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To face terror with prayer

By Elise L. Moore

The driver was visibly nervous. He hustled us into his eight-passenger van and started down the mountain. We'd enjoyed the day wandering through the colorful market, smelling the incense from Mayan worshipers at the church, eating black beans and plátanos in a typical restaurant. Chichicastenango in the Guatemalan Highlands was a pleasant stop for tourists. Now, as the driver maneuvered the twisty mountain road leading to Guatemala City, he quietly turned to me.

"Would you pray?" he asked.

We'd traveled for days together. This was the first time I'd seen him afraid, and the first time he'd asked for prayer. Later I found out why. Only a week before, armed bandits had sprung from the woods beside the road and tried to stop his van. Thinking quickly, he'd shifted into reverse and fled backward, back up the twisted road to Chichi. A friend had passed him heading toward Guatemala City. Our driver had frantically tried to warn him, but his friend hadn't understood. His friend's van was stopped by a hail of bullets, and the passengers were robbed at gunpoint. No one had been seriously injured, although the van had several bullet holes.

Now drivers were refusing to take their vehicles to Chichi, and our driver was afraid of being stopped. It was another example of terror in Guatemala. Although peace had been established in the 1980s, terrorist activities continued sporadically. Today, these incidents are increasing again.

While riding down the mountain I prayed to quiet fear and establish a feeling of universal safety. Prayer may begin as a petition to God for help. And such asking is heard. But prayer can be more than a petition. It can be spiritual reasoning, listening for God's inspiration, and even praising God for His goodness and power.

As I prayed to quiet fear—mine and the driver's—I began by affirming God's presence in the highlands of Guatemala, and everywhere. God is divine Spirit.

Divine Spirit fills all space and is equally present in the country and in the city, in the mountains and the plains—in Guatemala, Argentina, Spain, the Middle East, and the United States. Where God is, gentleness and protection are. Deity's presence serves to replace fear of evil with faith in good.

This divine presence is a power beyond human perception. The Holy Spirit inspires wise actions and protects us with intuition. Being wrapped in the arms of divine Love provides more security than military weapons. As the Bible says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). This is the power that warns of danger and guides to safety. The Supreme Being is divinity in action on earth. It can protect and provide the wisdom needed to correct evil and envy.

God knows the thoughts and in tents of the heart. The Supreme Being is divine Mind. And Mind sees all that it has created as perfect and good. Mind makes null and void evil plans by speaking good thoughts directly into the thought and heart of the evildoer. Anyone who sees justice as supreme can realize their ability to obey God and act wisely. No good idea is powerless. No person is helpless nor any situation hopeless. God knows a way to safety and will lead His/Her children there.

I remembered a true story that a friend from Mexico told me. When she was a young girl, a man tried to rape her. Outside the safety of her village in the deserted countryside, she prayed silently for help. Suddenly the man got up and ran. Years later she heard that he had seen a troop of government soldiers riding down the dusty road toward them. Afraid of being caught by superior forces, he bolted. But there had been no horse troop. The girl had been saved by the power of God at work in human consciousness. It wasn't wild imagination but the action of divine inspiration working in a way the man would comprehend.

As we drove through the Guatemalan countryside, I affirmed God as all-present, all-powerful, and all-knowing. God was present, giving righteous ideas to every person. God was powerful in preventing evil from being thought or done. God was knowing each individual as His/Her beloved creation, as able to value others and their contribution. This spiritual reasoning quieted my fear, and I knew it was reaching like a native rebozo—a shawl—to envelop everyone in the area.

We returned safely to Guatemala City, but I've continued to pray specifically to

remove terror from the world scene. I pray that no one feel that they lack anything—money, power, intelligence, purpose, opportunity. My prayer includes terrorists as well as those who feel powerless. When those who use fear as a weapon begin valuing others, terror will cease. I pray that fear and prejudice and the feeling of deprivation leave everyone's thought. Jesus urged this type of prayer. He said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of this magazine, prayed daily for people around the world. I've memorized one of her prayers and pray it for terrorists and those being terrorized. " 'God bless my enemies; make them Thy friends; give them to know the joy and the peace of love' " (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 220). She prefaced her prayer with these words: "I also have faith that my prayer availeth, and that He who is overturning will overturn until He whose right it is shall reign."

It is through the power of God that the world can oppose and eventually overturn any reign of terror. Perhaps you would like to unite with me and many others praying to counter terrorism.

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