

WHEN HATRED COMES TO TOWN: LOVE CONQUERS SIN

Where the great elbow of **Cape Cod** thrusts out into the blue waters of Nantucket Sound at West Harwich, MA, lies **Old Mill Point**, a 94-year-old private enclave spread out across forty acres that once was home to my maternal grandparents. We loved our summer visits in that idyllic spot, but only later in life did I learn that the owners' association had initially forbidden Jewish families from purchasing homes. My grandfather was one of a small group who objected, and the rule was rescinded in the 1950's. Much closer to home, many today are unaware that St. Paul's **Hillcrest Golf Club** (among a handful of city golf courses facing closure), was established in 1945 largely by Jewish residents who had been barred from other country clubs. Such regulations were a product of their time—thankfully that time passed! These are examples from a bygone era. But inexplicably, as evidenced by the chants “Jews will not replace us,” far more insidious views are present and active in 2017. When you think of **Charlottesville, Virginia**, what should first come to mind?

The **University of Virginia** (founded in 1819 in Charlottesville) is one of the great public universities in this nation, and the flagship of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Perhaps this is because 93% of admitted applicants ranked in the top 10% of their high school classes! *U.S. News & World Report* ranks it as the 24th best national university and the second best public university (only outranked by U Cal-Berkeley). Seniors vie to spend their final year in one of the 54 coveted 198-year-old dorm rooms facing “the Lawn,” though once there they must walk outdoors just to access the restroom! But such is the desire to be living in a space that has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, amidst a university steeped in American history and neo-classical architecture.

The singular driving force behind the establishment of the University of Virginia was **President Thomas Jefferson**, who personally drew sketches of how he envisioned the campus layout. In a letter to a British scientist by the name of Joseph Priestly, Jefferson wrote: “We wish to establish in the upper country of Virginia, and more centrally for the State, a University on a plan so broad and liberal and modern, as to be worth patronizing with the public support, and be a temptation to the youth of other States to come and drink of the cup of knowledge and fraternize with us.”

Into this milieu marched white supremacists, white nationalists and neo-Nazi's, almost exclusively young men seething with hatred for those who see the world differently than do they. How did a mere twenty-year-old young man become so jaded? Where did it originate? I am neither going to make the convenient inference that it came from his family, nor presume that he was parked in his basement trolling the dark side of the internet for hours on end, though I would not be particularly surprised by the latter. There could be many factors, but I assure you of this—he had to have encountered like-minded views in others, such that he found a place where he “belonged,” even if it was among fellow hate mongers. Accepting the premise that all persons share equal dignity does not preclude the existence of legitimate differences among us, be they political or spiritual. Nor does our equal dignity insulate us from the views of others, some of which may offend our most deeply held beliefs. I am thinking particularly of various artistic displays deliberately created to offend people of faith. Such is the price of living in a pluralistic and free society.

But some views are so abhorrent that they must never be framed under the rubric of “legitimate political dialogue,” not when our foundational principles are disdained. Once the inherent dignity afforded every human person is questioned, or worse yet, denied— we have regressed as a nation. Racism is evil, it is a **serious sin** and it must be stated unequivocally. People do not hate so violently unless they are radically uncomfortable with their own lives. Last week's events brought to light the horrific hatred that boils in some people's hearts. The graphic video of a car deliberating crashing into a crowd left me speechless and I'm amazed more were not killed. A surge of hatred cost the lives of an innocent 29-year-old woman and two state troopers who died in a helicopter crash while patrolling the area. It harms our national unity, precarious enough as it is. We must all do better, from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to 239 Selby Avenue to Main Street, USA.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the USCCB, issued a statement in the name of all his brother bishops:

“The abhorrent acts of hatred on display in Charlottesville are an attack on the unity of our nation and therefore summon us all to fervent prayer and peaceful action. The bishops stand with all who are oppressed by evil ideology and entrust all who suffer to the prayers of St. Peter Claver as we approach his feast day. We also stand ready to work with all people of goodwill for an end to racial violence and for the building of peace in our communities.” Our Catechism could not be clearer that equality rests essentially upon our dignity as human persons. Echoing the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (29 § 2), the Church teaches: “Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design.” As human beings, we share the same nature and origin. The tragic events in Charlottesville must never obscure that fact.

- A small Catholic Church in **Somaliland** (a *de facto* independent region within Somalia), closed for 30 years, reopened last month. It turned out to be short-lived, as the Muslim majority again demanded its closure within a week of its reopening. Pray for Christians in Somalia, as they have no rights whatsoever to worship publicly following this latest setback to religious freedom.
- I read a sobering article about **Irish teenagers** who simply don’t “do religion” anymore. An entire generation of Irish teens has grown up hearing little about the Catholic Church besides scandal and decline, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Catholic Church there is trying to increase outreach efforts. I was delighted to see the **National Evangelization Teams (NET)** at Mass last Sunday, prior to the start of their training for the upcoming year. These vital youth programs deserve our full support.
- A **Royal Commission in Australia** has recommended that laws be changed such that priests would be forced to report to law enforcement situations in which abuse of minors was confessed, thus violating the sacred **confessional seal**. Canon Law uses the Latin word “nefas” to describe how serious is the breaking of the seal. Its best English equivalents include impious deed or crime, especially something contrary to divine law. Archbishop Denis Hart of Melbourne said he’d rather go to jail than break the seal of the confessional.
- I am most grateful that some parishioners have answered the call to serve as lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. We continue to welcome more men and women to this service.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector