

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past week's tragic shooting in Las Vegas stunned a nation. At the risk of sounding old: back when I was growing up, this was unfathomable! Do you remember when we could keep our houses unlocked? Do you remember when we never had to lock our cars? Life seems to have become much more complicated . . . and much more evil. How do we deal with such evil in our times?

I do think these times are more evil than the past. Never in the history of humanity has there been widespread atheism. True, people have not always believed in one God (many of the ancient religions believed in many gods, as some do today), but there was always an understanding that we were not self-sufficient, that there was something greater than ourselves. Now, our society encourages us to look no further than ourselves for meaning – a meaning we can't find without God. Maybe – I'm not sure – but maybe this is part of the reason why some have allowed themselves to fall into such deep evil as to *plan out* the senseless massacre of so many.

So back to that question: how do we deal with such evil in our times? While I think that there is more evil rampant today than ever, evil is not new. In the second reading today, St. Paul has some sound advice to us in our crisis:

**Whatever is true, whatever is honorable,
whatever is just, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.**

**Keep on doing what you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me.**

Then the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9)

While there is evil in the world, and we are not to ignore it, *we cannot focus on it*. When called, we reach out to repeal evil, help those in need, to do what we can to fight evil . . . but we must not focus on it. If we spend too much time focusing on evil, *it will consume us*. Sheriff Joseph Lombardo said, "I can't get into the mind of a psychopath," and I think that is a good thing. The answer is not to spend too much time trying to figure out his demented logic, but rather spend it on thinking about what is true and honorable and just and pure and lovely and gracious and excellent and worthy of praise.

You see, God has the final word. Please don't misunderstand me: the shooting was NOT God's will (moral evil NEVER is, and we should be careful not to blame God for the evil choices *we* make). However, in the mystery of God, He did allow it, knowing that He can make a greater good come out of it. This is the Mystery of the Cross – the worst evil in the world (we *killed* God) God turned into the greatest good (a sign of His immense love for us, and the path to eternal life). He does this. GOD WINS. He will make a greater good come out of this evil. By focusing on what is good and pure, by keeping our eyes on the God who loves us and wants only good for us, hate will not consume us, nor a desire for revenge, nor the darkness and fear that can lead us to hell.

As we pray for the victims of this tragedy and their families, let us turn to God asking Him to help us to keep our eyes focused on all that is good, so that *love will consume us*, not hate.