

Building Our Future, October 19/19 – Rev. Dr. Brian Rude

Greta has come to Montreal and Edmonton.

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"Make the Americas Greta Always--MAGA," I say (hey, why not the entire planet?).

Elections are coming to Montreal and Edmonton--well, to all of Canada, including to us globally-scattered ex-pats--once again, PM Trudeau says.

Heady days, no? Are we being asked to put our mark on the course of history? Even re-direct history, perhaps? Uff da.

Some wonder whether we should just stick to being concerned about the homeless, making sure they have shelter, food and clothing. As with the poor, oil and gas will always be with us, they say. Such essential energy sources probably won't have any impact on us, our future, or our planet, they optimistically insist, not taking seriously what Greta has learned from science.

I am immersed in a national church--the Salvadoran Lutheran Church--which takes both concerns--the homeless, and the environment--very seriously (when we're not worshipping, which, at several times per week, seems almost excessive, by Canadian standards). I get involved with both, though my priority is with the homeless. Here, with two Salvadoran colleagues, ministry funding from the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), and personal support from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, ELCI Canada, we get into this issue at every stage. We attend to the homeless, of course, physically, psychologically, spiritually, socially, legally, and so on. Here, they include migrants, deportees, forcibly displaced, asylum-seekers, refugees, and street persons. Here, these situations too often involve extortion, death threats, murders and massacres, with little security provided by the security forces. With a network of a couple dozen organizations, we are very politically involved, attending numerous meetings, leading frequent fora, and organizing numerous press conferences, seeking to educate the public on these realities, and influence politicians with respect to their constitutional obligations in this regard. We draft legislative proposals to propel members of parliament in this direction, seeking support from international human rights organizations, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN, the Red Cross, etc.--and with the express mandate of the Supreme Court of El Salvador, and at the invitation of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The next few months will see our mini-team participating in related hemispheric events in Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala, and a couple in Mexico, pursuing this urgent ministry.

Meanwhile, I continue to provide housing (etc., etc.) to three or four displaced persons in my own home, as I have done over several decades, both in Canada and in El Salvador. So, I have up-close contact and communication with them, their families and friends, and their issues and concerns, 24/7/365 (yes, even when I'm out-of-country).

The environmental branch of the Lutheran faith response and mission focuses on water--access and justice. The underlying issues are mining (especially Canadian/Australian), corruption, urbanization, legislative inaction, administrative incompetence, etc. At least El Salvador hasn't been blessed/plagued with gas and oil and coal to get rich on/fight over (so far). Protest over water involves regular street

marches, in which many Lutherans lead and participate. From time to time, such a response is considered terrorism, leading to significant negative consequences, but that doesn't deter such advocates.

Lutherans here--the entire nation--take elections very seriously, as well, getting involved at every level, at every stage, many of us as official observers, a responsibility which fills a couple weeks. But Salvadorans are well aware that elections play only a small part in keeping a democracy alive and thriving. If those they elect don't fulfill their responsibilities as public servants, they must be held to account. Considering El Salvador's tumultuous history, that is an uphill battle. Even those responsible for San Romero's martyrdom almost 40 years ago, and the Jesuit massacre 30 years ago, have not yet been held to account. We could point to influences from outside El Salvador's borders to help to explain such prolonged delays. The families of 75,000 victims of murder and disappearance from the 1980-1992 uncivil war have not yet received justice or reparations. The survivors continue to be the victims of corruption, greed, injustice, violence, and displacement.

Michael Coren published an opinion piece in the Globe and Mail on October 14. At the risk of promoting party politics (in our home, politics is always a party), let me quote a couple excerpts from it (Michael Coren's latest book, *Reclaiming Faith*, is set to be published next month. He is about to be ordained in the Anglican Church of Canada.):

"If anything does permeate the scriptures, it's a call to justice and peace, to welcome the stranger, to stand with the marginalized, to liberate the poor and oppressed, to be stewards of God's creation. As Jesus says: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

...

"The NDP and the Greens go to the top of the theology class on this subject."

I hope the homeless, in whatever part of the world, will sleep more peacefully, more hopefully, more satisfied, Monday night and beyond, and I hope we and future generations will enjoy clean air, clean water, clean soil, and healthy food, thanks to our--Canadian--votes, thanks to our newly-elected, justice-minded--Canadian--politicians, thanks to Greta and her 7,500,000 supporters, and thanks to our God of love.

Happy election day!

Happy democracy, every day!

Often cynical, but always hope-filled,

Brian

Rev. Dr. Brian Rude

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