

# World violence is not an acceptable tool or solution

## FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. TIMOTHY F. BABCOCK

In recent weeks, many of us have been shaken by the destruction of TWA Flight 800 and, only shortly after that, the bomb explosion at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. As I write this column, no responsibility for either of these events has been determined. These two events have brought home even more strongly the sad reality of violence in our society today.

We find ourselves deeply troubled because of the amount of violence in the world today. So many groups choose violence as a means of exercising influence and control in many diverse situations. Not only in Israel, but in Japan, Bosnia, New York, Oklahoma City,

parts of Africa, Northern Ireland and many other areas of the world.

Unfortunately, violence is all too real not only on the public scene and not only involving terrorists or criminals. Spousal abuse and child abuse face us even in our homes. Local crimes of violence are one of the highest concerns of most of our society today.

What is even more sad is that those who choose violence as a weapon have no reservation about directing it at innocent people. People of ethics have always distinguished between combatants and non-combatants in a struggle. While any death is a tragedy, there may be a justification when both people are armed military people. When innocent civilians, people who are just on being about daily business, or in their homes, are injured and killed, it is even more tragic.

Most of those who will be reading this column, including the writer, are not in a position to do much about violence on the world scene, or at the level of the greater society to which we belong. The only place we can address this issue is in the context of our own attitudes and behavior. I suggest that all of us need to examine the extent to which we consider violence acceptable in any context of our life.

More and more I am convinced that we need to consciously make a commitment to a philosophy that "violence is not an acceptable solution" to virtually any problem. With very, very few exceptions, violence does not solve things, it increases the problem. I come to this position not only from a religious standpoint, but from one of basic sanity in our life.

It is only when we are willing to renounce the choice of evil and violent means, such as terrorist acts and abuse

of other people, that we can even begin to move our society toward more acceptable ways of approaching differences and resolving problems. Until then, we will continue to add to the problem.

I realize that this philosophy faces its greatest test when we are confronted with violence ourselves. Do we then meet violence with violence? If we do, and even more if we justify more than appropriate self-defense, we only perpetuate the problem. That is what happens when we encounter centuries old feuds between tribes, nations or even families.

Violence is not an acceptable solution. Violence is not an acceptable tool to get what we want, or to settle grievances. On the personal level, or the societal level, violence cannot be used to make a point. As citizens in a republic, we must assume the responsibility for conveying this message to the leaders.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, the great prophet of non-violence, reminds us that violence is first a matter of the heart, not of the action. A commitment not to accept violent actions or solutions involves first a change in attitude and values, a turning of the mind and heart to the conscious choice of non-violence. Only then can we expect to have an impact by our actions.

It may take longer to resolve differences if violence is not an acceptable solution. We may have to endure more along the way.

"We will need to improve our negotiations and mediation skills. But somewhere we must begin to change the trend. Like it or not, the solution begins, and remains, with us!"

The Rev. Timothy F. Babcock is pastor at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Rochester. He can reach him at the church: (810) 651-7488.

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## COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

### WOMEN'S FORUM

Southfield-based Family Victory Fellowship will sponsor its fourth annual women's conference, entitled "Breakthrough '96," from Sept. 5 to 7.

Emphasis is to address and meet the challenges faced by women today regarding divorce, raising children, relationships and gaining financial freedom through wise shopping tips.

A Saturday workshop is planned especially for teens.

The free forum will include local and nationally-known speakers and teachers: Sylvia Jordan, wife of Pastor Larry Jordan, Family Victory Fellowship Church; Francina Norman of Dallas; and Shanna Johnson of Harbour Island, Bahamas.

The daily schedule is 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday through Saturday with evening sessions at 7 p.m. The location is the Best Western Executive Hotel, 31525 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills. Call the church at (810) 354-1990.

### HIGH HOLIDAYS

Cong. B'nai Moshé in West Bloomfield will offer a multidimensional evening at a pre-High Holiday Selichot program and service on Saturday, Sept. 7. The evening begins with a dessert reception at 8:45 p.m. followed

by a video screening of the Academy Award nominee for Best Short Documentary, "One Survivor Remembers," featuring Gerda Weissman Klein. Rabbi Elliot Pechter will lead a discussion about the film and its spiritual message.

The climax of the evening will be a participatory pre-High Holiday prayer service called Selichot. The service will include a ceremony in which the synagogue's Torah scrolls will be dressed in special white mantles for the fall holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Prayers and readings will be offered in Hebrew and English. The public is invited. Call (810) 788-0800.

Temple Kol Ami in West Bloomfield will begin a Selichot Children/Family Program at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 7, to celebrate the beginning of the High Holiday season.

Preschool through eighth-grade students and their families are invited to take part in the activities, which include the changing of the Torah covers to white for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

A dinner will follow. An adult study group will follow; the topic is "Who does God do anyway... filling all those hours." A coffee will follow at 8:30 p.m. The Selichot service will begin at 10 p.m. Call (810) 661-0040.

### ECKANKAR SEMINAR

Attention, Oakland County residents: The 1996 Michigan Eckankar Regional Seminar will be held Sept. 7-8 at the Thomas Edison Inn, 600 Thomas Edison Parkway, Port Huron.

The two-day weekend features a newcomer's workshop, talks, creative arts, workshops, roundtable discussion, panel discussions, youth activities and worship service. Guest speaker will be Jerry Leonard, Co-RESA from Virginia.

Participants from all walks of life will share stories and experiences as they explore and discover the spiritual purpose of life. Eckankar, the Religion of the Light and Sound of God, teaches how to have a firsthand experience in spiritual matters through contemplation.

To reserve a room for the weekend seminar, call the Thomas Edison Inn at (810) 984-8000 by Aug. 23.

For more information, call Helen North, Michigan Satsang Society public information director, at (313) 243-6728.

### FAMILY FUNDAY

Brightmoor Tabernacle will host a Family Funday Sunday School Rally on Sunday, Sept. 8. An 8 a.m. continental breakfast in Fellowship Hall will be followed at 9:15 a.m. by puppets with Jim and Sandy Jones and by WB sports director Chuck Swirsky, a Salina resident, who will share his faith in God.

A balloon launch will follow at 10 m. Sunday School is for all family members, not just children. The church is at 26555 Franklin Road, Southfield.

■ APPLES & HONEY

The Agency for Jewish Education will host its 10th annual Apples and Honey and Lots, Lots More from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 8.

Kids can make holiday crafts, meet the Bee-man, see Noah and play with his exotic animals, stop at the Super Chai-way for computer fun and games, make their own shofars, play festival games and lots, lots more.

See COMMUNITY MESSENGER, B8

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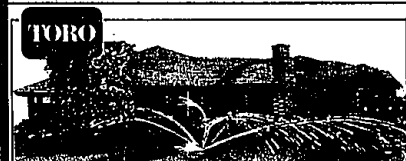


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