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Let's Keep Our Eyes Open in Our Actions

In the past couple weeks I devoted quality precious evening time viewing the TV series, "America at a Crossroads" on KET 2. [It will also be aired on KET 1 in May.]

Much of the several segments dealt with Islam—its history, variety across countries, various schools of thought within it. One scene in the series haunts me though, and I believe it is very telling about us as people.

The scene was that of 3 women being stoned for sexual sins. That is an old type punishment though I was startled that some of us in the 21st century are still using it. (And I never have figured out why the persons who are clearly the other half of these sinful situations are let off.)

But back to the stoning. The women were completely covered over with white sheets. Thus we saw 3 white mounds in a shallow pit. People threw stones at each of these white piles and each pile wiggled as it was hit.

Granted there are plenty instances in which we hurt and kill one another and do see the consequences of what we are doing, this stoning instance it seems to me points to our wish not to see the persons being hurt by our actions.

This "not seeing" is one of the devilish qualities of modern warfare, too. A button is pushed, a lever moved, something happens—but we don't see what happens to the persons in the target area.

This hiding can be accomplished by language too. I cringe at "illegal aliens" when we are talking about sisters and brothers here without documents (and often enough they are here as a consequence of our national economic policies and trade treat-

ties). We have all sorts of masking words with which to talk about human life development. "The poor" can be depersonalizing, too—and if we can depersonalize, it is easier to demonize, and then we can do all sorts of hurtful things especially if we don't see the people recipients.

A national budget can likewise help us keep our eyes closed. The numbers seem so big, the process of determining a budget takes months, so we cover it all over with our inattention. Thus we miss out on seeing that a flow of budget decisions is enlarging a dangerous gap between our very rich people and the rest of society as well as cutting out programs that help people of all ages, not to mention the consequences of all we are spending on a quagmire of a war.

Then there is the weight of reports on local, national and international developments. If I don't read the newspaper, listen to the radio, watch the TV news and documentaries, I don't have to see mischief afoot (and miss a fair amount of good news, too!). Yet all of this is happening in our time, and we are responsible for trying to make it better and to work together to make it so (no one can do it alone). Not seeing it does not remove all of our responsibility for what is going on.

The exhortation to medical people, "Do no harm," is for all of us. This requires keeping our eyes open, staying in the struggle to take responsibility for the consequences of our actions and to do all we can to protect people and the common good. God is counting on us to do that.

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