

## Chaplain's Bulletin April 16, 2023



Dear Folks,

As we celebrate the Easter season, we remember it is a time of new hope and new possibilities. As we read Acts of the Apostles, we see things happening that the early Christians would not have thought possible at first.

There is so much violence in our world. I sure would like for there to be less. When there is a particularly horrific incident it will often dominate the news for a while. Then different people will repeat their usual talking points. Various groups will talk past each other, and then nothing changes. I think we could do better. Short term, we can harden targets and make them less vulnerable. The deeper solution is not being so good at creating savages. We have to have a less violent culture, a more peaceful culture, or no law can save us, and civilization itself is in the balance. I think there are some concrete things we can do.

We have to decide what kind of people we want to be. It would involve looking at our own behavior (let none of us assume we are guiltless). It will involve what kind of messages that we send, and what kind of messages we encourage (calling out people on our side would likely be more effective than calling out our opponents; the other side is easy to dismiss). It will require considerable thought on how we as a society encourage good behaviors and discourage bad behaviors.

Particular issues would include:

- Support law enforcement, and value law and order.
- Build a strong sense of right and wrong.
- Combat fatherlessness.
- Stop talking past each other.
- Don't condemn or demean our opponents; make a better case for our position.
- Keep our feelings and thoughts in perspective: just because I'm angry about something important doesn't give me license to be destructive. Just because my cause is right doesn't mean I have license to be destructive. We can work toward a better world, but we can't expect to fix everything in our time. Building a better world is an intergenerational project.
- Build empathy, especially with people who see things differently, and reject objectifying groups or individuals. Avoid ridiculing people we disagree with.

- Reject using others' behavior as an excuse to misbehave ourselves.
- Have the same standard of behavior for those we agree with and those we don't; not condemn destruction when we disagree with their cause, and condone or dismiss it when we agree with the cause.
- Value growing in virtue over gratifying desire.
- Have some serious humility about how much we understand and how much we don't: maybe even people we disagree with have some things to teach us.

In the weeks to come I'll try to expand on these issues. I hope it may stimulate some thought and some discussion. Civilizations do rise and fall, but when they fall, it causes much suffering. It would be worth a lot to keep ours going.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim