

I had the good fortune to study with Doctor Viktor Frankl and in his memory have written a novel "Hitler's Priest. I have enclosed a copy of the presentation I have been making all over the country and would welcome the opportunity to present it to your community.

Sincerely,

S.J.Tagliareni

http://youtu.be/_uWzmBo6PT0

Holocaust Remembrance

"Now that you know what happened you must be a witness." With these words Dr. Viktor Frankl a Nazi concentration camp survivor and author of "Man's search for Meaning" radically changed my life. The Holocaust, which I had always regarded as a tragic historical period, transformed into a personal reality through our many conversations. Never preaching or ranting with a righteous vengeance of one who had lost so much, he often told me stories as though they happened yesterday. The stories were never merely abstract examples, they were filled with names. places and hordes of vivid details. The familiar columns of numbers, and sterile statistics that we had all witnessed became people with names and faces and personal life histories. These were sisters, mothers, fathers, friends, old and young. No longer were they numbers in a history class, or newsreel moments that flashed on the screen and then faded away. Once they became flesh and blood with names and places they were not easily forgotten.

The horror of the Holocaust became more intense with reference points to my life. Although no one could fully understand the Holocaust, I began to see it in light of my own human experience. My life growing up in a community where diversity was not punished, but rather seen as positive was so different from what the Jews

experienced. I had never lived in a climate where any second I could be arrested and thrown into the back of a truck like a sack of potatoes. These moments with Viktor at dinner, during class, while walking through the city with him, or speaking with other Holocaust victims, opened the wellspring of insight that was powerful and compelling. There were no smooth edges and simple answers. Initially it was almost impossible to believe that an innocent group of people could suffer merely because of their race.

Through Dr. Viktor Frankl's eyes and the experiences of other survivors, I witnessed the stories of the atrocities. I understood that it could have happened to me and my loved ones. I imagined holding the hands of my infant children, waiting to be slaughtered, or watching my parents be herded into a cattle car bound for the crematoria. These realities had a lasting impact on my consciousness and spirit. They made the event's tangible and were bridges to those horrendous times. There were moments when the temptation to retreat from the facts was almost overwhelming. One vivid experience was when a survivor recounted how his entire village was slaughtered in one day. He only survived because he was in the forest collecting firewood.

No one could ever understand or explain the evil that they experienced, but I knew that there was an obligation to listen and absorb the pain. Time does not diminish the acts of cruelty that were the hallmarks of the Holocaust. It is not the passage of time that heals the wounds of these horrors. To continuously honor the victims and recount the stories is not the maudlin search for vengeance. It is the obligation to keep alive the memory of those who suffered by personalizing their lives. They were not merely numbers that can be aggregated into a collective tragedy. These were singular persons with the human needs and drives that we all possess. They were neighbors, friends members of their communities parents, children and elders. Life was stripped away from them without cause.

We must keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and remember all those who died, and those who also at great risk stood up for the Jews. We must also remember those who relished and fully participated in the horrors, and those who

around the world, the majority of people, who stood in silence and washed their hands of culpability.

Those who survived and those that liberated the camps are almost all gone and the torch must be past to the next generations. For this horror never to occur again it must be remembered more than one day a year.

We must never forget.

S.J.Tagliareni

Author of Hitler's Priest