

Homily 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A week ago Sunday evening we all were stunned by yet another tragic and senseless slaughter and injury of so many innocent people. Again we felt helpless as the pain of those wounded and killed touched our hearts deeply. Also distressful to us is the unknown thinking behind the killer's irrational actions. As Christians we always respond in three ways. We reach out to help in any way we can. We pray. And we ask what can be done to better protect one another in the future.

What we can do is urge our legislators to craft and pass appropriate laws that will regulate safety measures pertaining to firearms for the protection and safety of people. And those who belong to gun associations can seek to influence their leadership always to exercise moral responsibility and proper restraint in any positions which the association takes - remembering that no right is absolute. All rights exist in relationship to other rights and to the protection of the common good.

Later in the week the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. This event is not unrelated to last Sunday and to the gospel's message of producing good fruit. The press release from the Norwegian committee stated that the organization was "receiving the award for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons."

The Nobel Peace Prize raises in our consciences that a nuclear weapon would not just cause hundreds of deaths but thousands and tens of thousands or millions depending on the the strength and the target. The A-bombs dropped in Nagasaki and Hiroshima 72 years ago killed over 70,000 people in each city and caused an even greater number of illnesses and related deaths.

Not only do we want to take steps to prevent another Las Vegas tragedy, we must take every step to prevent a catastrophic loss of lives through the use of nuclear arms.

We must demand of our national leaders that all inflammatory rhetoric cease immediately, that the hard work of diplomatic negotiations proceed ahead in spite of every obstacle or setback, and that our leaders see themselves as world statesmen working not just for one's own country but for the future preservation of the human race. And, of course, we as Catholics see it to be essential to pray for peace and for people to turn back to God.

This past September 20, the Vatican City State (the Holy See) signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted at the United Nations on July 7, 2017. (I believe that about 50 nations have signed so far.) This treaty is aimed at negotiating a legally binding agreement for prohibiting nuclear weapons. This past May, Pope Francis had written to a United Nations Conference calling for "a collective and concerted multilateral effort to eliminate nuclear weapons."

The kingdom of God has been given to us, today's gospel proclaims, so that we as a people will produce

fruit. The fruit of the kingdom is peace. To be a true Christian, we must do everything we can to respond to the needs of those who have suffered tragedy; we must work as hard as we can to promote peace in the world - and this means not only appropriate regulation of fire arms but the end of the nuclear arms race; and above all we must pray for peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God." Mt. 5:9

Bishop Stephen Blaire