

Newtown, CT Tragedy- Special Homily
December 16, 2012
Father Frank Matera

Dear friends, this is not the homily I prepared for this weekend. How could it be given the awful tragedy that occurred in Newtown on Friday?

What happened this week is beyond all understanding. There is no way to explain the horror of this event. There is no way to give it meaning. There is no way to escape the pain and suffering it has brought to so many people.

The loss of life is always tragic. But the loss of young and innocent life is beyond tragedy. We don't expect events such as this to happen so close to home. We watch and we see it happen somewhere else. And because it happens so often in other places, there is a danger of becoming numb to it. But when it happens close to home, we are overwhelmed with sorrow. When it happens in a place we know, to people we know, we are overwhelmed with grief. We cannot comprehend or understand what has happened.

The tragedy of this event is multiplied by the time of year that occurs. During this Advent season, we have been waiting and hoping for the coming of Christ in Christmas mystery. Little children have been waiting and hoping for the coming of Christmas, a Christmas many of them will never see.

What are we to say? What can we say? First, and most importantly, our hearts go out to the parents, the relatives, and friends of all who lost their life in this senseless tragedy. Second, we unite ourselves to them by sharing in their sorrow and pain, and we pledge our prayers to them. Third, and most importantly, we rededicate ourselves to our families and friends; we rededicate ourselves to a life without violence.

People will respond to this tragedy in different ways, and that is not surprising. For some, it will be a moment of anger and sorrow they will never overcome. To others, it will be a moment of deep and profound questioning: Is life ultimately without meaning? Is my faith useless and empty?

If we are confused today, that is to be expected. If we complain to God and ask why this happened, that is to be expected. For, there are moments such as this when we cannot explain such horrific events. There are moments such as this when the only thing and the best thing we can do is to recommit ourselves to our children and to each other. There are moments such as this when we can only stand in

solidarity with each other against the power and force of evil and recommit ourselves to all that is good. There are moments such as this when we must believe and trust that good will triumph over evil. There are moments such as this when words fail, and it better to say too little than to say too much. And, so we pray.

Father in heaven, our hearts are filled with an inexpressible sadness because we do not and we cannot understand this tragedy. And so we ask you to protect us and our children from all evil. We ask you to free us from violence and the power of sin. We ask to look kindly on the families of those who suffered such loss. Grant them strength to endure this awful tragedy, and grant each of us the grace to live our lives in holiness, free from all evil and violence. Amen