

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**May 15, 2022**  
**Homily for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**  
**of St. Thomas More Catholic Parish**  
**celebrated at**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**116 Theodore Street**  
**Scranton, PA 18508**  
**John 13:31-33a, 34-35**

I preached last night about the organized effort to influence the justices of the United States Supreme Court through the protests now happening literally outside their houses. Our government's refusal to apply the law in this case, since what is happening is illegal, demonstrates that a good number of our rulers believe coercion is a more effective strategy than persuasion.

As disturbing as this development is, I am much more bothered by what happened last night in Buffalo, New York, the hometown of my grandma and grandpa, and where I buried my uncle just last year. A young man from Broome County, just forty-five minutes north of here, drove to Buffalo with the express intent to kill black people, wounding three and murdering ten others at a supermarket in a poor neighborhood just north of where my grandpa grew up.

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."* Jesus is talking here about his death, the sacrifice of love by which we are forgiven of our sins and saved from eternity in hell. In truth, His death is the solution to our biggest problem, and His resurrection from the dead enables Him to declare as we read in Revelation today, *"Behold, I make all things new."* It is the love of God that both saves us from sin and makes each of us a new creation.

If we are to understand death as a solution, we must be careful to note that God accomplished this renewal by suffering death, not by inflicting it. It was the enemies of God who imagined they could effect renewal by killing the Lord of Life. They proposed death as a solution in a different way, not as an expression of their love, but as an outgrowth of their hatred for Him who is holy, good, and true.

What we are witnessing in society today, and for the past several decades, what we witnessed last night in Buffalo, is not Jesus' understanding of death as a solution. Rather, we are seeing the Roman Empire's understanding of death as a solution: problems are not solved by suffering death to save those we love. Instead, problems are solved by inflicting death upon those we despise. This is the precise opposite of the Good News communicated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The 18-year-old who committed that atrocity in Buffalo last night grew up in a world in which we lionize not the suffering of death for those we love, but the infliction of death upon those who stand in the way of our objectives. Just two years ago, at the Golden Globes, referring to the Best Actress award she had just received, Michelle Williams said this in her acceptance speech: "I wouldn't have been able to do this without employing a woman's right to choose." Her speech received not just widespread approval but fawning coverage from almost all the major media outlets and newspapers as an impassioned defense of a woman's right to kill her own child.

The same media outlets that lauded Michelle Williams's decision kill an innocent baby will now loudly denounce the Broome County killer's decision to slaughter black people in Buffalo. Such murders, all murders, should be denounced, but our press will denounce these only because they disagree with the killer's racist motives. But he was doing the same thing they celebrate, for he was killing people inconvenient to him. If he were an abortionist and had killed ten babies, even ten black babies who stood in the way of their mothers' career goals, our media elites and politicians would celebrate his accomplishment and hold him up as an example of a defender of human rights. Indeed, the Broome County murderer undertook his killing spree on the same day that the black mayor of New York City, Eric Adams, said that there should be no restrictions on abortion, up to the day of birth.

But most Americans aren't so easily hoodwinked, and we know we can't have it both ways. If we want the carnage in our schools, stores, offices, and places of worship to cease, then we must stop insisting that killing millions of innocent children every year is not only good, but the foundation of our freedom as Americans. However much the protesters, the politicians, and their mouthpieces in the media may hyperventilate, the majority of our populace understands that abortion is a bad thing, and that the worst fruit of wantonly killing the unborn is the cheapening of life for everyone. The end of abortion will mean fewer tragedies like the one that happened in Buffalo last night, because it will mean we've stopped teaching our children that inflicting death upon the innocent is a legitimate solution to our perceived problems.

The actual solution is love. The Broome County killer published a 180-page manifesto that lamented the low birthrate among white people, indicating he understood the demographic catastrophe that is the result of legalized abortion. Yet his hatred blinded him to the obvious solution, the love that issues in life. Did it not occur to him that he could simply get married and have lots of children, while attempting to convince others to do the same?

My point is that we shall require more than a simple change in the law, that the end of abortion is just the beginning. The dehumanization of the unborn does not stand alone but is, rather, emblematic of the failure to love all the vulnerable. Rather than loving God and seeing the gifts inherent to the neighbors He has given us, we see others as a burden, a responsibility to be shirked. Our failure to love God means we have forgotten how to love our neighbor as ourselves. Before we're going to be able to convince our countrymen to sacrifice their lives that others may live, to love as we've been loved, we'll have to introduce them to the Author of Life.

Therefore, since conversions to the Faith must be our goal, how we introduce our neighbors to the Lord is very important. We must never adopt the vengeful orientation of our adversaries, however crushed we may be by yesterday's events. Our love must resemble the love our Lord expressed from the Altar of the Cross, as he prayed for the very people who killed him. Truly, we can't desire the death of those who are inconvenient to us: we are called to love even those like the man whose name I haven't yet been able to bring myself to tell you. As we intercede for all his victims and for those who love them, please live the magnitude of Christ's love, move towards healing and reconciliation, and pray also for him and all those who would harm the innocent. If we want the love of God to triumph, it's up to us to show it first.