



Reflection in memory of the victims of the Nova Scotia shooting

My dear brothers and sisters,

I hope and pray that you are all doing good, and that you are all safe, along with the people that you love.

May Almighty God protect us and keep us all safe in this time of great challenge; may He welcome into His Kingdom all the victims of violence and those who took their lives, forgiving them for the insanity of their actions.

Today I would like to invite all of us to pray in a special way for all the people who have been killed this past weekend.

As Christians we pray for all of them, leaving the judgment to God and hoping that in His Mercy He may always look for the lost sheep, always reaching out to set us free from the chains of darkness, sin and death.

Along with the victims, we pray also those who were harmed in their bodies, in their minds and in their souls by this storm of violence, anger, pain, sadness and despair.

Too many hard things happened this past weekend, as this terrible tragedy hit our beautiful Province of Nova Scotia.

A poor man, mentally sick, Mr. Gabriel Wortman, committed terrible actions, killing and harming many people, before he himself was killed by the police, in the middle of the race toward his human destruction.

It is impossible to understand for what reason all this took place, probably because there isn't a reason.

The only thing that I can think is that the heart of Gabriel was overcome by darkness; the darkness that maybe took advantage of his mental frailty. The darkness that is still hunting all of us. Just this afternoon I received on my cell phone an alert message, saying to stay at home because of another shooting. Maybe you received the same message or heard about it in the news.

What is happening, Lord? Be our defence, be our strength as we fight against darkness with the light of Your Love. Keep us safe, who are defenseless without Your presence and Your help, in front of the evil that besieges our souls!

I believe that for a long time we have been taught by the news that this kind of tragic events, these mass murders, can happen in the world. And I also believe that at this point we are all convinced that they don't make any sense, but they are only explosions of destructiveness.

What I would never have thought is that the same could happen so close to us, becoming a tragic part of our lives, terrible and painful for those who have been touched by the killing, and terrible and distressing for those whom this event has taught to be fearful.

The human heart is a mystery; only God can understand it.

It is a mystery of poverty that, when it accepts to be loved, it is filled with light and is reborn; but when it refuses, starts to give up to darkness and then finally it dies. It is a long journey and it takes a long time to learn how to accept to be loved and to love. Maybe it doesn't sound much, but in my understanding, it is the only way that we have to fight against darkness, and the despair that darkness brings with itself.

Right now, Love is our greatest strength to push back the threat to our confidence that we live in a peaceful land. It is our only hope and resource for the building of God's Kingdom on earth.

I am grateful for all those who expressed their sorrow and condolences in these past few days. It was beautiful, in its own way, to witness the open sharing of the people who have been affected by this tragedy, to hear the bells of all churches ringing in memory of the beloved dead, to listen to the speeches of solidarity and acknowledgment of the pain, to watch the wonderful vigil broadcasted in television...

I am grateful for the police forces that protect us, especially to the young woman, RCMP constable Heidi Stevenson, who offered the ultimate sacrifice of her life, along with her family. My gratitude goes also to RCMP constable Chad Morrison, who was wounded in the line of duty. Both of them doing all that they could to keep us safe.

I apologize for taking so long to write you this week. I wasn't even sure that I could. Never as before I have been a witness of such a strong fighting between light and darkness.

We have to continue to remain focused on God's Love, which is our light, walking with faith, maybe even stubbornness in the moments when we feel it's harder.

We are so little, so frail to the point that our lives can be taken from us in an instant by a senseless action of a poor lost soul. We have seen it clearly this past weekend.

Let us hide in the embrace of our Father in Heaven, because only in God our souls rest in peace and secure.

I entrust this letter to you with a request: that we may all lift our souls to God, and pray that He may pour His Love, His light on earth, protecting, consoling and strengthening the hearts of all.

May the Lord bless you and keep you always safe,
Fr Francesco

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