

Recently, I attended two meetings. At least partly, the meetings had to do with preparing for a mass shooting. Those parts were certainly the most memorable parts of the meetings. The tone of the meetings suggested that it's just a matter of time before something happens in Dutchess County. Unfortunately, that suggestion doesn't seem far fetched. Although a mass shooting weighs on my mind, I also see the gut wrenching effects of the drug epidemic on a regular basis, mostly with young people and their families. What is going on and what can be done about it? It's too big of a problem to tackle in a bulletin article. For some sort of partial answer to those questions, I suggest reading Peggy Noonan's recent WSJ (Wall Street Journal) article, "*The Parkland Massacre and the Air We Breathe: What's gone wrong with our culture that produces such atrocities? It's a very long list.*" What I'd like to share instead are some insights into today's dilemma, that you won't get from the mainstream media.

As early as WWII, some WASP elite social planners, and other enemies of Catholicism made a concerted effort to break up big ethnic Catholic neighborhoods in the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast and Midwest. If you are interested in the details, read *The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing* by E. Michael Jones. In a nutshell, in 1930, the Anglican community began to permit birth control and other Protestant communities began to follow suit. Some WASP elite saw the size of the Catholic neighborhoods and parishes and felt demographically threatened because Catholics were still having big families. In these cities, there were some huge ethnic parishes. In some parishes, over 10,000 people were going to Mass on Sunday. Their children were mostly going to Catholic schools. Catholicism, to some social planners, seemed too insular and out of their political control. Therefore, they set out to destroy these neighborhoods. They had help. For example, the car companies wanted us in the suburbs too. With the help of the 1952 Interstate Highway Act, the car companies got the assistance they needed. Some non-catholic elite arranged an array of forces to push us out of these Catholic neighborhoods and into the suburbs to hopefully, Americanize us.

Unfortunately, this sinister plan wasn't clear to Catholic leadership as it was happening. Many bishops and members of the Catholic intelligentsia share some blame for its success. How? The heresy of Americanism had been condemned by the Holy See at the turn of the 20th century. It seeped into the Catholic mentality anyway through the likes of Catholic intellectuals such as John Courtney Murray, S.J., and dare if I say it, William F. Buckley, Jr., who encouraged some of its concepts. Essentially, Americanism is an apologetic, accommodating Catholicism. It twists and turns Catholicism to fit the American political and cultural mentality. You still see its effects in the tolerance, almost without limits, of many Catholic parishioners. However, if a fellow Catholic calls a moral wrong for what it is, in that case, that Catholic may be shown no tolerance.

Many Catholic elite were effected by this heresy. They wanted so badly to be accepted into mainstream society. Also, they genuinely thought it wasn't a bad idea that we become Americanized. If you doubt that some accommodating hierarchy didn't have a role in this, think of the history of our parish. In the early 1960's, St Peter's, the "Irish" parish, was moved out of downtown Poughkeepsie into the suburban area of Poughkeepsie with no town (i.e. shops) to speak of and with no Church even waiting for us. In recent times, the Polish and Italian of Poughkeepsie have effectively lost their parishes. In the latter cases, understandable, practical decisions were made based on the number of worshippers and parish finances. However, make no mistake about it, this is the tail end of a long process of ethnic cleansing.

So what does this have to do with mass shootings and drug epidemics? The sinister plan to Americanize Catholics wasn't just a success. It was a spectacular success. Also, helped by the rise of secularism, materialism and the sexual revolution, Catholics became disconnected from their parishes and their Faith. These forces didn't effect just Catholics. It effected Protestants as well. Today, there are many Catholic, suburban teenagers and adults who have no real identifiable identity. Perhaps, they identify themselves as a Democrat or a Republican or as a Yankee or a Met fan. However, that's pretty much it. Faith-wise, they are essentially aimless and spiritually malnourished. In almost all cases, they have been brainwashed by a decrepit American culture. It's a powder keg just waiting to go off. In an absolute worst case scenario, the result could be a shooting or act of violence. In other cases, one will find people exhibiting symptoms of depression, anxiety, substance abuse and an extended aimless adolescence.

If a Catholic or anyone else doesn't know who they are and they don't nourish themselves spiritually, they are heading for trouble. A congenial personality, good looks, intelligence, athletic ability and other talents can delay the onset of problems. However, the problems will surface eventually. Sadly, I guarantee it. We are built to worship. We need the forgiveness that comes in the Confessional. We need the soothing relationship with God that comes with Christian prayer. We need to feel and know that we are making a difference in the world through praying. People, who feel powerless and also feel aimless, are easy pickings for Satan and societal ills.

Is there a practical solution? I don't know the macro answer. I'm more a student of history and theology, not a visionary. I commentate. I do know it's not as simple as sending your kids to Catholic schools or dragging them to Church on Sunday, although I recommend that you do. Plenty of kids and adults have sat through years of Catholic school and Sunday homilies with all of it basically going through one ear and out the other. Teachers and clergy share some blame for that. I do think that the answer lays with the Church producing more faithful, prayerful Catholic families.

I'm very impressed with some of the young people in this parish and other parishes I've been in. They are swimming upstream against a culture trying to pull them downstream. In many ways, they are heroic. There's one common denominator with these kids. One or both of the parents are faithful Catholics, a grandparent is faithful, some faithful peer befriends them, a teacher or priest inspires them and draws them closer to Our Lord. Note well, when I write faithful Catholic, I mean someone who truly believes what the Church teaches, and although not perfect, tries to live out his/her beliefs within an acceptable margin of error.

If you want to change society and/or the destiny of a young person, become on fire for Christ! Finally, remember what we priests were told as seminarians. We were told that when a person comes to see a priest for advice, that person should be able to see in some way, Christ in us. As priests, we essentially have two things we can offer someone, the Sacraments and the teachings of our Lord. Therefore, don't get innovative. In most cases, we don't need anything else but Our Lord.