

INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

Generosity fuels the warmth for community survival

With the right amount of warmth, citizens can function peacefully, benevolently

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Now that winter officially is here, most of us just want to be warm. Why is being warm so important? Because we need warmth to survive.

The enzymes and proteins that fuel our biology require heat.

And not just any heat. Our bodies need an ideal temperature (98.6 degrees) for optimum function. In other words, without the right amount of heat, we can't survive.

And why is "warmth" such a comforting word? Think of



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the ways you use warm to describe something: a warm heart, warm hands, warm welcome, just to name three.

Why does that word affect us

the way it does?

Just as the individuals who make up the community require a specific amount of warmth, so does the community itself.

For it to survive, it too must maintain the right amount of warmth.

If its citizens are too enflamed by war, disease, poverty, intolerance, the society cannot function.

If it freezes with indifference, ambivalence, apathy it cannot function.

With just the right amount

of warmth, the community and its citizens function together harmoniously, peacefully and benevolently.

How does a community generate warmth? Generosity.

Generosity puts us right in the middle of our community and it asks that we do something for another.

When we do, our generosity helps stoke the heat and generate the warmth that is so important to our community.

In my tradition, the Buddhist faith, we are asked to perfect six specific practices and one of them is generosity.

But we are no different than all the faith traditions.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters can look to the Talmud: "Just as the Lord clothes the naked as He did with Adam, so you clothe the naked; just as the Lord visits

the sick as He did with Abraham, so you visit the sick; just as the Lord comforts the bereaved as He did with Isaac, so you comfort the bereaved."

From our Muslim neighbors we learn from one Hadith that Abu Hurairah related: "The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'Whosoever alleviates (the) lot of a destitute person, Allah will alleviate his lot in this world and the next.'"

Christians find the imperative for generosity in Timothy:

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

If we want this community to generate the kind of warmth that we need to function properly, to live together with kindness, love, compassion and joy, we must warm it with the fire of generosity.

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