



Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Pastor's Column

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“More Guns” Is Not the Answer

After the murder of our nine brothers and sisters in Christ in their Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Charles L. Cotton a Board Member of the National Rifle Association (NRA) blamed the Pastor for the tragedy. The Pastor was one of the nine who were murdered. The Pastor is also a State Legislator in South Carolina. Recently he voted against a law that would allow guns to be brought into Churches. This NRA Board Member's position was that if the Pastor would have voted for guns in Churches, there would have been guns present that day, and the murders could have been avoided. To me this is a very untenable position, and one that lacked any human compassion in light of the situation.

I am sharing with you the column I wrote after the Sandy Hook tragedy several years ago. We need responsible gun control. We need responsible gun owners to come forward and support responsible gun control. More guns is not the answer!

Recently a number of people have asked my thoughts about the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, and the debate regarding “gun control.” I share with you my personal thoughts. I hope what I say can be of some assistance in your conversations with others about this issue.

The NRA's response to this tragedy makes absolutely no sense to me.

Its response says this to me: If there were a shooting within the Church of St. Thomas More and a number of people were killed during a Sunday Mass, then the NRA's response to us would be that we should make sure that there are armed security guards on the parking lot, that a number of our hospitality ministers would also need to be trained to carry and use guns, and finally, the priest celebrating Mass would need to be sure that he too is packing a gun under his vestments.

Is this what we would want to see? Obviously, this is not what I would want to see. “More guns” is not the answer.

From my perspective, there is good legislation that could go forth to address gun violence in our society: universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons with high-capacity clips, and a greater attention to mental health issues in our society.

Recently on Facebook, there were a number of people using this analogy, and we have heard it before: “Guns do not kill people. People with guns kill people.” But to make their point, they push the analogy further: “Cars do not kill people. People driving cars kill people. So should we ban all cars?”

Obviously, all cars should not be banned. That is ridiculous! But this analogy limps badly.

First of all, no one is talking about banning all guns—just certain guns that kill like the gun responsible for the killings that took place in Newtown, Connecticut.

Why is it anti-American or anti-Second Amendment to ban assault-style weapons, weapons that are used in warfare as in Iraq or Afghanistan?

We have banned armored assault vehicles (tanks) like the ones used in Iraq or Afghanistan from the streets of our cities, states, and our country. Why? We do so because they are dangerous.

Is this anti-American? Are our rights being violated or taken away, because we cannot drive the kind of vehicle we would like? It would give better protection while driving, would it not?

Assault weapons as well as assault vehicles belong in warfare, not in our homes, schools, churches, temples, and mosques, and not on the streets of our country.

First-responders are only now beginning to publicly share what they saw in the classrooms of Sandy Hook Elementary. They were never prepared to see the carnage before their eyes, the ways in which those innocent children were so mutilated and torn apart.

Do we really need such weapons in order to feel secure in maintaining our Second Amendment Rights? I think not.

If you saw the movie, “Lincoln,” there is a scene in which one man is trying to shoot and kill another man. The scene almost becomes hilarious, because he fires and misses, then he has to “clean the barrel of his shotgun, and then he has to reload with another bullet.” In the meantime, his target has high-tailed it and is down the street. He had time to flee.

I tend to think that many people still think about these kinds of weapons when we are talking about gun control. We are not familiar with or aware of the killing machines now available to the average person and household.

I am not anti-Second Amendment. I grew up in a family of hunter—my father and my four brothers. I grew up in a house with rifles for deer hunting. They enjoyed the hunting.

“More guns” is not the answer!

The San Diego Organizing Project, SDOP, of which St. Thomas More Parish is a member, is working to support gun control legislation. SDOP is an affiliate of the parent organization, the PICO National Network. The work of SDOP is supported by the Diocese of San Diego. Their websites are: www.sdop.net; www.piconetwork.org.

Fr. Mike