

A National Tragedy: Can Contemplative Prayer Help?

- By [Fr. James Farfaglia](#) 12/16/2012
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How does contemplative prayer have anything to do with a tragedy which is beyond comprehension? "If my people who bear my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I myself will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land."



CORPUS CHRISTI, TX (Catholic Online) - The beginning of the Year of Faith was very exciting for me. I decided to put together a group of clergy that would provide a daily homily for Catholic Online and I committed to writing a weekly article on contemplative prayer, a topic which interests me greatly.

Tonight, as I sit before my computer, I must be honest, I am really stuck. I am at a loss for words. Should I just drop the article and call it a night?

Deacon Keith is always asking his small team of writers for new material.

Turning off the computer would be an easy way out.

The best approach with you, the readers of this series on contemplative prayer, is just to be honest.

So, let me be honest with you tonight.

The shootings in Connecticut have had a huge impact on me. I have been holding back the tears since I learned of the news on Friday morning. This is not to say that other shootings have not caused me to feel profound sadness, but this one is really close to home.

You see, although I now live in Corpus Christi, Texas, I grew up in Ridgefield, which is located about 40 minutes west of the Newtown and Sandy Hook area. As a kid, our family used to take Sunday rides through this part of Connecticut.

Like Ridgefield and other areas of Connecticut, Newtown and Sandy Hook are your typical small New England communities: beautiful, quiet, friendly and great places to live.

How does contemplative prayer have anything to do with a tragedy which is beyond comprehension?

I am not sure.

I am trying to figure it out myself.

However, I do think that it does have something to offer us.

I am a Catholic priest and the pastor of a poor Hispanic parish. I can't even begin to imagine what the members of the clergy are going through. I am here in Corpus Christi. As a member of the clergy too, how do I deal with this tragedy? How can I help? I can't leave. My people need me here and it is almost Christmas.

I think that my best response and perhaps my only response is prayer.

My prayer could take many forms. I can offer Masses. I can pray the Rosary. I can spend time in adoration, or I can open myself up to the Holy Spirit in contemplative prayer and simply remain in silence, with the hope that somehow that time of prayer will bring some kind of peace to all those who suffer so profoundly.

Is there any act of violence worse than shooting children and adults in a school, a movie theatre or a place of work?

Joined together in prayer, the contemplative prayer of all of us around the world who are not directly involved in helping the people of Connecticut could in some way be united to the prayer of the suffering of Jesus on the Cross.

It is a powerful prayer because it is a prayer that unites itself to the cry of the Crucified Lord: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?"

I don't think that we need a Mayan calendar to tell us that we are in big trouble.

Whatever motivated the alleged shooter to inflict such terrible pain upon a small New England community might be discovered by the local law enforcement officials.

There is a bigger picture to consider as the world is left in shock at such a horrific act of evil.

This is not the first time that this has happened. These acts of evil are only symptoms of a very deep and a very serious problem.

Not everyone is going to like what I have to say here.

First, if we can kill an innocent baby in the womb of a mother, what is to keep us from killing a child outside of the womb?

What about our television, our movies, our video games and our music? We have an obsession and fascination with violence.

And what about the guns? Yes, I understand the Second Amendment of the Constitution, but did the Founding Fathers of our nation foresee this kind of perversity and insanity?

Can a democracy exist when a people can no longer govern themselves?

This may sound unrealistic and even radical, but what I really think that we need is a national day of silence.

Yes.

One day when no one drives a car.

The television, the radio and the Internet are shut down.

One day when no one goes to work, no one goes to school and no one goes shopping.

Twenty four hours of silence when nobody speaks a word.

Twenty four hours where we sit in our living room, on our front or back porches, in the backyard, on the beach or in the woods and we just listen. listen to the voice that calls us back to wisdom.

"If my people who bear my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I myself will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land"
(Second Book of Chronicles: 7; 14).

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