

Remarks: Prayer Service for Healing from Violence
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Marshall County.

Parkland, Florida.

Las Vegas.

Orlando.

Madrid, London and Paris.

Columbine and Sandy Hook.

The very mention of these locales recall the reality of violence in our society: our schools, our neighborhoods, and public spaces of all kinds.

Some seek to shield themselves from the reality of violence---to escape from the magnitude and number of violent incidents can even be justified as a form of self-protection.

But again, reality enters in.

And noone is exempt from the reality of violence.

Violence occurs in our homes. Domestic violence---child abuse---in hate-filled words, gestures and actions among family members and relatives.

Violence clouds our public debate---demonizes those who agree or disagree with a particular policy proposal---polarizes our political system---and objectifies “the other.”

When did all of this start---and how will it all end?

The despair which many feel in confronting the violence of our world calls each of us---now more than ever---to reflect upon the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus

Christ. During this service today, we have and will embrace our Catholic tradition as a means of working for a just and non-violent world.

Today, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and in the offering up of our prayerful intentions through recitation of the Rosary, we return to basics. And those basics are found in found in our faith in Jesus.

I recently read a pastoral letter written by Archbishop Charles Thompson of Indianapolis, a son of the Archdiocese of Louisville. In that letter, Archbishop Thompson called his flock---and indeed all of us beyond the borders of central and southern Indiana---to reflect upon the fundamental basis for our Church's engagement in issues such as abortion, immigration, racism, drug abuse, religious liberty and, dare I add in this time and place, gun laws. And given the sensitivity and complexity of the issue of gun laws, I want it known that I am not adding my support or opposition to any particular proposal. That is a subject for another day.

The basis of who we are as Catholics is found in our recognition of the dignity of the human person. Or, as Archbishop Thompson states, our response to public issues is "deeply rooted in the church's understanding of the origin, nature and destiny of the human person as revealed in Jesus Christ."

In the reality of violence, a matter both individual and communal, we are called to basics.

Prayer is basic---and at the core of who we are.

Confronting the reality of violence is basic---and central to who we are.

Seeing violence in not just well-publicized incidents but in the lives of ordinary people---this is who we are as Catholics.

Encountering Jesus in his humanity and divinity is a non-negotiable. For it is in such an encounter and through grace which overflows in our relationship, that each of us is healed.