



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

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It was a shocking and chilling event. It was during my years at Star of the Sea in Long Branch in the 1980's where my primary ministry was serving at Monmouth Medical Center. This was one of those dreaded calls to the emergency room. A woman had been stabbed to death in a parking lot in a quiet area of West End. When I arrived, there was the distraught husband, out of control and inconsolable. It was a murder that gripped the community with fear. Everyone was on edge.

Then, the truth came out. The poor woman, Anne Karas, stabbed twenty-two times, had been murdered by a young woman who was having an affair with the husband Walter, who helped her plan the whole thing. Not long after, the two moved in together. That was the plan. They couldn't move forward with their love until Anne was out of the picture. They decided she had to be killed. After a few months, guilt overcame the woman, Mary Claire Williams, and she finally confessed. With the truth out, justice was served.

How does that happen? How does one go from a normal, quiet young woman, after a chance meeting on a train, to end up viciously killing an innocent woman whom she barely knew? Evil. We have seen this sequence too often in recent events. People allow themselves to be so overcome with emotion that they become convinced, fully convinced, that someone they barely know, in some cases not all, must die.

As I ponder the murder of Charlie Kirk, there is something about this brutal act that troubles, even frightens me, even more than just the shooting. That is the reaction. There have been those, some in the public eye, others in what I call the jungle of social media, who actually celebrated his death. The issue is not whether you liked him or not, whether you agreed with him or not. The issue is life. Like you, I can think of many people with whom I disagree, in some cases strongly. However, NO ONE, NO ONE, deserves to die because someone else disagrees with them. NO ONE has that right. Anyone who cannot see that, in my opinion, has lost their humanity. I pray for them. I wish them well. I hope for their conversion, but they embraced darkness.

On several occasions, I have preached about the Seven Sorrows Rosary. I only recently became aware of this devotion. As I learned a little about its history, something profoundly struck me. While this devotion has been around for a long time, it has been most recently promoted by Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor of the Rwandan Holocaust. She travels the world preaching forgiveness, and promoting devotion to the Blessed Mother. However, an important part of the story is that when the Blessed Mother appeared in Kibeho in 1991, her message was for Rwanda and the world to turn to God and love one another. As tragically happens so often, her warnings were not heeded and in 1994, almost 1 million people were murdered in a genocidal blood bath. Hutu militia systematically murdered members of the Tutsi tribe. While the killing was mostly one sided, it follows the pattern of all civil wars—division, hatred, violence. In other words, a mind-set develops: the other side doesn't deserve to live. Sound familiar? Underneath that self-justifying hatred is the distorted belief that paradise is waiting just on the other side of the killing. Peace will follow when the other is eliminated. What's more is that this kind of violence is not against people on a battlefield who are shooting at you. It is just against people who have ideas that I don't like.

It deeply concerns me that this mentality is becoming more and more mainstream. There has been a lot written about what is called the "mob mentality." It is not rational, but purely emotional, like days in the wild West when a crowd decides to hang an innocent victim without a trial because in a frenzy they believe they are serving justice.

The last time I checked, Jesus taught us to live together, not to eliminate one another. The message of Kibeho is as relevant today as then. We must turn to God; listen to Him; and follow—before it's too late.

"His disciples realized what was about to happen, and they asked, 'Lord, shall we strike with a sword?' And one of them struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said in reply, 'Stop, no more of this!' Then He touched the servant's ear and healed him." (Luke 22:49-51)