Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

When people want to punish law-breakers, even with capital punishment, they often say they are upholding the value of justice. When people fight against common sense gun regulation (or about any other curtailment of their activities), they say they are fighting for individual freedom. When people condemn homosexuality, they say they are promoting morality (based on their interpretation of scripture).

All of us agree that justice, freedom, and morality are good things. But human beings are experts at justifying their actions (sometimes awful actions) by claiming these good values as what motivates them. People are so good at this that they can rationalize anything, even the most horrendous things. The crucifixion of Jesus is a prime example for us Christians. The Jan. 6 attack on the capitol is a more recent example.

So how are we to guard against justifying harmful behavior by wrapping it in a cloak of virtue?

It seems to me we need to cut through all the arguments and rationalizations and explanations for why we do what we do, and always ask the simple question, "Is this particular action helping or hurting this particular person?" If we ask that question, and are unsure about the answer, the other person can usually give us a clue. The farther away we get from this question, the more easily love becomes a debatable theory or idea, rather than a clear, concrete action.

~ *Peace,*

Fr. Garry