

Homily for the Feast of the Holy Family

It has been somewhat of a strange Christmas experience. No matter what Christmas was like, none of us could escape the news, the horror or the emotional pain of 20 children and 6 adults being killed just one week before Christmas.

We need to pray for the man whose actions caused such carnage. It is obvious that he suffered from mental illness. While never an excuse, it should make all of us realize how fragile our human condition can be.

All these victims were filled with the excitement for Channakah and Christmas. And the families of these children and adults now must face pain and grief that will never know an end and will find healing every so difficult. We pray for these victims and for their families. We pray that the light of God's love may lead them from the darkness of this hour.

I have never believed that murder and mayhem, that horror and carnage, offer us a lesson. They don't. They are utter destruction without just cause or reason. They are senseless acts of violence that are inexcusable and which create unbearable pain. They are the product of the empty void of narcissism from which we have created our culture.

But on this feast of the Holy Family that basks in the light of Christmas which no event can diminish we might, in light of the horror of this event, be called to realize a very simple truth. And the truth is that always and everywhere we are called to honor and venerate, cherish and love, forgive and support the members of our family. We are called to realize that these very precious people who are our parents and our grandparents, our spouses and our children, our in-laws and our cousins are the locus in which God acts within our lives. For they are the people who teach us what loving and caring, forgiving and learning are all about.

The readings today tell us that the relationships of family are important. The readings tell us that respect, love, forgiveness, patience and kindness are what make up the fabric of our family life. And the readings even suggest that families run into problems, children get lost, parents fret and that sometimes we need to take the time to search and once again find each other.

But all these readings are theory. Sadly, sometimes we need an event like this senseless massacre to make us realize that it is not the theory on the page but the practice of it in our lives that makes a difference. May all of us who celebrate this Feast of the Holy Family promise ourselves that what we proclaim today will not just be theory.

Rather we will put it into practice because once again we have been reminded that life is fragile and love is the only thing that is important.