

Continue to be moved

Beloved person,

It has been four years already... When I read it this week, I actually could not believe it. It has been four years since the war in Ukraine started. Years full of terrible news, images and numbers, of so much unimaginable human suffering. On top of that, this weekend we were shocked by headlines and images of new war violence in the Middle East. In a region where there has been so much discontent for a long time, violence continues to flare up, bringing with it fear and uncertainty. As my thoughts turned to this, the multitude of other places of violence and injustice also came to mind, as if suffering is strung together worldwide. It is almost impossible to comprehend.

That same weekend, I stood in front of my wardrobe, got ready for a night out and left for the theatre. There was laughter in the foyer, glasses clinking. We found our seats in the auditorium. My world went on. As we drove home, I was painfully aware of the contrast. At that moment in the car, I heard a call that would not leave me: *continue to be moved*¹.

Those words mingled with my own questions. How does it affect me when war lasts so long that it almost becomes part of the background noise, and when one conflict displaces another? How do I continue to inhabit this earth with love amid so much violence and powerlessness? And how do I prevent myself from becoming indifferent when I notice that my heart is seeking protection?

We seek each other out, for example in our religious community, to be close to one another, even when it comes to these questions. To share with each other our feelings of powerlessness and perhaps those ever-lurking feelings of indifference. We do not have ready-made answers, and words of hope and trust alone will not suffice. But we want to share with each other how we invoke hope within ourselves and how we can find the path to love. Shall we confide in each other what strengthens us in this?

What helps me, and what I try to practise, is to consciously nourish myself with small acts of kindness. Not to soften or deny the great suffering, but to remind myself that evil does not have the last word. I want to keep seeing it, I want to let myself be touched and nourished by everything that entails goodness. A person who shakes my hand at the front door and welcomes me. An unexpected gesture of attention. A word of comfort. A courageous decision to choose love. To stand up for someone who is oppressed. When I consciously focus my attention on this, I feel that love can flow within me *and* that this leaves room in my soul to be moved. Kindness protects my heart from hardening and helps me to continue to be moved.

And there is something else. If you look outside (in the Netherlands), you can see it: *you cannot stop spring from coming*. In that simple sentence, I hear a deep trust in God resounding. Not because storms do not exist or strife does not tear apart, but because I believe – because I choose to believe – that ultimately, no matter how harsh the winter, good cannot be stopped. It is continuing to nurture the belief that light, however fragile, is stronger than darkness and that even after a dark night, a new dawn will break.

A while ago, I received a question from a young man (26). He had heard that there used to be necklaces with our emblem and that he had been looking for one for a long time. Not out of nostalgia, but because he wanted to be reminded every day to be a beautiful and loving person. With a little help and searching, I was able to give him one of those emblems. And what he said moved me: “Now I am reminded every day of who I want to be”.

Perhaps that is the simplest and at the same time most powerful way. I cannot save the world on my own. I cannot stop all the violence. But I *can* choose who I want to be today. In my words. In my attitude. In my willingness to listen. In what I do and what I don't do. That is not a heroic deed, but a daily choice. And when we do that together, as people of good will, the world becomes a brighter place. Because *you cannot stop spring from coming. Continue to be moved.*

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your brother,
Marten van der Wal



We remember those who have gone before us

¹ See: <https://www.zoa.nl/>