



Unwarranted Hatred: Unselfish Love

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“It thundered here today. I don’t know how many shells fell nearby. There was a terrible boom. Glass shattered, bricks fell, and there were clouds of dust. We didn’t know where to run. We were convinced that the shell had fallen on our roof.” These were the words of twelve-year old Zlata Filipovic who lived in Sarajevo, Bosnia during the outbreak of the war. Zlata, like millions of others, spent her childhood inside her house without electricity or water, and living each day in constant fear. (Filipovic, Zlata)

The Bosnian war broke out as a result of the division of Yugoslavia. The country was divided into several independent countries including: Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. Serbia consisted of the Serbs and Croatia consisted of the Croats. In Bosnia, however, there was a mix of Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians; who were a mix of both. The Serbs felt that this was not right, and that Serbs and Croats should not be mixed. They wanted a country of one ethnic background. As a result, the Serbs began to fight the Bosnians and the Croatians to accomplish what has been referred to as an “ethnic cleansing,” which meant they only wanted people of Serbian background living there. (<http://www.answers.com>)

During this time of mass destruction, there was one man who stood out as going over and above what was expected to help others. This man was Father Svetozar Kraljevic. Father Svet’s personal mission was to minister and deliver relief supplies to war victims. Although a Bosnian himself, Father Svet continuously delivered food and medicine into war zones and refugee camps never asking whether the people were Croatians, Serbians, or Bosnians. Time after time, this devoted man risked his life for the lives of others. Even when the Serbians were trying to destroy the Bosnians and Croatians, Father Svet still helped them, realizing it was wrong

to hate based on ethnic background. To me, this shows the greatest courage of all. To be able to stand up against what everyone else views as right, and stand up for what you believe takes a lot of strength. To endanger your own safety in order to provide kindness and caring to others takes unimaginable bravery and determination. It was not easy, yet this man did what was right throughout the entire war. (King, Hon & Eck, Larry and Mary)

Father Svet did not single-handedly stop the war. He wasn't raised in glory and the people didn't chant his name and praise him as being their savior. However, Father Svet didn't run and he didn't hide, and this is what sets him apart. In a time of controversy, he was there to help and he did everything that he was able to do in order to help others. This is what makes him possess moral courage. Taking refuge in another country would have been easy, but he stayed. He put his life on the line for the sake of others. He didn't do it for glory, for fame, or for recognition, he did it because deep down in his heart he knew it was right.

Following the war, an orphanage called Mother's Village was opened for the children who were left orphans of the war. Father Svet has given his time to help at this orphanage and has recently taken over and now runs the orphanage. I had the opportunity to visit and help in this orphanage in Medjugorje, and I met Father Svet without knowing the courageous things that he had done. The thing I did know, however, was that he had changed my life. By asking my mom and I to stay and work with some of the kids in the orphanage, it opened my eyes to the world. These innocent children had lost their parents due to ethnic discrimination, and I was able to help them in a small way. Father Svet encouraged us to give of ourselves unselfishly, and it is an experience I will carry with me for the rest of my life and I will never forget.

Today in the United States, we look at the Bosnian war and think it is unreasonable. Why would anyone try to destroy people because they are of different ethnic background? Yet, are we really that much better? Just looking around you can find a group of teenage kids laughing as an Afghan man wearing a turban walks by, a group of elementary kids pulling at their eyes and saying, "I'm Chinese," comedians on T.V. making jokes about Mexicans and African Americans. It is all around us and somehow we find it acceptable to harm people of different ethnic backgrounds with words and actions. However, when harmed with guns, we find it horrible and

don't understand how anyone could do such a terrible thing. Although it is not the same as physically stabbing them with a sword and killing them immediately, it still tears apart their soul and their spirit eventually dies. In reflection, I know that things are not that much different here than in Bosnia. While researching this paper, I realized that I need to be more like Father Svet and be kind and loving to all people, even those that are not of the same background. By setting an example like Father Svet, I may not be able to change the world, but if I can touch just one life the way that Father Svet has touched mine, then I would know I have helped in making the world a better place.

Unfortunately, Zlata Filipovic did not get the chance to experience childhood the way most of us do in our early years. The war changed that for her and many other families of Bosnia by stripping them of their right to live carefree. Father Svet risked his life for the lives of many of these families, living each day, never knowing if it would be his last. Even in a time of unwarranted hatred, unselfish love has shown through.

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