

COLUMNISTS

Will we be better off after the 'war'?

I have two observations, actually questions, about the current state of affairs, one from the realm of experience, the other the product of considerable reflection.

From experience I make this observation. Whenever I get the chance, I walk the beach at Durand Park early in the morning. If I get there early enough, sand drawings from the day before are still visible. Big hearts are often etched in the sand with various names attached: "Madeline Loves Ramon," "I Love You, Mom."

Since the events of Sept. 11, drawings of big American flags appear in the sand, often with "God Bless America" above them.

We are aware of a renewal of patriotism. We testify to our deepened love for our country, to not let this assault defeat us, to come out of this struggle stronger and better in spite of suffering and fear. Polls tell us that more people than ever say they are willing to suffer for the convictions we embrace as a nation, that many more young people intend to pursue military careers.

All this is good. To pursue worthy goals and do so from a stance of love and devotion gives life some of its deepest meaning. To resolve to defeat forces that oppress and oppress us as individuals and as groups is a healthy response. Moreover, history has shown that these are the very characteristics that combine to bring



the moral life

BY PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

about victory in the face of defeat.

If these are our responses to attack from outside forces, won't the people in Afghanistan and in the Arab world now under attack by us respond in the same way? Won't they become stronger in their convictions and in their resolve? Won't they be willing to sacrifice more to defeat their enemies? Won't their patriotism deepen their commitment to destroy as opposition forces increase? My fear is, of course, that all this will indeed happen. Then my question becomes, will we be better off, or will we actually be more in harm's way?

I don't have the answer to that one, so I'll move on to the second. This one emerges from these weeks of thinking about how the just-war theory can help us as we struggle to understand the meaning of our response to terrorism. Like many

others who try to let the moral traditions of Catholicism inform our response, I have spent much time trying to interpret how "just cause," "just authority," "non-combatant immunity," "proportionate means," "winnability," and the other prescriptions of this theory might be adapted to address the realities of the situation.

As I've struggled with all this, I find that I am less and less convinced that the notion of "war" is the best analogy to help us deal with the circumstance at hand. We find the analogy partly right, I think, since we have been attacked by forces from outside our own country, violent means were used to destroy innocent human life on a massive scale, priceless symbols of our way of life were attacked, and significant property has been lost. The harm to our economy, to several industries we all rely on, to our national pride and sense of justice is immeasurable, all making it seem like war.

We also seem to find meaning in using the analogy of war for many of our problems. In my lifetime we've had a war on poverty, war on crime, war on drugs. All those uses of war language are metaphorical at best. None of those "wars" has met with great success, either.

The question I have in the face of all this is: Is this a war at all? Is the best way to defeat terrorism through the mecha-

nisms of war, or would we be better off by addressing it like we address criminal activity? Our enemies right now seem more like individuals, or gangs, rather than governments of other nation states. Maybe, more than individual countries pursuing justice against individuals whose national loyalty seems nearly nonexistent, we need a central authority for all countries that can pursue and track down the renegades who perpetrate the crime of terrorism.

In responding to criminal activity we engage in activities like the investigation and pursuit of individual actions, seizing individuals whose actions confront the standards accepted by "the whole" in order to remove them from society. The past few weeks have made me uncomfortable trying to make the just-war theory fit the response needed for today's "new warfare." I fear we are overlooking the lessons of the last century, when one war simply fed the outbreak of the next. I also fear that we may not be ridding the world of terrorism at all, but by relying on past models of responding to violence might actually be perpetuating it. Please accept the thoughts here for what they are: just questions after a little thinking, a lot of worrying.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

Prayer requires persistence and patience

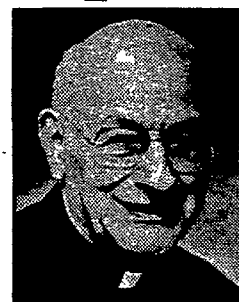
29th Sunday of the Year (Oct. 21): (R3) Luke 18:1-8; (R1) Exodus 17:8-13; (R2) 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2.

Two women met unexpectedly in the parking lot of a local bookstore. One had a great bundle of books in her arms. "What in the world are you doing," her friend asked, "opening your own bookstore?" "No," said the woman, "these are all books about prayer. All my life I have been hearing about the importance of prayer, so I decided to learn how to pray."

Several weeks later, the women met again. "Have you learned to pray?" the friend asked. The woman replied, "It was too complicated. Now I'm taking a course in yoga."

How often we complicate so simple a thing as prayer. St. John Damascene defined prayer as simply asking God for fitting things. When our Lord walked the earth, people simply brought their problems to him - no formal petitions, just their needs. And that is all that prayer is - bringing our needs to God.

In Sunday's parable, our Lord told his disciples of "the necessity of praying always and not losing heart." He illustrated what he meant by the parable of the widow and the wicked judge. The judge kept ignoring her case; but she kept per-



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

sisting in her appeal. Finally the judge gave in. The point our Lord was making was that if a wicked judge grants a petition because of a woman's persistence, how much more would a good God answer the petitions of his children.

Our Lord wants us to pray persistently, even when we are discouraged, when it seems we are getting no results. Persistent prayer overcomes all obstacles.

A great missionary to India put it this way: "Prayer tones up the total life. I find by actual experiences I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If my prayer life sags, my whole life sags with it; if my prayer life goes up, my life as a whole goes up with it. To fail here is to fail all down the line; to succeed here is to succeed everywhere." Jesus tells us to pray

always, not for his benefit, but for ours.

Your child asks you for something and you are going to give it to him, but maybe not right away because you have something more pressing to do. Still the child persists and keeps asking. You might get impatient and say, "I'm busy right now. I'll give it to you as soon as I'm free." Not so with God. He hears our prayers, but often he delays answering them either to prepare us for the answer or to teach us to persist in praying.

Besides persistence in prayer, we ought to pray with patience. Sometimes we get discouraged waiting for God. Norman Vincent Peale, after starting his publication, *Guideposts*, was running out of money. He prayed fervently for help. As he did, the idea came to him to explain his predicament to Howard Pew, a very wealthy man. He did. And Pew gave him the money he needed to save his publication. Peale said, "I truly believe the Lord wanted *Guideposts* saved."

Finally, we ought to pray not only with patience and persistence, but as if praying to a loving parent. Jesus in the parable contrasted the unjust judge with God, asking how much more will a God who loves each of us respond to his children who come to him with their needs.

When we pray we are talking to our Father who knows, understands and loves us. The keys to prayer are patience, persistence, and parent. God is a Father who cares for us. Trust Him!

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

- Monday, October 22**
Romans 4:20-25;
(Ps) Luke 1:69-75; Luke 12:13-21
- Tuesday, October 23**
Romans 5:12, 15B, 17-19, 20B-21;
Psalms 40:7-10, 17; Luke 12:35-38
- Wednesday, October 24**
Romans 6:12-18;
Psalms 124:1-8; Luke 12:39-48
- Thursday, October 25**
Romans 6:19-23;
Psalms 1:1-4, 6; Luke 12:49-53
- Friday, October 26**
Romans 7:18-25A; Psalms 119:66, 68, 76, 77, 93, 94; Luke 12:54-59
- Saturday, October 27**
Romans 8:1-11;
Psalms 24:1-6; Luke 13:1-9

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