



live To love

## His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa - Peace Building

The recent attacks in America, Europe, the Near East and Asia instilled a very understandable fear of terrorism around the world. I see many of my own friends base decisions on fear. I see communities torn apart by fear. I see fear creep into different crevices of peoples' lives and politics. But, I also see courage in the most unlikely places from the most unexpected people.

I come from a part of the world where ethnic and religious minorities must navigate extremist elements, geopolitical instability and limited resources. We know about uncertainty, survival and fear. Fear thrives in the absence of mutual understanding and diversity. Fear is a poisonous weapon, but there is an antidote: compassion. Compassion combats fear.

In my religion, we believe in "karma". Many people misunderstand the concept of karma. Karma is not a pre-determined destiny. Karma does not mean we accept injustice or inequality. Karma means cause and effect. Karma means we are empowered to be part of the solution. Karma gives us a method to combat fear, terror, injustice and inequality. Karma means that we are not defined by our situation but rather by the choices we make.

As a believer in karma, I encourage the world to choose courage and compassion. Far too often, we wait for leaders and governments to bring us peace. But think about it: it is individuals who build peace. And when individuals build peace, it is strong, it is lasting and it is genuine. That does not mean that we sit nicely on a meditation cushion and enjoy our own inner peace. Peace requires action. Peace requires a real sense of urgency. Peace requires courage and hard work. Peace means that each and every one of us has an obligation to build mutual understanding and an obligation to reject fear. Peace requires us to not only accept but celebrate the differences amongst us. Fear needs us to reject differences. Peace encourages us to embrace differences.

The nuns of my lineage, often known as the Kung Fu Nuns, are great examples of that courage. In my part of the world, nuns are not afforded much opportunity for education or leadership. However, the nuns of the Drukpa Order take on real leadership roles and responsibilities within our community. They learn to work with each other even though they come from different countries and speak different languages. Breaking centuries of tradition, the nuns are learning Kung Fu as a means to instill physical and mental confidence. Upon the Nepal earthquakes of 2015, for example, the Kung Fu Nuns delivered medical and relief supplies to some of the hardest hit regions. They traversed mountainsides and river rafted to help Nepalis of all religions and backgrounds. They rejected fear and chose courage.

In light of all the violence in the world, the Kung Fu Nuns and I have embarked upon a bicycle journey from Kathmandu to Kashmir to celebrate diversity to build mutual understanding. In Ladakh, where many of my nuns come from, there is a long history of diversity. Located along the Silk Route, the people of this community celebrated different religions, languages, ethnicities and traditions. They know that these differences do not fracture us. Diversity strengthens us. Diversity is not something to be tolerated, it is to be celebrated. We should welcome it with curiosity, delight and joy. This is what fear fears.

While cycling is a small gesture, I hope we serve as an example of how women, religious leaders, and individuals from all communities have a role in peace building. You also have a role in peace building. Some of you have a large platform and can speak out for others who are not heard. Some of you are not in public service, but may make a big difference in your work place, in school or at home. Every one of us can create an immediate impact and can build peace.