

Homily—27th Sunday OT; B-cycle

Well, it happened again; another senseless shooting in our country, this time at a community college in Oregon, and our prayers go out to the victims of this crime and their families.

This nameless gunman, asked each of his victims what religion they were, and if they said “Christian,” he shot them in the head.

If they gave another religion, he shot them in the leg.

If it is any consolation to the families and loved ones of these young people who died, they died martyrs. They died saints.

They died standing up for their belief in Jesus Christ.

We can at least take some small measure of comfort in that.

But once again, the nation is in shock, the nation is horrified, and the nation which is weary worn and tired of hearing things like this searches for an answer and asks, why?

The news media offers potential explanations. Politicians offer potential explanations.

I maintain, as I have in the past, that the problem is not a cultural one, it is not a political one, and it is not a matter of law or policies. The problem is a spiritual one.

You can pass all the laws you want; make all guns completely illegal, allow the FBI constant access to every phone call we make, e-mail we send, and website we visit, have a police drone hovering over the head of every single citizen with orders to shoot that citizen immediately if the drone detects anyone doing anything remotely illegal; do ALL these things, and it wouldn't do a bit of good.

People will still find ways to hurt and kill innocent people.

The only way to stop the madness is to change hearts.

The only way to change hearts, is to raise awareness of how sacred human life is.

And the only way to raise that awareness, is to embrace Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit he has sent into creation precisely with the power to change hearts.

And that's it. It really IS that simple. The more we embrace sin, keep our sins, make excuses for sin, justify our sins, the more we push God away, and the more we push God away the more we push his Grace away.

The more we push God's Grace away, the less God's Grace can protect from demonic forces that want to tear creation apart.

Oh Father, that's the biggest bunch of superstitious, nonsensical garbage, I've ever heard!

Fine, OK, I'm superstitious. I'm still right.

Even our Founding Fathers knew what I just told you is true.

I've told you before, that most of the nation's Founding Fathers were not Christian.

Most of them were Deists. A Deist doesn't believe in a personal god.

Deists and Masons don't believe God intervenes in human affairs.

So, of course, a Deist or a Mason would not believe Jesus Christ was God, or even came from God. Here is obviously where they part from Christianity.

But despite being Deists, the Founding Fathers knew the value of Christianity, in that Christianity always challenges us to be better people, and they knew the only way for a democracy to survive was if its citizens were putting the good of society before their own personal desires.

So the founding Father's respected Christianity or at least, acknowledged its usefulness, unlike today, where Christianity is frowned upon and shunned by our culture.

Society today wants us to be ashamed to be Christian.

Christians are stereotyped as judgmental, hypocritical, superstitious, pietistic, unsympathetic and uncaring towards the plights of others.

We're anti-science, anti-women, and anti-freedom.

Odd claims, since during the dark ages when Europe was in economic and social ruin, it was the Catholic Church who held it all together and built the colleges and universities and monasteries that preserved and spread education.

You can thank the Catholic Church that a woman can choose to marry a man or NOT marry him, because THAT started with us.

And the Catholic Church has throughout history, been the loudest voice defending those who cannot defend themselves, the poor, the sick, the unborn, the immigrant; and we've been an unpleasant reminder to society that THOSE people are entitled to freedom and dignity as well.

Which brings us back to why? I posted about the shooting on Facebook and how it was a spiritual problem, and one of my friends commented about how she felt this occurred because of

the declining availability of mental health care treatment in our country.

OK, I will acquiesce to that point to an extent. That's certainly part of the problem.

From what I've seen on the news this young man was showing all the signs of a being a problem; a loner, obsessed with Hitler and the 3rd Reich, he was fascinated by the man who shot the reporters in Virginia last month and filmed himself doing it.

But these warning signs have been seen in mass murderers in the past and still, that didn't prevent anyone from stopping those tragedies either.

Another detail that came out after the tragedy is this young man wanted to be famous.

Well, OK, what young man doesn't want that? When I was 20, I wanted to be famous!

But I didn't kill a bunch of people to do it! So what happened between 1986 and 2015?

The abortion mentality has spread. Even with the horrors of Planned Parenthood selling the parts of aborted babies and planning abortions specifically to harvest organs; many people are still defending them.

Doesn't that at least LEND to the mindset, it's OK to kill if it benefits me?

Life is disposable. What else has happened since 1986 when I was 20 years old?

Reality shows happened, where it's OK to demean others for money and entertainment.

Akin to that, people who get their own reality shows and become famous by celebrating their dysfunction. First it was the Osborn family in the 90's.

Then it was Paris Hilton who became famous for dysfunction fifteen years ago.

Then it was Kim Kardashian. Then the whole Kardashian clan. Now they're countless.

Because now we laugh at, and reward dysfunctional behavior.

Doesn't that lend to the mentality if I'm narcissistic, if I crave attention, I can get what I want by capitalizing on anti-social behavior?

Feeding into that point, since 1986 we have sacrificed social interaction for gadgets.

People have lost themselves in their own alternate reality of gaming.

Instead of talking TO people, we text AT them, or we shut the world out completely with the little plugs in our ears. I admit the gadgets are useful. I use them.

Writing sermons on a computer is infinitely easier than typing them or writing long hand.

Sending a quick text is easy to get or confirm information quickly, but it annoys the heck

out of me when someone tries to have a dialog with me over text!
CALL ME and let's have a five minute conversation instead of wasting an hour texting!
But on the dark side, the gadgets have made it easy for us to escape within ourselves, and
God created us to interact with one another and build one another up.
Another detail leaned about this young man; as the days of this tragedy got closer, all he
would do is close himself up at home and sit in front of his computer screen all
day long. How can that NOT have a dehumanizing effect?
You're not interacting with people. You're interacting with a machine!
God created us to be creatures of community. In today's first reading when God creates
Adam the first thing he says is, "*it is not good for the man to be alone.*"
We weren't created to be alone, and I'm convinced the gadgets are destroying the ability
of the next generation to socially interact with each other in healthy ways.

And finally, the last element of this perfect storm is that people have lost a sense of vocation.

Vocations to priesthood and the religious life are down. (--Holy Matrimony are down.)

People instead live together, no commitment to each other, no commitment to God.

Even vocations to teach, nursing, emergency care workers are all in decline.

Doctor Scott Hahn of Franciscan University said, "*If Catholics simply lived the Grace of
the sacrament of marriage, in forty years, we would be a Christian Society.*"

How does he figure that? Because in marriage, indeed in any vocation, if properly lived,
requires us to empty ourselves for the betterment of others.

That's what our second reading from the letter to Hebrews was talking about today when
it says, "*He, for a little while, was made lower than the angels, that by the Grace
of God he might taste death for everyone.*"

Jesus emptied himself of his divinity so he could take our sins and atone for us, and thus
raise us up. That's what a vocation is; we empty ourselves for the sake of others.

And as we empty ourselves, God fills us with Grace. Grace pulls us away from sin.

Grace changes our hearts to see the sacredness in others, and then our hearts, will
influence the hearts of others around us. It really IS that simple.

I pray today that more people embrace Christian vocation in their lives, and in so doing,
help make tragedies like this become a thing of the past. Lord, make it so.