The World Community for Christian Meditation

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"What's happening in Thailand" | May 18, 2010

Father Laurence and the WCCM Community join our brothers and sisters in Thailand in praying that the violent civil unrest in their once peaceful country is resolved soon, and without further loss of life. We know that the meditation practice and the mantra will carry the Thai community through this difficult time, and we invite meditators to share their contemplative response to the situation. Please send comments for posting on the Peace & Justice pages to claudiamorgan@comcast.net.
From: Na Tasukon tasukon@gmail.com
Dear Friends,

I thought I would take this example to update you all on what's happening in Thailand.

Firstly, I am fine and safe as I live in a different part of the city, a fair distance from where these clashes are happening. However, the violence is indeed located in the very heart of Bangkok's prime financial and commercial district.

It is strange for someone like me now, having lived nearly my entire life abroad and immersed in international media, always wondering about the violence and devastation I saw on TV in other countries, wondering as to what people were enduring in this or that faraway country. I have seen rocks being thrown in the middle east, explosions in africa and riots in central america. I always said to myself 'how awful'.

I always thought quietly, 'look at that authoritarian govt. cracking down on the people'. I believed naively that when I read an article in the New York Times or saw coverage on CNN or the BBC that these were experts in news coverage that they would be providing the most impartial in providing accounts of what was actually happening. I also thought that at the least, I could determine for myself what was probably the fair opinion to have, or how to analyze what was happening in these faraway place.

Well now I am not only living in one of those faraway places, I am finding myself at the center of what is now front page news on TV and Online around the world. That my wonderful city Bangkok has now become a heavily embattled war zone, and that my country seems to be on the verge of tearing itself apart and plunging into civil war.

Yes, it is safe to say that I wouldn't be involved in any of this political mess, but I feel at least I can play a small part in helping my friends to know how I felt about what is going on here in Thailand. Now, many of you only see scenes of tires burning, 'protesters' huddling behind one

another after having been subjected tear gas, and these silhouettes of individuals wearing Che Guevara T-Shirts waving Thai flags against a backdrop of flames and smoke. I am sadly disappointed that these are the images being shown to portray a battle against the rich and poor.

A battle that has been created for the political gain of individuals in this country who have bought their own personal greed to the streets of Bangkok. A battle that has now cost our country dozens of lives, affect thousands of others and cost our city tens of billions of Baht.

I know in situations like this there is a complex and interwoven tapestry of political infighting. I am not claiming that the current Thai administration and military consist of only higher minded leaders and are free of corruption, but what I do know and believe with every fiber of my body is that those people you see on TV claiming to be fighting a just cause for the poor of Thailand, are most certainly NOT what they claim to be. They are terrorists in every way you can classify them.

Their leaders are a cabal some of the most notoriously corrupt political cronies this country has ever seen, and they have led thousands of people, many women and children to be positioned now in a place where their very lives are in danger. If you have been following the extensive amount of information that has been pouring out of this situation, you will be shocked at how deep this situation runs well beyond what is happening now on the streets of Bangkok. What it comes down to is not a battle again rich vs. poor. It is about the greed of one man Thaksin Shinatwatra (the former PM of Thailand), and how his failure to advance his own personal goals has been used as the launching ground for a movement that has now taken a life of its own, spelling disaster for Thailand.

I believe the majority of this country have tried our best to be patient in support the government's myriad ways in attempting to deal with these protesters. Do we agree with what we see as protracted inaction and costly hesitation? No. Much to the dismay of many us actually, we feel this government has been too lenient, too 'by the book', announcing in minute details daily what their every action will be. The protesters have taken advantage of this in every way and worst of all they have been allowed to heavily fortify themselves into the heart of this city.

This fortification of tires, barbed wire, broken glass, bamboo and is not to be underestimated. What it means in that no anti-riot equipment will be effective in use for crowd dispersal. Which is more or less the limits of how the army wishes to contain their actions. You need war equipment to get past these barricades. But how will that look? How many hundred if not thousands of lives will be lost if/when that happens.

