God, Life, and Everything
"20...and counting"

I had truly hoped to write a slightly amusing piece about Pope Francis' visit to the United States, but then came the shooting at Umpqua Community College is Oregon. Nine victims plus the shooter died, and another nine were wounded. Like so many, when I heard the news, I thought, "Not again."

Another shooting.

Another damn shooting. That's the 20th school shooting this year. 20 and counting.

Just school shootings, mind you, not shootings, not mass shootings. School shootings.

What's more, this was the eighth school shooting of 2015 in which more than one person was shot. Since (but not including) the infamous Columbine massacre in 1999, there have been 72 school shootings with more than one person shot.

This does not include the shootings like the Charleston, South Carolina shooting of nine people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Want another little tidbit? More pre-K kids are shot each year than police officers in the line of duty. In 2013, 82 toddlers were shot dead while 27 cops suffered the same fate (though the average for police in the last 25 years is closer to 60).

The point is that schools are not a safe place, and a large part of that is gun violence. It will always be part of it.

Why?

Because we do not want it to change. We are so used to these shootings now that they no longer raise loud shouts of indignation. We just shrug and say, "Good thing it didn't happen at my kids' school."

After all, what are a few death if we get to keep things the way we want? Heck, the number of people who support "gun regulation" has been shrinking over the past few years. We don't want to be regulated!

Here are some things people I know have said in the past few days (I am paraphrasing in order to make it fit):

* Guns aren't the problem, mental health is.
* Passing more laws won't change anything - criminals don't obey laws.
* Cars kill more people than guns.
* Switzerland has more guns than us, but they don't have these shootings.
* If you take away our guns, we won't be able to protect ourselves against the government.

Yes, all of these have been said in the past few days. There's no way to address them in this short space, but my point is that people love their guns and really do not care if there are school shootings.

So what do we do?

1. Well, we yell at Congress to fund research. Why? Because Congress is blocking even government studies of gun violence. Did you know that? The government is not allowed to study the effects of gun violence? There are members of congress trying to ban doctors from discussing gun violence as a public health issue with their patients. Free speech, anyone?

So tell Congress to fund research - unless they are scared of the truth.

Research is going on, of course, through other sources. And that research tells us what is logical. The more guns, the more deaths. Without exception. Gun lovers cite Switzerland (which the Swiss hate), but they neglect to mention that Switzerland does have a higher gun death rate than its neighbors, and that Switzerland has incredibly strict gun laws which would drive the NRA to distraction. You can't have ammo in your home without a special permit. No open or concealed carry without a special permit. Mandatory testing and inspection. And so on.

   2. Yell at Congress to pass specific regulations. Where there are tougher regulations, gun violence is lower. But what regulations, if people are opposed to "gun regulation?" Oddly, while they oppose it in general, most Americans - most gun owners - support specific regulations. They support thorough background checks. They support bans on assault weapons. They support safe-storage regulations. They support 10-year bans on gun ownership for people convicted of any sort of violent crime.

   3. Yell at your friends. This is probably not a great idea, but I have taken to not putting up with the nonsensical arguments of my friends who think the 2nd Amendment is part of the 10 Commandments (and only the part they like). I argue that sense it says "well regulated," we can regulate them till the cows come home.

   When my friends tell me that guns aren't the problem, but mental health is, I point out that, yes, US mental health services are horrible. So why make it easier for the mentally ill to have guns? Indeed, if "guns don't kill people, people do," then I'm fine leaving the guns alone as long as we don't let any people get hold of them.

   When people say criminals don't obey laws, so why pass stricter gun laws, I say that by their reasoning, we shouldn't have laws against stealing or speeding - after all, people steal and speed. We have the laws because they do it a lot less when it is illegal. States with strict gun laws have less gun violence.

   When people says cars kill more people than guns, I say that's almost true. But we've made so many car restrictions (tougher licensing requirements, safety standards, airbags and seat belts...) that car fatalities in the last 40 years have dropped by something like 95%.

   I despise the argument about protecting us from our government. We are our government! And when politicians are the ones saying it, don't they realize that they are in government? Ugh. The US government has always regulated guns in some way. When the 2nd Amendment was made law, it included a clause about a "well regulated militia being necessary." This refers to the fact that, like Switzerland, all eligible men were required to be in the local militia which could be federalized by the president. People were required by law to muster in and provide their own gun. That's regulation by the government.

   Yes, I know, I sound angry and am probably rambling. But to think that we can't do anything about the gun violence in our country is absurd. The fact that we don't want to do anything about is sinful.