

Fifth Sunday of Pentecost – Reflections on the Orlando Shooting

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
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In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We have all heard about the tragedy that occurred in Orlando last week, when an Islamic gunman entered a club that was frequented by gays and began shooting. Three hours later, fifty people were killed, including the gunman. This devastating event has opened issues such as radical Islam, gay rights, immigration reform, gun control, home-grown terrorism, a mental illness, just to name a few. This event is unfortunate and saddening, but our society's and leaders' reactions are more disappointing.

Society is arguing with memes and pictures on social media/ Politicians and so-called clergy are playing the blame game. Organizations are using this to advance their own agendas. Yet, through all of this, we forget that 50 of our brothers and sisters have been taken away, thousands more need the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the world still needs the message of Christ.

After an event like this, people quickly claim that God is on their side, whether it be gay rights, gun control, immigration reform, or anything else, but in reality, God is neither on this side or that. God is too busy crying at what we have become and turned society and the world into.

Mankind is the pinnacle of creation. The Church Fathers explain that the creation of man was the greatest of all creation and this is why the creatures of the world walk on four legs or are hunched over, always bowing before God's masterpiece. We were made to be diamonds and jewels of this world, but we act and treat one another as coal and rubbish.

The Gospel of John (9:1-7) tells us of a blind man about whom the disciples ask, "Lord, whose sins have caused this man to be blind, his parents' or his?" Christ replies, "it is neither his sins nor his parents' sins that he is blind, but so God may be glorified."

What Christ is saying is not to focus on the sin. Don't focus on the tragedy and don't use the tragedy to guess who or why it happened, rather, see the tragedy as a call to do God's work.

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We can play the blame game and push agendas and even be indifferent, but if we want to be Christ-like and Christian, we must respond to evil and suffering with action.

In the wake of the Orlando shooting, Chick-fil-la, who has been outspoken in its position of certain issues and is closed on Sundays, demonstrated what it means to be Christian. Immediately following the shooting, early on Sunday morning, Chick-fil-las in the Orlando area opened up and cooked thousands of meals. They then took the meals to blood banks, first responders and victims and their families. They did not blame or accuse. They did not discriminate or show favoritism. They went to the tragedy and said we are here to listen, to serve and to glorify the Father. They responded to evil and suffering with action and God's work, fulfilling Christ's command, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Amen.