

A Christian Response
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This weekend was a rough one across the world.

On Saturday we learned of a shooting in Syria that killed U.S. and Syrian soldiers. In this case, the gunman was killed. At the time of my writing this article, the gunman is understood to be an Islamic terrorist but no group has claimed responsibility.

Then, there was a mass shooting at Brown University in Rhode Island. There were eleven direct victims with two of them deceased. I say *direct victims* recognizing that the lives of every student, faculty, and staff in the university are likely forever changed. The motive is unknown and the attacker has not been captured at the time of this writing.

Then, in the U.S., we awoke Sunday to the news of a mass shooting in Australia at a Jewish celebration. It is being treated as an act of terrorism against Jews. Fifteen people are dead. One gunman is dead and another is in serious condition in the hospital.

With each story, I wanted to cry. Actually, *I did cry*. When is the violence going to end?

Of course, there are those who claim to want justice. *The victims deserve justice*. I am afraid that what many people want is not justice. It seems to me that what many people are looking for is *revenge*. I wonder if a person can ever find peace if they are looking for *revenge*.

When the U.S. soldiers were killed in Syria, President Trump said “we will retaliate.” What does it mean to retaliate when the gunman is already dead and no group has claimed responsibility? What type of retaliation and how intense? *We must pray for a reasonable response in accord with the concepts of Just War Theory*.

What upset me most about the shooting in Syria may sound like is politically motivated. It is not. *It is from the depths of my heart* where I hear and feel God saying this is not how He wants us to treat others. U.S. Secretary of Defense Hegseth wrote on social media, “Let it be known, if you target Americans — anywhere in the world — you will spend the rest of your brief, anxious life knowing the United States will hunt you, find you, and ruthlessly kill you” (“Trump vows “we will retaliate” after 2 U.S. soldiers and civilian killed in attack on U.S.-Syrian patrol in Syria.” CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/shots-us-syria-troops-palmyra/?intcid=CNM-00-10abd1h> .”). I see hate in this response. Many will argue the hate is justified. I ask what good the hate does? Jesus calls us to *love our enemies* (see [Matthew 5:44](#)).

We have every right to see justice. I pray that this justice be sought in accordance with the Amish approach to forgiveness (see Kraybill, Donald B., Steven M. Nolt, David L. Weaver-Zercher. *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. Jossey-Bass (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) 2007.) To benefit from the forgiveness, the perpetrator must repent. That is on them. We can only control our actions and what is in our heart. The Amish do expect legal justice but revenge is not part of it. (If you wish to read more about justice, you might read the definition of the virtue of

[justice given in the glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) and/or [my articles on the death penalty.](#))

Those who seek a harsh response might point to the Bible and its notion of vengeance. We must remember what the Lord says in [Deuteronomy 32:35](#), “*Vengeance is mine.*”

Jeremiah was persecuted by those around him. At one point he says to the Lord, “*Let me see the vengeance you take on them, for to you I have entrusted my cause*” ([Jeremiah 20:12](#)). Do you seek vengeance for yourself against your enemies or do you leave the vengeance to God?

If you leave the vengeance to the Lord, do you want to see the Lord deliver that vengeance on your enemies? [Jeremiah 20:12](#) would seem to justify that but I do not want to see vengeance on those who have hurt me. *I pray for their conversion.*

Why? Because in the Lord’s Prayer we pray “forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” Jesus says, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*” ([Matthew 5:7](#)). I know I am not perfect. I need God’s forgiveness. I need God’s mercy. I know if I want to receive God’s forgiveness and mercy, I need to be willing to offer the same to those who have hurt me. I may (accurately) think my sins are not as bad as theirs. Yet, sin is sin.

The Bible does speak of vengeance. If you want vengeance on those who have wronged you, are you ready to accept the Lord’s vengeance on yourself for the ways in which you have done wrong against the Lord?

Those who want to punish the assailants in the terrible acts of violence this weekend may wish to cite [Leviticus 24:19-20](#), “*Anyone who inflicts a permanent injury on his or her neighbor shall receive the same in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The same injury that one gives another shall be inflicted in return.*” I am glad they know verses from the Old Testament.

However, if we are going to cite the Old Testament, we must also consider what Jesus says in the New Testament about that very passage. They need to read Jesus’ words in [Matthew 5:38-48](#). People want to interpret “*an eye for an eye*” as God’s instruction to do this. God gave this instruction to limit their more severe responses.

