



and Perseverance

An Insanity of Rationality

This spiritual disease thrives on violence and calls it good. *by Joan Chittister, OSB*

THERE IS A MADNESS abroad in the land, hiding behind the Constitution, brazenly ignoring the suffering of many who, over the years, have died in its defense, and operating under the banner of rationality. It's a rare form of spiritual disease that thrives on violence and calls it good.

They want a proper response to violence, they tell us, and, most interesting of all, they insist that only violence can control violence. If "the good guys" have guns, this argument goes, "the bad guys" won't be able to do any harm.

This particular insanity of rationality argues that violence is an antidote to violence. Then why do we find scant proof of that anywhere? Why, for instance, hasn't it worked in Syria, we might ask. And where was the good of it in Iraq, the land of our own misadventures, where the weapons of mass destruction we went to disarm did not even exist and the people who died in the crossfire of that insanity had not harbored bin Laden. So how much *peace through violence* have all the good guys on all sides really achieved?

The insanity of rationality says it is only reasonable to arm a population to defend itself against itself. And so, day after day, the level of violence rises around us as hunting rifles and small pistols turn into larger and larger weapons of our private little wars.

Clearly this particular piece of childish logic has yet to quell the gang violence in Chicago. It didn't even work on an army base in Texas where, we must assume, the place was loaded with legal weapons.

What's more, it does nothing to save the lives of the good guy's children, who pick up the good guy's guns at the age of 2 and 3 and 4 years old

and turn them on the good guy fathers who own them.

So the mayhem only increases while white men in business suits insist that their civil rights have been impugned, their right to defend themselves has been taken from them, and more guns, larger guns, insanely damaging guns are the answer. Instead of hiring more police officers, they argue that arming students and teachers themselves, nonprofessionals, will do more to maintain calm and control the damage in situations specifically designed to cause chaos than waiting for security personnel would do.

It is that kind of creeping irrationality that threatens us all.

And in the end, it is a sad commentary on our society. We have now become the most violent country in the world while our industries collapse, our educational system declines, women are denied healthcare, our infrastructure is falling apart, and there's more money to be made selling drugs in this country than in teaching school. No wonder gun pushers fear for their lives and sell the drug that promises the security it cannot possibly give while the country is becoming more desperate for peace and security by the day.

The hope? The hope lies only in those who refuse to feed this addiction to violence. These are they who remember again that we follow the one who said "Peter, put away your sword" when it was his own life that was at stake.

The hope is you and me. Or not. ■

Joan Chittister, OSB, a Sojourners contributing editor, is executive director of Benetvision, author of 47 books, and co-chair of the Global Peace Initiative of Women.

The numbers above represent U.S. gun deaths every two months, based on the National Vital Statistics Reports from the CDC. Firearms killed 30,470 people in 2010, the latest year with complete data. Graphic by Ken Davis.