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## It's Not Funny Any Longer

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Sad note of some interest: I have checked Canon Law, the Catechism of the Church and every book I have on Moral Theology and I can find no *anathema* to shoveling snow during Lent. Believe me I have looked!!

It's an old joke about the couple married for +50 years, being interviewed by a newspaper reporter and asked the question; "did you ever consider divorce?" Whereby the wife quickly answers "Heavens no! Murder sometimes though." As our radio and TV airwaves are full of violence, internationally and locally, and especially now in Macomb County, it is long past funny. We live in a brutally violent world. "When has it been any different?" many might ask, and I agree that murder and mayhem seems to be an integral facet of human society. Still, our propensity toward evil is not what God intended we do with our free will.

We are created in God's likeness and image. The stain of original sin that discolors our soul and gives life to concupiscence can be cleansed through baptism and directing our human will to a life in Christ. This is possible; the saints have proved that by their examples throughout the centuries. I am convinced that the adage that "we're only human" as an excuse for evil is only the lie of a lazy, undisciplined pattern of behavior. We are capable of so much better. So, the question may be asked, "Why don't we just do better? Why is it so difficult to make decent decisions and behave as lovingly as Christ commands?"

The answer to *why* is a lot easier than the answer to the question "What are we going to do to change?" I am convinced that the greatest reason we "can't" change is because we have allowed ourselves to believe that "we can't change." I agree that this is an overly simplistic answer. Certainly there are environmental, genetic and cultural elements in our human make-up that makes it difficult to change. Nonetheless, if we don't begin with the belief that we can change, then we just flat out won't change. As long as we think that the idea of Utopia comes straight out of Karl Marx and his Godless communism, we can't begin to believe that the principles of justice, human dignity and peace are achievable goals in human society. (Actually, "Utopia" is a fictitious island from the writings of Saint Thomas Moore, 16<sup>th</sup> century Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII, of England.)

Still, just wanting to change, even believing that changing is humanly possible is not enough to effect any real or lasting change. We need (as Fr. Mark reminded us in his homily last week) a **plan!** We need to identify a starting point and have defined methods and goals as to what behaviors we want to change and in what direction. Therefore, I would like to offer the following "Plan" for reducing the level of violence in our human society by beginning with a factor of one – me.

There are, as I mentioned above, a lot of factors behind our violent behaviors, even some that we can't ever fully "change" (genetics is one). But I believe that a major factor that we can control is our vocabulary. Years ago, I read an article by a peace activist (don't know his name) who challenged the "Peace Movement" to recognize the level of violence in their own rhetoric. He argued that is real peace was ever to be accomplished, then a language of peace must necessarily precede the change desired. (*Fighting for peace is like . . . for chastity.*) When we take the time to think about the high level or violent rhetoric we expose ourselves to every day it is not surprising that we behave with such violence. We euphemize our word choices by calling it "competitive banter", patriotism, religious fervor or what have you. We tell jokes with such violent outcomes and we all laugh. When will we learn that they aren't funny any more?