



FAITH: A FRESH TAKE



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Nothing can justify terrorist attacks, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Using God's name to try to justify violence and murder is "blasphemy," Pope Francis said Nov. 15, speaking about the terrorist attacks on Paris.

"Such barbarity leaves us dismayed, and we ask ourselves how the human heart can plan and carry out such horrible events," the pope said after reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter's Square.

The attacks in Paris Nov. 13 — attacks the French government said were carried out by three teams of Islamic State terrorists — caused the deaths of at least 129 people and left more than 350 injured, many of them critically. A suicide bomber blew himself up outside a soccer stadium, gunmen attacked customers at cafes and restaurants and a team of terrorists gunned down dozens of people at a concert.

The attacks, Pope Francis said, were an "unspeakable affront to the dignity of the human person."

"The path of violence and hatred cannot resolve the problems of humanity, and using the name of God to justify this path is blasphemy," he said.

Pope Francis asked the thousands of people who gathered at St. Peter's for the Sunday midday prayer to observe a moment of silence and to join him in reciting a Hail Mary.

"May the Virgin Mary, mother of mercy, give rise in the hearts of everyone thoughts of wisdom and

proposals for peace," he said. "We ask her to protect and watch over the dear French nation, the first daughter of the church, over Europe and the whole world."

"Let us entrust to the mercy of God the innocent victims of this tragedy," the pope said.

Speaking Nov. 14, the day after the terrorist attacks, Pope Francis had told the television station of the Italian bishops' conference, "I am shaken and pained."

"I don't understand, but these things are difficult to understand, how human beings can do this," the pope said. "That is why I am shaken, pained and am praying."

The director of the television station recalled how the pope has spoken many times about a "third world war being fought in pieces."

"This is a piece," the pope responded. "There are no justifications for these things."

On social media, Islamic State militants claimed responsibility, but Pope Francis insisted there can be no "religious or human" excuse for killing innocent people and sowing terror. "This is not human." French authorities reported Nov. 14 that eight terrorists were dead after the night of attacks; six of them committed suicide and two were killed by police, who stormed the concert hall where the terrorists had taken hostages and where the majority of victims died.

You Are Your Most Important Supporter

There's an old character from "Saturday Night Live" named Stuart Smalley. Each sketch began with him reciting the phrase, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough and, doggone it, people like me."

While the character was played for laughs, the sentiment behind that statement always stuck with me. In

looking at the success I've had in my life and the success I've seen in others, the one constant I've found is that successful people believe in themselves and their capabilities. After all, if you don't think you can do it, why should anyone else?

Success takes more than confidence, however. Success takes passion, hard work and more than a little bit of luck. Behind every so-called "overnight success," there are years of hard work behind the skills and knowledge necessary to make achievements seem effortless.

In everything you do, you will face competition. You need to stand out. Discover how to build yourself up without tearing others down. No one likes working with people they hate. Be the one they like working with.

Know how to win with grace, but also how to lose with dignity. It's in the moments of great disappointment, when you fall short, that you need to push yourself even more.

To be successful, know how to make a mistake. Accept responsibility for the error of your ways.

Also, be true to yourself. The worst kind of success is the kind you can't enjoy. Don't choose what to do based

on what you think would be successful. Choose what to do based on what you love. Embrace your passions. If you can't commit with your heart, don't commit with your head.

And when you find something you believe in, don't let it go. Be passionate about that passion. If you're a writer, write. If you're a programmer, program. If you're a diver, dive. Invest in yourself every day.

Don't let success be defined by money or title. Define success as joy. Define success as contentment.

Remember feelings of success. During the next challenge you face, use that memory as motivation. Recall how it felt when you achieved your goal. There's nothing better.

Finally, there will always be people out there who will say you can't do it. They'll say you're not good enough. Don't believe them. Don't let them hold you back or tear you down. There is no greater motivator than being told you can't accomplish something.

In the end, success is about faith. It's about a belief in yourself. Remember the words of Stuart Smalley, but more importantly, think about Al Franken, the writer/actor who created him. After leaving "Saturday Night Live," he found a new passion. He became a radio host and then ran for office. Today, he represents Minnesota in the U.S. Senate.

No matter who you are, a little faith and a little confidence can go a long way. You are good enough. You are smart enough. And, doggone it, people like you.

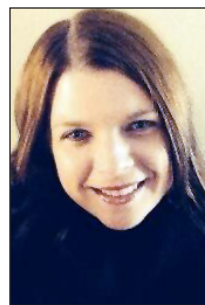
Now, go find your success.

— Erick Rommel

(This column is part of the CNS columns package.)

Reality Checks

We come across quotes or phrases consistently when bombarded with billboards, online memes and commercials. Some are funny, some are



offensive and some are just plain annoying, but every once in awhile, we come across a phrase that makes us feel something and changes our outlook.

"The sad thing is, nobody ever really knows how much

anyone else is hurting. We could be standing next to somebody who is completely broken and we wouldn't even know it." When first reading this quote, I couldn't help but nod and realize the truth that just hit me in the face. I was sitting in a hallway on the college campus where I teach, scrolling through my Facebook feed, and immediately, I shut off the app. I wondered about what I was missing while my head was buried in my phone.

Looking up, I saw two students, clearly sleep-deprived, trying to keep their eyes open while reading a textbook. Had they eaten? Were they struggling with worry about how to balance a job to pay the bills while paying for an education? Had they been up all night studying? Were they dealing with an addiction that robbed them of sleep?

The bottom line is that I had no way of knowing their struggles. They could be essentially happy, yet bored with their studies and giving into the temptation to close their eyes for a moment. Or, they could have been struggling with emotional trauma that was of no

business of mine.

It is very easy to become obsessed with our own worries, concerns and tribulations without realizing that what we may be struggling with mentally or physically is often minute compared to the struggles of others. We pass homeless people on the streets, people collecting change at every intersection and adults who appear to be put together and happy on a regular basis. We don't know the struggles each has endured and we have no right to pass judgment based on what we can see.

I try and remind myself and my children of this very fact each and every day, trying to focus on the fact that a cracked iPhone screen is pale in comparison to not knowing when your next meal will be or how to recover from a tragic death in the family. Spilled milk is just that — spilled milk. Tragedy, death and suffering surrounds us, even when our eyes are not open or our judgments and stereotyping cloud our sense of what is right and wrong.

We may not be able to offer help toward struggles we don't know about, but we can offer a silent prayer to all mankind and humble ourselves by realizing that our struggles are personal — just as our peers. Luckily, we do have the option to place our worries about ourselves and the unknown struggles out there in God's hands.

— Shannon Philpott

Shannon Philpott is a freelance writer and college journalism instructor, but most of all a mother of two teens. You can see her work at www.shannonphilpott.com.



CNS/PAUL HARING

Abdalkim Asar, an imam at a local mosque, talks to people at a memorial near the Bataclan music hall in Paris Nov. 16. About a dozen imams in the city showed up at a memorial near Bataclan, where about 100 people were killed in the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks by Islamic State.

Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We want to give young adults something to "chew on," to think about when they're looking for something more than an on-line horoscope or the

latest star news.

This page offers columns we believe will interest our young adults. Let us know.

Email us at cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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