

About a month ago Pastor Drew, Imam Sykes and I met in Clermont to discuss the Peace Sunday service. We exchanged many ideas. It was decided that the theme for our sermons would be about love. Sounds romantic doesn't it? Love. Love yourself, love your family, love you spouse and children, your siblings, love your country, love your God. There are so many ways that we express our love. But in today's world the ultimate way of expressing love is grounded in the human condition. Its' grounded in human need and suffering. I would like to talk about loving our fellow human beings, whoever they may be, who are suffering today for reasons we cannot begin to understand.

Let me take you back in history, to the year 1939. Some of us sitting here today were here in 1939. The 900 or more Jewish refugees that were aboard the ocean liner St. Louis were escaping from Germany because of discrimination and mistreatment based on their religion. They were coming to the United States for a better life for themselves and their children. They did not impose any threat to the United States but were refused entry. So close were the lights of Miami, yet so far. The United States limits on refugees during World War II influenced by anti-semitism were fed fears the Nazis would plant agents, spies and saboteurs among the Jewish Refugees and that they would pressure those whose families who were still in Germany to act as agents on behalf of the Third Reich. Those arguments are chillingly similar to the arguments being made against the Syrian refugees and those of the Muslim faith. When we sent Jews back to Germany and when we sent thousands of Japanese Americans to internment camps,

we lived to regret it. Labeling refugees as a threat, whether those fleeing the Nazis, refugees of the Hungarian Revolution, the boat people uprooted by the Vietnam War has proven to have no validity. Every time this country is confronted with a visible influx of oppressed people, the issue becomes politicized. I hope we don't live to regret this decision as well.

I remember a song written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David which goes like this:

What the world needs now, is love sweet love,
It's the only thing that there's just too little of.

What the world needs now, is love sweet love,
No not just for some, but for everyone.

We seem to have become a nation that has lost its way. Where is the love that we used to show for our fellow human beings? Where has it gone? I recently had a call from Hospice to visit a Jewish woman who was near death. She was in great pain and my heart went out to her. I came to bring her comfort, love, whatever I could to help her. The first out of her mouth shocked me. She said "I hate this president. I just hate him". She was so consumed with her hatred, that it was all she could focus on. It was terrible and I was speechless. How could anyone hate so much that even in death carry that hatred to her grave. What's wrong with this picture? What do we have to do to get back the love that I remember we once had for our fellow human beings. I wish had the answer, but maybe all

of us, people of faith, can help recover what has been lost. It really does start with us. This is ground zero. Everyone is scrambling now for an answer. Let us be part of the solution and not the problem. Small as it may seem, gatherings such as this will help ease the tension and smooth the way for an answer. We must work together as fellow Americans. Unless you are Native American, someone in your family was a refugee in this country. In my case, it was my father who came here from Russia. My wife is second generation. Her grandparents came here from Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. We are a land of refugees and let us not forget it. Let's extend the love to those oppressed people coming here now, as was extended to our ancestors and welcome them to what is still the greatest nation on earth. They need us. They need our love.

Shalom