

Chaplain's Bulletin September 7, 2025



Dear folks,

Here are some continuing thoughts about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

Intellectual humility: Don't be too quick to be too certain that we see the whole picture. What if there is more to the story? I learned this the hard way: experiences of feeling very certain and finding out I was very wrong. Things can seem obvious and still be wrong. This will make me more reluctant to go too far to get my agenda.

Humility of Agency: Not be so certain that we are the solution, such that we decide we can violate boundaries rather than fail. If we try honorably and fail, someone might launch a successful attempt from the ashes our failure. Remember that actions done with good intentions may have bad consequences. Sometimes we even cause the opposite of what we intend. This goes with Moral Humility: Not being so certain that we will always do the right thing, lest we trust ourselves with too much power (Think of why Gandalf refused to take the one ring: "I would intend to use it for good..."). When boundaries, accountability, checks and balances on us get in the way of what we want to do it is frustrating, but not necessarily bad.

People like Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Robespierre all apparently thought they were fixing things and would make a paradise on earth, and so they thought they could take some serious moral shortcuts to do so. They made hell on earth and brought untold suffering. We must fight monsters without becoming monsters. As Jesus said, we must be "clever as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt 10:16)." We must work toward a better world but always remember that we are not the savior (We have a Savior).

Seeing the big picture: I can be okay with losing today so that I could win tomorrow. If I think in terms of years, decades, or even centuries, I can be content to work bit by bit for a better world, and a temporary loss is not a catastrophe. This would give me less temptation to drastic, violent action.

Support Law enforcement: Of course, hold bad actors accountable, but when one is accused, that officer should get the same due process and presumption of innocence that we would want for ourselves if we were accused of a terrible crime. Those who do their jobs deserve our support and gratitude for the tremendous sacrifices they make for our sake. Let us send clear, consistent messages that we value and admire obeying the law and respecting law enforcement officers, and believe in holding criminals accountable.

Fill ourselves with stories of people who solved problems and accomplished great things without resorting to violence. Sometimes physical force is necessary, especially in war, law enforcement, or self-defense, but let us emphasize our admiration for those who do great things through other means and let us aspire to imitate them. Tim Scott just released the book "One Nation Always Under God" and it is full of such stories. If there were more people like those depicted in the book, and if we as a society aspired to be like them, perhaps that would help people focus their energies more peacefully (reading the lives of the saints doesn't hurt either).

Next, the most important part.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim