Today’s readings, if you really listen, seem
demanding, confrontative, exacting, troubling,
bothersome, irritating, downright annoying.

Why?
Because that’s just the way God is?

Marian Duggan gave me a 14th century Persian poem
that speaks about how God is with us.

“In the morning, when I began to wake, it happened again.
A feeling that you, Beloved, had stood over me all night, keeping watch.
That feeling that as soon as I began to stir
   You put your lips to my forehead
   and lit a holy lamp inside my heart.”

The truth is —
that lamp that is lighted within us all
exposes us to the reality of HOLY COMMUNION
I am part of you, you are part of me, we are all part of one another.
The reality is that I am more than me. And God is all in all.

What follows from that is
   that there is no true human happiness without generosity.
Generosity is built into our DNA. We really can’t escape it.
We are made to be generative, generous.
I am more than me.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We are caught up in an inescapable network of
mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever effects one directly,
affects all indirectly.”

Fr. Ron Rolheiser said, “We cannot be healthy or happy
unless we share our riches, of every kind, with the poor.”

The poor are an inescapable part of who I am — my flesh and bones.
I simply can’t be really happy, fulfilled, content, if I’m ignoring an open wound.
If you are sheltering yourself and protecting yourself from the needy denying the reality of the needy brothers and sisters around you, that will eventually catch up with you. Not because God is vindictive, but because you have failed “to thine own self be true.”

St. Paul urges Timothy and us today to “… pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of … eternal life .. keep the commandment without spot or blame.”

A recent editorial in the Toledo Blade by Nicolas Kristof of the New York Times is worth considering as we ponder all this.

Titled,“In a world filled with misery, a glimmer of hope in the fight against poverty,” Kristof says:
  Most of us are probably convinced that world poverty has gotten worse in the past 20 years. Yet, according to reliable statistics our conviction is dead wrong.
  • Number of people living in extreme poverty ($1.50 per day) has been cut in half in past 20 years
  • In that time period, six million lives have been saved by vaccinations, promotion of breast feeding, pneumonia medications and treatment of diarrhea.
  • In 1984, 44 percent of the world lived in extreme poverty. Now, less than 10 percent do.
  • Throughout history until 1960s, better than half the world was illiterate. Today 85 percent of adults are literate.

Kristof says it’s important for us to know those facts. “Otherwise, the public may perceive poverty as hopeless and see no point in carrying on the fight.”

He says that, in our ongoing fight against poverty, it is very important to “pause for a nanosecond to acknowledge the greatest gains in human well-being in the history of our species, not to inspire complacency, but rather to spur our efforts to accelerate what may be the most important trend in the world today

In light of this, these organizations certainly have my support:
Bread for the World, Amnesty International and Catholic Relief Services.