

God, Life and Everything  
April 17, 2013

### **Boston On My Mind.**

Boston's on my mind.

Monday's Boston Marathon should have been a beautiful thing.

After all, distance runners are a special breed (to which I do not belong). They run endlessly without cheering crowds, they support each other even while competing against each other. They don't really see themselves as competing against each other but rather pushing themselves.

Marathon watchers are of a similar bent. They cheer for every runner coming in, from number one to number 27,000. They have no national pride - every runner is a hero just for trying.

It was all shattered when two bombs exploded, killing three and devastating more than a hundred. Reports at this point are that about two dozen spectators lost limbs.

While it is always wise to avoid leaping to conclusions, one can safely guess that this was yet another terrorist attack in a world that had known all too many.

For those of us who are not present at such events but hear about them (usually through the media) one of the common responses is to take in as much as we can through radio, television and most certainly through the internet. My sister lives there, so one of the first things I did was call her. She's fine.

One of the other portals to information and venting that wasn't available for previous disasters (not even the World Trade Center attack of 2001) is FaceBook. But it became an instant resource for millions. I was one of them.

It was what I found on FaceBook and other social media I checked which drives this column. Though I won't quote comments made by friends, there were two basic themes that played out repeatedly.

Theme 1: God will get the evil person or persons who did this. But only if I don't get to them first. And if I do, I will string them up and flail them alive.

Theme 2: Evil is and always has been there. But so has good. Over and over, I saw a quote from the late Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood) which summarizes this theme:

*"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of "disaster," I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world."*

Mr. Rogers got it right. There are always helpers in the world. There are always **more** who are willing to put their lives in danger to do good than there are to do harm. Yes, the harm the few do is horrible and unconscionable, but the good that we can do in response neutralizes the harm.

No, it has the power to overwhelm the evil.

Evil acts are often caused by people who have been harmed themselves. They give up on humanity. They see the evil done to them and decide the only way to fight it

is with more evil. Their way is Theme 1. Make the enemy pay and make him pay dearly, the dirty rotten coward.

For the record, I do not believe that the perpetrators of these acts are necessarily cowards - at least not in the conventional sense. After all, when you make an IED, there's a very good chance it will blow you up. Many bombers are more than willing to die while they perpetrate terror. The point is to make others as afraid as possible, and they will use whatever means necessary to achieve this goal.

So, even though I feel sadness and anger at this sort of attack, it is unrealistic to think that "making them pay," will somehow deter future bombings. If someone is going to commit a crime like this, they already expect retaliation. Maybe they even welcome it because it will make them a martyr.

Of course, the authorities must do everything possible to find those responsible and get them off the streets; that is their duty. But it is not our duty to live in outrage, to seek vengeance.

So, what **do** we do? Change our focus.

Those who are caught up in Theme 1 are focussing on the bombs. They're focussing on that 78-year-old runner who is shown on the news tumbling to the ground as the bomb goes off - over and over. They are focussing on the bloody streets and the shattered glass. The more they focus on that, the more the anger builds. The more they give up on humanity and cry, "What is wrong with people these days?"

Change your focus to the helpers. Look at the man in the white hat who is helping a man whose legs have been blown off. That man, a new US citizen, lost a son to violence and wanted to make sure someone else didn't lose their son.

Focus on those yellow vests of police and physicians running to the explosion sites. Focus on the runners and bystanders who stopped running and helped those who had fallen.

And then focus on the people around you - there are helpers everywhere you look - not in dramatic circumstances but every day. People doing good. They fill your heart and help you know that in the face of evil, the only thing that can make evil win is if we succumb to it. They help you know that it is better to be hurt helping someone than to have a whole body while committing evil.

Once you get your focus right, then you can also become one who helps. Even in little ways. You and I can redeem the evil acts by overwhelming them every day with acts of goodness and kindness. It won't stop evil actions - they've been going on a long time - but it will help the world know that the real power is not in harming others but in helping.