

A Christian Response To Violence

GATHER AND PRAY

Lord make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be love.
For it is in giving that we receive, it is pardoning that we are
pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Reflection

Genesis 4:1-16
Romans 12: 9-15
Matthew 5:38-45

1. What does the first passage tell us about the human condition?

2. What is Jesus teaching in the other two passages about responding to violence?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

"(Fr.) Charlie has been doing a lot of counseling in the schools this past week. In one parish in Rockaway, 51 dads were killed last Tuesday. What does a pastor say to those families? Every story is sadder than the next. We need to continue to pray that God will protect us and the Holy Spirit will guide us and our leaders who have to make the next important decisions."

- Family minister's letter Sept.18, 2001

"... violence cannot be destroyed by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through nonviolence. Hatred can only be overcome by love."

- Mahatma Gandhi

"Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility."

- Catechism of the Catholic Church #2265

Observe

1. Ask two adults how they were affected by the events of September 11. Ask two children. Ask someone in a helping profession.
2. From news reports, describe the behavior of people in your town, state, or around the country towards those from the Middle East after the recent terrorism in the United States.

3. Have someone in the group research the basis tenets of Islam and report their findings to the group. (See <http://directory-oman.com/islam/basicten.htm> for a brief description or do other internet research.)

Judge

1. How does this terrorist act coincide with the tenets of Islam?
2. In the face of the devastation we have witnessed at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and rural Pennsylvania, what is a Christian response?

Act

1. Send a contribution to the Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/>), Catholic Charities (<http://www.catholiccharities.org/>) or another charitable organization which is helping cope with the aftermath of this disaster.
2. Pray for who have lost their lives in the recent terrorist attacks and those involved in ministering to them.
3. As a family, decide what is the best response.
4. Review and discuss this web site on children and terrorism: <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/terrorism/children/index.htm>.

CLOSING PRAYER

Psalms 72: 1-8, 12-13

Closing Hymn

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" or perhaps this hymn to the tune of "O God Our Help in Ages Past"

O God, our words cannot express
The pain we feel this day.
Enraged, uncertain, we confess
Our need to bow and pray.

We grieve for all who lost their lives
And for each injured one.
We pray for children, husbands, wives
Whose grief has just begun.

O Lord, we're called to offer prayer
For all our leaders, too.
May they, amid such great despair,
Be wise in all they do.

We trust your mercy and your grace;
In you we will not fear!
May peace and justice now embrace!
Be with your people here!

O GOD, OUR WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS;

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Phone: (856)-589-8444.

E-mail: Bruce.Gillette@ecunet.org. You may freely copy the text as long as this notice is included.

The Cyber Hymnal (<http://www.cyberhymnal.org>) has appropriate music (this hymn among them) posted under its "recent additions" link.