We have been frustrated to no end as we watched these people take our city hostage, vandalize our lives, point their fingers at us as the source of their injustices and now claim that the government is being unfair and heavy handed in dealing with them.

When the government wanted to negotiate (against the better wishes and judgement of many of its supporters), the protesters mocked the offer, made ridiculous demands and did their very best effort to grand stand and behave as if they had a right to demand more. They hijacked our lives and now they think they have the moral high ground. I cannot tell you how depressing it is to watch this being played out on the international stage and if infuriates me that now these protesters are appealing for 'international intervention' to save their lives.

As you all know, my friends, I went to the same schools you did, lived the same lives you did, and have been brought up in the same open democratic existences as you did. I can tell you that these people who are running rampant on the streets of this city do not know anything about what it is they are staking a claim to. The democracy they are screaming for is exactly what is being destroyed right now. The hatred against the poor is exactly what is being generated as they cry for 'freedom' with a molotov cocktail in their hand.

Any one of you who have ever been to Thailand would know we have one the most open and colorful democracies in South East Asia. Are we mature in our political arena? Not by a long way. Corruption? Yes. Systematic discrimination again poor rural people? Never has that existed in this country. I would like to point out that many of the wealthiest families in this country started from zero less than a generation ago. If ever there was a land of opportunity and hope, this country has symbolized that more than any other in the Asian region.

Think for a moment, if 10,000 - 20,000 thousand people took hostage a part of your city. Say Trafalgar Square, Times Square, Place de la Concorde, Ginza, Connaught Place, Daley Plaza, etc... If you happen to be living near these areas, your car would be searched just to get in and out of your home, you would be seen as a threat just walking on the street. You would have make shift toilets and showers set up on your lawns, your electricity siphoned off to power container units used as meeting rooms and every day, 24 hours on hundreds of loud speakers you would hear hatred and vitriol being broadcasted on a makeshift stage listing the thousands of 'wrongs' again the poor by the so-called leaders of this movement.

Claiming that if they were back in 'power' -- and this is key point. That they would right the wrongs. They would get rid of the current system that blocks the 'wealth' from reaching 'them'. They would eliminate the 'elites' that run this country. I find it ironic that the thousands of the rural 'poor' rally around a billionaire who claims he is one of them. That's the real reason my friends. As always in this world, people fight for money and power. Now imagine this has been happening in front of your house for a MONTH and HALF. Trust me, you would feel that efforts the government are doing now to clear them out are probably not enough, and should have been done a long time ago.

If you saw these people burning tires in front you, screaming for their fellow protesters to 'kill the soldiers' and then point to you with hatred, what would you do? These aren't protesters. They are people who want only to instill fear. We've all seen Rwanda haven't we? What happened in that country as millions of people were killed due to the political manipulation of deep seeded divisions in a country. These protest leaders have been shouting on stage that if the government does not give in to their demands, they will make Thailand into a place that pales in comparison to what happened in Rwanda.

I ask you who would make such insane and dangerous claims? What goes on in the minds of people like this? Why is it that the international media not ask these questions. It can't be for lack of information, because any 5 year old who watches the news in this country can see it. What worries me is that the hand full of international journalists stationed here are applying what they see in other countries and making dangerous assumptions about the political and social situation in Thailand.

The tragedy is once it rolls out on CNN, millions of opinions are formed instantly. An therein lies the the danger. It is safe to say that both the protesters and the government have made mistakes against one another that will be difficult to overcome. But please do not

misunderstand this situation as a battle again the rich and poor or even a fight for democracy.

This is a battle about money and power. And always, as everywhere else in the world, it is the innocent people who have to pay the price. So the next time you see the news my friends, and some gung-ho reporters gives his opinion on what he sees as frightened protesters fighting for their lives with what little they have... I tell you that those people could have easily walked out and gone home and none of this would have had to happen.

I just wanted to let you all know I'm all right, but also I wanted to give you my take on what is happening. It's a lot to comprehend but at least I said my small part to help set the record straight. Spread the Word.

So keep your fingers crossed and I hope this ends soon.

Love,
Na

Peace & Justice

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