

Time as Seasoning

By the Rev. Ann Schranz

I recently enhanced my pop culture knowledge. I watched my first episode of the long-running BBC television show, “Dr. Who.” A friend had purchased a DVD containing the 50th anniversary special. Now I have a clue as to what the fuss is all about. It is fun, campy, informed by science fiction and fantasy, and whimsical. It raises occasional knotty philosophical issues. I am eager to catch up on what I have missed over the past half century.

Time travel is a key feature in the adventures of Dr. Who. In a split second, he can step from one era on one world to a different era on the same world or to a different world entirely. Dr. Who’s experiences caused me to reflect on the nature of time. I am accustomed to thinking of time as a resource – something to be squandered or to be used wisely. As with many resources, time is limited. There are often more demands on our time than there is time available to us.

Time is not only a resource, however. Time is also a seasoning. Time is a seasoning in the same way that spices in the kitchen cabinet add to the flavor of a meal. I sometimes think of shiny new experiences as wholesome yet bland food. They keep me going. Action brings rewards. Yet without reflection, action is just a whirlwind of superficial activity.

Time is the seasoning that helps us reflect on our actions and to reflect on what happens around us. The recent tragic loss of life in San Bernardino at the hands of criminals merits reflection. It is not just one more news item on a busy news day. This is our neighborhood. Those who lost their lives are neighbors, whether we knew them personally or not. It is wise to pause, to use the seasoning of time to look inside and check on our feelings, check in with loved ones, and check out ways of responding that de-escalate hatred.

Reflection happens in different ways for different people. For those who have experienced trauma in the past, a new tragedy may stir up “old” feelings. However, feelings are not really old or new. Feelings exist in the present. How we roll with feelings, process them, express them (or not), and incorporate them into our lives depends in part on our experiences up to the present.

These rules of thumb have served me well. Expect people to respond differently to distressing news (and to happy news, for that matter). “Hold the space” for others if they wish to talk. “Hold the space” for others if they wish to be silent. Be gentle with yourself. Think in terms of community resiliency. You may wish to look into the Claremont-based Trauma Resource Institute training in what is called the “Community Resiliency Model.”

Finally, do not try to “do it all,” whatever “all” means to you. There is not enough available time for that. Instead, pause and use time as seasoning to allow the fullness of the present moment to flavor your day. Love and blessings to all.