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Fountain of Good
By Elise L. Moore, CSB

I received an e-mail message from a friend recently, requesting prayer for her hometown in Oaxaca, Mexico, where violence was escalating. Another e-mail came, telling of the slave trade in India. Still another talked about genocide in Darfur. One of my friends has a relative stationed in Iraq. Even as a former Sunday School student of mine was teaching English in South Korea, North Korea exploded a nuclear bomb. My niece lives in Afghanistan.

The list of worrisome, often terrifying, situations seems endless. If I believed that I was responsible for keeping everyone safe, I might shrink from--and probably sink under--the burden. But I am not responsible for the welfare of the world.

God governs the universe. When humankind strikes out in frustration or fear, God is the divine power of good that renews and restores, helps and heals us. This divine force for good is continuously at work. And while it is not activated by our prayer, our prayer does enable us to see the activity of good in our lives. Where the materially minded see only violence and intransigent problems, the spiritually minded see solutions shining through.

Praying isn't ignoring problems; it's refusing to be overwhelmed by them. Perhaps you have been indifferent to praying for world situations like terrorism or war because they seem too big or too many. Maybe you feel your prayer isn't good enough or that prayer doesn't really change anything. Whatever the reason, let me reassure you with words from the Scriptures: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [or woman] availeth much" (James 5: 16).

Your prayer is important. The founder of this magazine, Mary Baker Eddy, advocated prayer about big issues, using the words of a poem popular in her day:

What if the little rain should say,
 'So small a drop as I
Can n'er refresh a drooping earth,
 I'll tarry in the sky.'"
 (Pulpit and Press, p. 4)

I've always loved thinking about this poem. Years ago I worked as a secretary one summer in a law firm. Each noon I'd eat my lunch outside and watch a magnificent fountain shooting water skyward. I'd try to follow a drop of water, singling it out from the cascading torrent. In one sense, no drop could be singled out. Each was an integral aspect of one glorious whole. But in another sense, each drop was independent, having its own trajectory and rhythm.

Watching that fountain, I'd pray for the world. I'd think of God as the unseen power of good, operating like the unseen force powering that fountain. God, who is Love, might not appear physically, but the effects of Love are evident for anyone willing to watch. I'd think how each water droplet was like a creation or idea of Love--free to soar, yet governed by divine law. No droplet displaced another. Each had its proper place.

I'd also think about how each drop rose without effort, a symbol of the way that divine Love propels spiritual action rather than personal human energy. Noticing how some drops went higher than others, I saw that the pleasing effect of the fountain was partly due to this variety of trajectories, rather than each droplet being forced into a monotonous sameness. I began to appreciate the gentle spray at the edges of the fountain as much as the power of the central columns, further examples of how every drop was valuable, was equal although individual.

This was a summer during the Vietnam War, and I had friends who were fighting far away. Some returned. Some did not. Watching the fountain day after day gave me an increasing sense of peace and hope about the welfare of them all. For me, that fountain began to represent the continuous flow of spiritual truth on earth. Thinking of each drop of water as representing a specific message of healing from God, I'd ponder how this

healing and saving power wasn't limited to one place, like the fountain; the healing and saving Christ was present everywhere.

About this time I discovered a sentence in *Science and Health*, long my favorite book for contemporary spiritual insights: "Love giveth to the least spiritual idea might, immortality, and goodness, which shine through all as the blossom shines through the bud" (p. 518). This encouraged me to value each spiritual inspiration I had, no matter how small, and to realize that each had all the might and goodness of God behind it.

Day after day, I contemplated new ways to view the fountain. I saw it as representing spiritual inspiration, God's power, His action, harmony, and so forth. Instead of feeling ineffective or insignificant, I found this daily prayer beginning to transform the way I looked at the world. I thought how my prayers, or views of spiritual reality, were uniting with others' prayers around the globe. I might not see their understanding of God's power as tangibly as I saw the water of the fountain, but I could trust that we were all working together, impelled by the same divine source. I grew to feel united with unseen millions praying to realize the protecting power of God on earth. And this daily prayer and willingness to think spiritually translated into a willingness to pray specifically for events that came to my attention.

For example, my commuter train went through a seedy part of the city. Poverty, decay, and violence hung over the area like a billboard advertising hopelessness. Each day I prayed to see some evidence of God's power at work there.

One evening while traveling home, I had a clear view that divine Love was present, showering this area with love. I thought of mothers loving their children, spouses sharing their love for each other, employers caring for their employees. I had a continual fountain of new views showing the activity of divine Love. It extended far beyond this depressed area.

I considered divine Love as embracing every urban area, especially where racial tension was boiling over. I began to mentally realize the power of divine Love encircling the globe. This wasn't about seeing physical images so much as perceiving clearer spiritual concepts. I felt the power of Love as able to reach and touch all of God's sons and daughters, wherever they were. I recognized that I was united in this prayer with all of them, everywhere.

That evening when my train arrived at the station, my mom picked me up. She told me she had been healed of a physical illness during the time of my train ride. She said one moment she was dreadfully ill, and the next moment perfectly well. And she said she intuitively knew that I had been praying. Even though I wasn't praying for her specific situation, she felt the healing power of divine Love; my bearing witness to the power of God helped her tangibly feel Love's presence through healing. Who knows how many others were touched and benefited by that time of prayer on the train?

That summer, I continued to gain confidence in the power of prayer. The consistency of praying daily for half an hour transformed me. Striving to grasp new views of spiritual reality, I started seeing the purpose of prayer as bearing witness to what God was doing. World events, even disturbing ones, stopped overwhelming me. I began to feel better equipped with a growing arsenal of spiritual insights.

And what about that recent cascade of e-mails I received the other day reporting violence and terrorism around the world? My response was to seek fresh spiritual insights until I could feel the fountain of spiritual ideas pouring out to each individual. At press time, I'm still praying for Oaxaca. The friend in South Korea says she feels safe. My niece in Afghanistan continues doing an important job despite challenging living conditions. And I'm seeing daily evidence of the healing power of Love transforming people's lives. The fears may be many, but God's fountain of goodness is more.

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