

**10/08/17 ..... 27 A**

*He looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed; for justice, but hark, the outcry!*

-- Violence is very much on our minds this week, especially after what took place in Las Vegas last Sunday night. It was public horror, carried out by a calculating but sick man.

-- But, as bad as that was, most of the violence in our country takes place in more private settings. The highest number of gun deaths are due to suicide, followed by drug killings which only make brief local headlines.

-- And there is another type of violence that typically takes place in the privacy of homes. We call it domestic violence. It doesn't always result in murder (though all too often it does), but it always brings terror into a home situation.

-- For a long time we seldom talked about it in public. But 25 years ago, the United States Bishops issued the letter *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Violence Against Women*. It publically took on this issue, calling domestic violence sinful and often criminal.

-- October is designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and God's word today can speak to this issue. The prophet Isaiah called out his people for their infidelity to God in language that mirrored a marriage relationship.

-- In the verses immediately following these we hear that the "bloodshed" he spoke about was the result of landgrabbing and excessive drinking. The second of these is certainly at the heart of much domestic violence.

-- Jesus "updated" this parable in speaking to and about the religious leadership of his own day. They failed to produce the fruit of their heritage, but perpetrated violence against the prophets, and would do so against Jesus himself.

-- It's not a big stretch to "update" this story once again in our own age. God calls us to cultivate the fruit of our faith in the Church. And the most basic unit of the Church is not the diocese or the parish but the family. It is the domestic Church. Here is where the faith is first passed on.

-- Unfortunately, it is also where, too often, violence takes place. Particularly disturbing is the fact that a high percentage of pregnant women suffer this type of violence. Respecting life requires responding to this situation.

-- Each of us needs to be sensitive to the signs of possible domestic violence in our own families and those around us. We must respond in a firm but Christlike manner to incidents of violence, seeking safety for victims and help for those perpetrating this violence.

-- And we should look within ourselves for any tendencies to respond to the tensions in life with physical or verbal acts of violence. Modern social media can all too easily be used to rile up our violent tendencies.

-- But there is good news as well. People are stepping forward on this issue. Resources are available. The most developed are in the Toledo area, but efforts are underway here in Fulton County to respond to the needs of victims (e.g., JJ Safehouse).

-- We can help by raising our awareness and that of people we know. And we can also help by fostering respect and peaceful ways of resolving conflict in our families and our neighborhoods.

-- As he spoke from prison, St. Paul prayed that the peace of Christ would guard the hearts and minds of the people he wrote in Philippi. We pray that we can foster the peace of Christ wherever we are, and especially in our own families.