

THE PASTOR'S POST

NUMB

Dear Parish Family:

Last Thursday morning after I celebrated the 7 a.m. Mass, a parishioner came up to me and said, "Fr. John, you didn't even mention the school shooting at Mass today. Why not?" He called me out and rightfully so. The truth is that I remembered it. I offered part of my prayer that morning for that situation. But if I'm honest, it did not really impact me enough to offer it as an intention in the Universal Prayer or part of the introduction to the Mass. I have become numb.



I wonder if the same might be said about you and so many others these days. I remember looking at my news app on Wednesday afternoon and the shooting was not even the top story. Sort of like, "Yea, another school shooting." I think it is the fifth or sixth one since the school year started. Then what happens, particularly these days? We offer thoughts and prayers, promise change and nothing changes, and then we pick each other apart for this thing or that one instead of trying to concretely address a serious issue - the gift of life. And we move on to the next topic or issue or return to our lives or ignore that these tragedies are even happening.

It is easier not to feel. Easier to move on. Easier to blame. Easier to offer a prayer, maybe light a candle. Feel content that we have done all we can do. What's next?

It is not just the issues of school violence, gun control, and mental health. We see it so often when it comes to issues of injustice in our world and lives. We're all upset for a bit. Then return to our lives. Part of it is the reality of our lives. We do have many responsibilities and challenges in our own lives. Of this, there is no question. But we are perhaps too fast, too quick to move on so we don't have to face the realities we presently live in these days in our country, our world, our own lives.

Isn't this what Jesus is calling us to in today's Gospel? We have the passion to even walk away from our families for the cross but we must do so with greater

discernment.

For the disciple, especially me these days, greater discernment of our prayers and our actions are needed and this must involve the heart, the core of who we are. From this core, should come our response. We might say, "Fr. John, I'm not going to solve school shootings in Minnesota." or "I'm not going to be the one to solve the problems of injustice around immigration these days." Maybe. Maybe not. How often, though, instead of entering a time of discernment do we enter a time of distance and distraction?

This process of discernment allows us to decide the better path to take. So maybe as we pray for those whose lives have been devastated by the most recent school shooting, can we ask the Lord to allow our hearts to be moved instead of being unmotivated? So, yes, using this situation as an example, offer a time of prayer for those involved. Make it a dedicated time. Maybe I can fast or offer a decade of my Rosary or pray for the two children who died by name. This is good.

Where, though, does that prayer lead? Can I write a letter to the principal of the school or the pastor of the parish? Good. Keep going. Maybe I need to write to my local political leaders and let them know about the Church's teaching on violence and how we need some action to address these issues. Good. Keep going. Maybe there is a local or national organization that I can work in - aware of the importance of my Catholic faith - that I can commit to or to support? As I do these things, I cannot move on. I have to allow this tragedy to touch my heart and I need my heart to respond.

This is just one example and I am, in no way, suggesting that what I have written is what we should do. However, when we take time to feel the pain, to enter the situation of another, I pray, with Jesus' help, we can discern the best way forward.

I am glad that parishioner spoke to me after Mass. A good wake up call to the numbness and indifference that sometimes creep into my own life. Maybe for you too?

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Feather