

Reflections on Sandy Hook, Connecticut

By Fr. Dave Heney

These are a few brief reflections written just hours after the most tragic events on Friday. All of us recoil in horror at this unimaginable crime, and agonize over the unimaginable grief those parents must feel who have lost a child in this unimaginably violent way. I am sure that everyone across America, and across the world as well, also brings to mind their own loved ones and how grateful they are that they are still here, and yet how quickly things can change so unexpectedly.

If your own children mention this event, answer their questions as simply and as accurately as possible, and only the question asked. If they do not bring it up, there is no reason to introduce it until they do. Let their needs guide you. If you don't have answers yet, simply say that, and assure them that everyone is searching for reasons.

The Gospel on this 3rd Sunday of Advent is about Justice, which simply means that we are to give to others what is their due. If you steal five dollars, well, you have to give it back! The Gospel specifically mentions that soldiers, tax collectors, and the crowd, should act justly towards those with whom they interact, and give each person what is their due.

Certainly, when a person is conceived, it is their due that they are able to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as even our own Declaration of Independence affirms. ***It is God's plan*** that each person enjoys a full life, in sickness or in health, and learns to love completely no matter what is going on. Love requires freedom so God gives us free will so that we can *freely* choose to love, *or not*. While we can never guarantee health or avoid illness, we certainly do not expect violence at the hands of another.

*This is an injustice that is **not** part of God's plan for us. It is **not** God's plan that a young man should enter a school and take innocent lives. God has been crying for some time at the evil*

that some people freely choose to do and is especially crying at what this young man freely chose to do in Sandy Hook, Connecticut.

If this young man is mentally ill, then he was not acting "freely," but it is also a tragedy that this unstable person had access to even these legally registered weapons that did such harm. Perhaps if someone saw signs of instability before and mentioned it, this event would be different.

We can never be *completely* safe from evil, or ever *guarantee* that this will not happen again somewhere in the world. After all, Connecticut has the strictest gun laws and this school had the very best security system in place.

What we can promise is continue to treat everyone within "our own world" of family and friends with justice and love. While we cannot *guarantee* safety, we can promise that we will immediately come to the aid of anyone in trouble, as Jesus promised at His own at-risk birth at Christmas

Let us continue to pray for the families of Sandy Hook and all of us in this Advent season as we prepare to greet Our Lord who arrived at that first Christmas into this dangerous world also as an innocent child in danger, who still cries today at every injustice, and yet offers the way to lasting peace.

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