

Message of Hope when Tempted Toward Despair

Like many of you, I heard the awful news last Wednesday morning out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. A lone gunman fired weapons at innocent children and teachers participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass during the first week of a new school year at Annunciation Parish. Gunfire erupted during the responsorial psalm.

Throughout that day, I vacillated between prayer, sadness, and anger. More senseless violence. More attacks upon innocent people. More finger-pointing by those who seek to immediately score political points in the wake of another example of man's inhumanity to man. We cry. We shout. We pray. We do our best to retain hope in the face of evil.

Lest we be distracted by the human motivations of the now-deceased suspect, the fruits of this act are evil; the murder and attempted murdering of children, teachers, and others during Holy Mass. It reeks of the unloving force that wants to profane what is sacred; innocent children are sacred, and the Mass is sacred. Both were attacked on August 27, 2025.

In John's gospel, Jesus says, "A thief comes only to steal, slaughter, and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

Stories of heroic action are emerging. Teachers and older students used their respective bodies to cover the younger children. Two children died that day, ages 8 and 10. In my opinion, they are martyrs and will have a place of prominence in history and eternal life.

Please keep all those affected by this tragedy in your prayers – especially parents and family members -- mindful that prayer also helps us to cope with bad news in a way that keeps us from getting sucked into the same hatred and evil that influences those who commit atrocities. We stay connected to Love; the Love that keeps us sane. We need grace.

Can we create a 100-percent safe environment? Sadly, no! There will always be a way for sick people to do sick things. The world we live in is not heaven. We should, however, do everything we reasonably can to put things in place that minimize the potential for harm without creating a "police state" where even going to Mass requires metal detectors and armed guards.

Our leaders – both civil and spiritual – need to challenge us to look inside our hearts; for a heart turned away from God's love and God's law soon becomes the internal weapon that acts by way of external weapons (guns, knives, bats, frying pans, missiles, mustard gas, etc). It's more complex than just more man-made laws all the while we flaunt God's law.

The goal of terror is to keep us living in fear. Perhaps it's no coincidence that one of the most repeated phrases in all Sacred Scripture is, "Do not be afraid." Is this a challenge in a culture of death and violence? Yes! But we are people of hope because Love is stronger than death. Our faith anchors us in eternal life as we go about today's business all the while cooperating with God's grace to do the necessary things to build the City of God.

St. Ambrose gives us something to ponder. He wrote, "No one heals himself by wounding another."

Healing begins when we unconditionally allow the Divine Healer into our hearts.

Peace!

Fr. Bob

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fr. Bob", written in a cursive, flowing style.