

## **Abortion doctor shooting reveals loss of moral compass**

By Rev. Paul Viggiano

Posted: 06/04/2009 04:05:11 PM PDT

During the moral and political decay of France in the early 1800s, political economist Frederic Bastiat wrote, "When law and morality contradict each other, the citizen has the cruel alternative of either losing his moral sense or losing his respect for the law." The killing of late-term abortion doctor George Tiller, while he served as an usher during a church service, is a horrifying example of a citizen losing both.

Twenty-first century America, similar to 19th century France, has lost its ethical and legislative moral compass. Laws are ungodly, unenforced or snubbed altogether. Border laws are meaningless; we exterminate our infants by the millions; in 2004 the mayor of San Francisco issued marriage certificates to homosexual couples in defiance of the laws of his own state. We are truly entering into a time of unprincipled civil mayhem, and vigilantism is an insidious temptation that must be resisted.

The isolated radical behavior of Scott Roeder, who allegedly killed Dr. Tiller, is patently unbiblical and immoral. It was during a darker political period that the apostle Paul instructed Christians to subject themselves to the governing authorities. Whatever we may think of the current moral corruptions of our judicial, legislative and executive branches, they pale in comparison to Nero. There is a proper method of dealing with a society's ills that doesn't include shooting ushers as they seat people in church.

God has graciously given Americans a peaceful means to change laws and displace ungodly leaders. Citizens needn't attempt a coup d' tat and violently rush the White House or Capitol Hill; they merely need to vote. After all, the United States does not have a king who wields sovereign power. Strictly speaking, the closest thing we have to a king is not the president, House, Senate or Supreme Court but the people themselves. The president and legislators are like CEOs and the people like a board of directors who displace them as they see fit. This is the process and it must be respected.

From a pastoral perspective my primary concern is not with the Scott Roeders of the world. There is a much more subtle disease festering within the borders of a nation that is losing its sense of self - one that doesn't want to be under God but can't quite define just who it wants to be under. Roeder is merely an exaggerated personification of a nation of people who are beginning to dislike each other.

The unity naturally engendered by speaking a similar language, marrying the opposite sex or protecting innocent babies has hit the exits. This ethnic and moral tribalism is tearing our country apart. It is becoming increasingly difficult to love our neighbors when we see our neighbors engaging in behaviors ranging from unhealthy to atrocious while the magistrate plays his fiddle.

The great 19th century Princeton theologian Charles Hodge warned that governments that fail to rule their people in a proper and godly manner are tempting their citizens to take the law into their own hands. For years we've been electing leaders who make laws that tempt us to hold our neighbors in derision. Nothing will put my children at each other's throats as much as being a father who refuses to properly administer justice.

Nonetheless, ungodly laws never justify ungodly behavior. The pro-life movement is largely a Christian movement. I am not a pacifist and recognize there is a time for war. But the type of warfare in the pro-life movement is a warfare of thoughts and ideas. It is not a wrestling with flesh and blood but against wickedness itself.

Christians are called to participate in the political process with zeal and conviction. If, after all, the closest thing we have to a king is the people, it is the responsibility of the people to collectively operate as a king submitting to the king of kings. But as individuals we are still called to love our neighbors - even the ones with whom we vehemently disagree. Christians must overcome the natural antipathy they find welling up in their souls toward their neighbors because their leaders have no sense of true justice.

The only hope for individuals and the nations they form is a humble faithful trust and submission to Christ as the savior of souls. If there is no faith in Christ as savior, there is no hope of Christ being Lord. We would do well to learn from the image of Jesus given by John in the Revelation while considering how the world is to be redeemed:

John is told to "Behold the Lion." We like the power of that image - so successfully used by C. S. Lewis in "The Chronicles of Narnia." But when John turns, he doesn't see a lion but a lamb - a gentle, harmless beast of sacrifice. It is the lamb that redeems - not with bullets, but with his own blood.

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