As I have said in numerous articles, if we want the fighting, *the hate*, to end, we must be willing to be the first to let go of the hate and respond with love.

We do well to heed Paul’s words, “*Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Rather, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good*” ([Romans 12:19-21](#)). We do well to leave the vengeance to God and let our own response be one of love.

We have reason to be angry when one attacks us. That anger becomes a deadly sin against ourselves when we let the anger take over us. Our anger will destroy our own heart and soul if we

let the anger take over our thinking and our hearts. *If we let the anger control us, we may get to see our enemies suffer for their sins when we spend eternity in Hell with them.*

Thank God that this is not what God wants! God does not want anyone to spend eternity in Hell. He has a different plan for us. I write this nine days before Christmas. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ. *We find great hope in looking at baby Jesus lying in the manger.*

Why did Jesus, the Son of God, become incarnate in the flesh when He was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and born in our world on Christmas day?

To save us from our sins!

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers an answer to “Why did the Word become flesh?” based on the words we say every Sunday and at Christmas in the Creed, “For us men and **for our salvation** he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man” ([Catechism of the Catholic Church, 456](#), my emphasis).¹

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides four reasons for the Incarnation in paragraphs [457-460](#).

1. [Paragraph 457](#) - “The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God.*” To save us He had to become human to suffer. At Christmas, God begins a new stage in our salvation. As we read in [Galatians 4:4-5](#), “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption.*”
2. [Paragraph 458](#) - “The Word became flesh *so that we might know God’s love.*” The Catechism points to [1 John 4:10](#), “*In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.*”
3. [Paragraph 459](#) - “The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness.*” The Catechism points us here to [John 14:6](#), “*Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life.”* Jesus does not say He is *a way* or *a truth*. He is **the way and the truth and the life**.
4. [Paragraph 460](#) - “The Word became flesh to “*make us partakers of the divine nature.*” Here I think of the words the priests say quietly during the offertory as he pours a drop of water into the wine in the chalice, “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come ***to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.***”

Jesus’ Incarnation was an act of love by our Father

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him ([John 3:16-17](#)).

¹ To give credit where credit is due, the following is cited from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. My inspiration to use came from the fact it was used in the materials provided by Family Formation in their use of it in their December 2025 Family Formation lesson. You can find them on the internet at <https://www.familyformation.net/>.

And it was an act of Jesus' own love for us as He says in [John 15:13](#)

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jesus doesn't just say this. He actually lays down his life for us on the Cross to save us from our sins.

How can we not be moved to love by this?

We are about to celebrate Christmas. How can we think in hateful terms as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as our Savior? He came to bring us love, mercy, and forgiveness. If we want to receive these gifts, we must show love, mercy, and forgiveness to others.

Does this mean we cannot defend ourselves? No, but we must use the minimal amount of force ([see "Just War Theory"](#))

If we want the shootings and terrorism to stop, then we must recognize them as a failure to respect life. So, if we want the shootings and terrorism to stop, we must set an example by respecting all life from the moment of conception until natural death ourselves. If we do not, then how can we expect the shooters and terrorists to respect the lives of their victims? This is not a change that will come quickly. It may take generations. No matter how long it takes, if we want the violence to end, we must respect life.

It is not just a matter of abortion and assisted suicide. We must respect life in our day-to-day interactions in how we treat other people. How do you treat the poor? How do you treat those who suffer from physical disabilities? How do you treat people who suffer from mental health issues? How do you treat a person who looks like they are from a foreign country?

Our government has a role to play in helping all these people but, as Christians, we must heed Jesus' command to love our neighbor and do what we can to help the people. Again, all the needed changes may take generations to change the hearts of all people but it starts with each one of us. In seeking justice, we must all do our part to ensure others have what they are due as children of God. We, with the help of God can change the world one step at a time.

Before we retaliate against the shooters and terrorists, we must ask ourselves if our retaliation will really improve anything. It might stop one shooter or terrorist but it may actually worsen things in the long term by inciting others to more hate.

More hate is not the answer. God responds to our sins with love. May we love as God loves.

This means the "cancel culture" must stop. We do not end violence by canceling out our enemies. We end the violence by loving our enemies as God loves us.