment help to guide your vision and action?
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For Prayer

For Courage to Do Justice

*O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others
Open my ears that I may hear their cries;
Open my heart so that they need not be without succor;
Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong,
Nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich.
Show me where love and hope and faith are needed,*

*And use me to bring them to those places.
And so open my eyes and my ears
That I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee.*

ALAN PATON

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