

By Roland Froyen '59

I believe my church ought to get its head out of its ecclesiastical ass and smell the coffee.

We're at war here. Our government kills and tortures other people in a clumsy attempt to protect us. In the process our own people die. And we are less safe because we have pissed off the world

This is not news.

If our safety depends on our presiding over the deaths of innocent people, we need to look elsewhere for our security.

In a Ralph Haugen inspired trip to Lansboro to see Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken," I heard a lecture by Douglas Rossman about Norse Myths and legends where he discussed the Nordic concept of Drengskaper, the idea that winning is not important. Nobody wins. Everybody dies. The important part of life is to "resist the latent tide of chaos."

Mr. Rossman quotes from the Poetic Edda:

Cattle die, kindred die  
Every man is mortal.  
But the good name will never fade  
Of one who has lived honorably.

By gosh, I think I believe that. Except the part of "never fading." I know plenty of good people who have had a postmortem fade out.

Don't get me wrong here. I'm still a Lutheran. Maybe not a very good one, but I know I'm saved by faith not works. Listening to sermons, however, makes me crabby so I don't, but I can still recite the Apostles' Creed without my fingers crossed so I am pretty much bound for glory.

So what can we do?

For starters we can speak up. Some folks judge Pope Pius XII for his silence on the holocaust. How will history judge us Lutherans? We are good Americans? We are too polite to point out that our emperor is naked?

A few words from the pulpit would have been nice: like "preemptive war is immoral."

Once I heard a minister sermonize that evil Hitler killed Bonhoeffer. I suppose Adolf was a bad character. He certainly did some evil things, but on the other hand he was seeking lebensraum for his people. Just like Jefferson bought land from the French for pennies an acre to allow westward expansion into lands occupied by native people.

Then for the next century we brought democracy and freedom to those pagan native people. This is irony too deep for tears. And we have left a trail of them.

So before we hang Hitler we should ask:

Where was Hitler when the Gestapo discovered Bonhoeffer's involvement in the Stauffenberg plot?

Where was Hitler when Dietrich was jailed?

Where was Hitler when Dietrich and Carnaris were drug naked into the courtyard and hung?

Hitler didn't tighten the noose. Some nice go-along-to-get-along guy like me did that.

We can't place all of the blame on our naked emperor for our inhuman Iraq fiasco.

If we hold our tongues, it is we not W who must answer.

Speak up. Honor does matter. Join the peace tsunami that is rolling toward election 2008.