

God, Life, and Everything "A Prayer for the Terrorized"

If terrorism is, as Wikipedia tells us, "attacks by violent non-state actors for political motives," then terrorism is as old as humanity. On Good Friday, we read about how a Jewish terrorist named Barrabus was released in place of Jesus.

Unfortunately, this Holy Week probably saw more victims of terrorism than the one we read about in the bible. Since Palm Sunday, there have been 29 terror attacks around the world. Including only those attacks with more than 15 victims (and not including killed attackers), they were responsible for 157 deaths this week.

The most recent attack was yesterday and also the most horrible. 72 innocents, most women and children, were killed in Lahore, Pakistan at a children's playground. The intended targets were Christians celebrating Easter, but the majority of victims were Muslims.

In fact, the vast majority of terrorist attacks are Muslim. Judging by the coverage of the recent (and horribly tragic) attacks in Brussels, you might not realize how many attacks there are each week, or that westerners make up a very small percentage of those affected most directly.

That's because we tend to only focus on people who are close to us and - I hesitate to say it - more like us. By that I mean, Europe is closer to the US both physically and culturally. Thus, the 35 killed in Brussels receive more news coverage than the 72 killed in Pakistan on Easter Day, even though that was an attack on Christians.

When people are distant from us, we turn them into statistics, we shake our head, and we move on. If you're a news agency, you have another constraint which keeps you from giving attention to all the middle easterners killed by terrorists. It's called "localize, localize, localize." Time-tested tradition says that if you can't make a local connection in a news story, nobody will care.

But we - at least those of us who claim a faith - must care. Certainly, in Christianity we see ourselves as connected to everyone in the world. We are all God's children, we are all bound one to another. What happens to the street person in Peshawar affects the Wall Street exec. Their pain is my pain.

Even as terrorists come from every culture, religion and political persuasion, so do their victims. But where they are and who they are is irrelevant - they are part of us.

So, let us lift up in prayer not only the Belgians (and 4 Americans) who died this month, but all the hundreds of victims of terror. It won't make terrorism go away, but it can remind us of our common humanity.