

Sunday, August 28, 2016
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

VIOLENCE

Violence is the most pressing issue of our times — even more so than global warming. This is obvious from all the wars, conflicts, and civil strife across the globe, the proliferation of weapons, the prejudice and persecution of minorities, political and religious terrorism, and the increasing polarization within communities and nations. Violence is too often used to express dissatisfaction or anger, to retaliate against wrongs, and to resolve problems. Rage, aggression, fighting, abuse, and provocative language are all signs of the widespread prevalence of violence that exists in our streets, communities and homes. It is time to address this issue in a consistent, serious way.

Tears and sadness are not enough where there are increasing homicides and other incidents of armed violence in local communities. Precautions have to be taken. The obvious place to start is limiting the easy access to guns. Husbands could not kill wives as recently happened here in Morro Bay, or children kill parents as in Connecticut, or racists shoot blacks in a church down South, or a spurned lover go on a college killing spree in Santa Barbara, if there were stringent gun control laws delaying the purchase of guns and banning assault weapons. Armed violence is pandemic in America and, like a mortal virus, every effort must be made to contain and eradicate it. To date, that is not happening, so the violence continues to rage and innocent lives pile up. No one seems to mind all the strict security at airports — and, despite Second Amendment rights, guns are not allowed on planes — but limiting guns in other venues is still unconstitutional. This is no longer a credible point of view. Individual citizens, churches, civic groups, and communities must now rise up to protest against violence and to restrict the possession of guns and other weapons. Just like mothers organized against drunk drivers (MADD), so different groups must do the same against violence and guns.

The same must happen if we expect peace in the world. Leaders still rely on weapons, however, to solve problems, even though the evidence proves that war and violence are rarely effective and, in fact, only cause worse results. Iraq and Afghanistan are two examples, but so are Congo, South Sudan and Columbia, though negotiations there look like they are finally succeeding. These are nations destroyed by violence and war. The Just War theory is no longer valid but needs to be replaced by an ethic of peace, as a recent Vatican symposium suggested. Perhaps this could be the next topic of a papal encyclical or world synod. Peace and dialogue must be the first recourse of all leaders. **“Boots on the ground”** is a simplistic strategy which may sound strong but puts too many lives at risk, military and civilian, especially the young. Peace must be the new choice for our times.