

Gardening and Thanks



Paul LaFollette, Editor

“There was a time when I was 9 years old I thought if I played beautifully enough in the Sistine Chapel the ‘Chaconne’ of Bach it would automatically bring peace to the world,” he laughs. “It was a childish dream, but it wasn’t as mad as it sounds.” – Yehudi, Lord Menuhin in a 1996 interview with Carolyn Henson

On Good Friday, my wife and I, in keeping with our 38 year tradition, started our garden. Gardening models life “in the small.” There are rare moments of joy and triumph – the appearance of the seedlings pushing through the earth, the first blush of red on the tomatoes, the final harvest. There are moments of terror demanding immediate action – the sight of the tomato horn worm, evidence of the squash vine borer, or an assault of Japanese beetles. But mostly, it is daily attention to the details of quiet but useful activities.

I ponder this as I put together this issue of the Herald, especially the Temple Family's caring and varied responses to President Trump's executive order on international travel. Within hours of the publication of this executive order, we saw communications from a diverse collection of offices and institutions at Temple reaching out with offers of help, advice, and compassion to those members of our Temple Family affected by this order. These included statements signed by:

- Richard Englert, President of Temple University
- Martyn Miller, Interim Assistant Vice President – Office of International Affairs
- Jie Wu – Associate Vice Provost for International Affairs
- Nicole Handel - Temple Student Government Executive Communications Director
- Art Hochner and the Officers of TAUP

Each of these publications was an effective expression of caring for our students and co-workers. Each was also, more or less, a part of everyday duties toward our family, but that does not make them any less exemplary.

I have done my share of marching, chanting, shouting, waving posters, lighting candles, holding hands in circles, and singing Kum Ba Yah. I have watched the recent resistance movement develop, and welcomed it with statements of “it’s about time to see this again,” and indeed it is. These tactics accomplished some worthwhile stuff 50 years ago, though probably less than we thought, and I expect they will again. But there is honor and dignity also in the daily attention to our appointed tasks – in the undertaking of them with love and care. This is true whether one’s task is as prosaic as grading an exam or as sublime as playing Bach. In this way, Lord Menuhin’s comments at the head of this article are, indeed, not as mad as they sound. When we go about our daily tasks “beautifully enough,” we do contribute to the sum total of peace and good will.

And so, I want to say “thank you” to all of those mentioned in the bullet points above; thank you for caring enough to do your jobs well. And I remark that when Pangloss rightly observes, “if you had not been kicked out of a magnificent castle for love of Miss Cunegonde: if you had not been put into the Inquisition: if you had not walked over America: if you had not stabbed the Baron: if you had not lost all your sheep from the fine country of El Dorado: you would not be here eating preserved citrons and pistachio-nuts.” it is also right for us to respond, with *Candide*, “All that is very well, but let us cultivate our garden.”

