



What connection does this symbol have to you and me as Christians? Actually it is a connection of great importance. Many of you have no doubt seen and heard the recent news that the ancient Christian community in parts of Iraq and Syria are under extreme persecution. The town of Mosul, which housed the historic tomb of the prophet Jonah, has been a center of attention such that Jonah's tomb has now been bombed and destroyed. Members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have taken control of this entire area and are intent on wiping out any remaining trace of the Christian faith. In a move reminiscent of how Hitler demanded all Jewish homes and businesses to be marked with the star of David, ISIS is now marking all Christian homes and businesses with the Arabic letter Nun (as pictured to the right). It stands for "Nazarene," or Christian. This symbol (ن) has now gone viral on social media and Christians around the globe are using it as a symbol of solidarity with the Christians of Mosul, Iraq and Syria.



Muslims in ISIS have given all marked Christians these four options:

1. Convert to Islam.
2. Live as dhimmis under sharia law and pay the jizya tax. (An extreme financial payment that makes them more or less "slaves" and offers a questionable promise of protection.)
3. Forfeit their homes, possessions, and flee the areas controlled by ISIS.
4. Die.

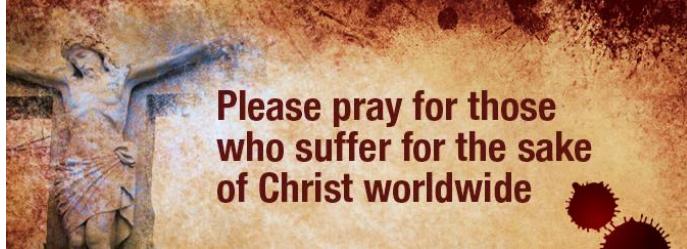
Sir Edmund Burke said, "Evil prevails when good men do nothing." Just ask survivors of the Jewish concentration camps what it was like in Germany when the majority of Christian (including Lutheran) pastors and churches did nothing to stand up against the evils that were being waged against both Jews and Christians by the Nazi Third Reich.

According to pictures that have made the rounds on Facebook, the killings have now begun and supposedly the last Christians in Mosul have left. I, for one, cannot get the words of Proverbs 31:8-9 out of my mind, "*Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*" At this time in the world, these and other Christians under the thumb of Islamic rule are truly "muted" and "needy". I believe it is time for the rest of us Christians who live in areas like America to get off of our duff, brush aside our lazy and fear-laden thoughts and start opening our mouths to speak up for them and for the truth of God and His Word in Scripture. We're late already in doing so.

For now, we still live in a country where politicians, at least sometimes still respond to extreme pressure from the people. It's time for that extreme pressure to be applied from us Christians so that America can be proactive in offering support, protection and other means of real help to those being persecuted; before they are "nun".

The president of our Church body (LCMS), Rev. Matthew Harrison sent out this request earlier this week (7/29): “Would you take a moment right now to join with me, my brothers and sisters in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in a prayer to our heavenly Father on their behalf and on behalf of all throughout the world who suffer for the precious name of Jesus?

All-merciful Father, You gave Your Son into the flesh to experience hatred and violence and to conquer them with His unfailing love. Remember in compassion Your children, our



sisters and brothers in Iraq and elsewhere, who suffer now for the sake of Christ.

Strengthen them for a good confession, and give them grace to entrust themselves entirely into Your loving care, knowing that You will never leave them or forsake them and that death is no match for the life that You have given in Your Son and Spirit. According to Your wisdom, bring an end to the bloodshed and violence. Open the hearts of Your people in all places to stand with these hurting members of Christ’s body and provide any earthly aid we can to them. We ask it all in the name of Him whose cross is the triumph over all hatred, violence and death and whose resurrection is our everlasting hope, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen”.

In service to our Savior and you His sheep,

Pastor Besel

p.s. Here is the internet link for one sample petition to the White House on this issue:
<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/help-christians-mosul-and-iraq-who-are-part-modern-day-holocaust/S0cLfXZg>