

After Orlando: To make myself safe



Women hold candles during a June 13 vigil in Los Angeles for the victims of the mass shooting at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla. A lone gunman, pledging allegiance to the Islamic State terrorist group, killed 49 people early June 12 at the nightclub. (CNS photo/Lucy Nicholson, Reuters)

There is no doubt the Orlando shooting has stirred up emotions and questions. Some of us want to know why, while others are more concerned with what we can do now. I spent most of the week just being angry.

As Catholics we know to pray and help in any way we can. Maybe you attended a prayer vigil. Maybe you were in the Orlando area and gave blood. Maybe you donated to an emergency organization. Sometimes none those feels like enough. But what could I do up here in Baltimore other than pray (which, by the way, is a completely valid response). Some people are really good prayer warriors and that is their gift. I'm a different kind of warrior.

As a veteran, I've been trained to think a little differently than most. Which doesn't mean I want to sit here and pick apart the tactical details of the Orlando tragedy; there are enough "analysts" who do that on TV and radio. My response had to be super practical but helpful for others as well. What could I do to help myself be safer and help those around me? I didn't have an answer until I checked my email.

What popped up in my email was a notice about a seminar at Krav Maga of Maryland where I train already. Not just any seminar, but one designed to respond to Active Shooter scenarios. Krav Maga is not a martial art so much as it is a system designed to get you home safely. I've always appreciated the training as super practical and teaching me mentally and physically how to be safer.

While we did practice fighting as the last option, it was always prefaced by the context of getting home and saving lives in the process. Just because I took the training doesn't mean I will walk around being suspicious of everyone while itching for a fight. Rather, I have more confidence in my ability to get home safely and help those around me. Staying safe doesn't always mean fighting. Sometimes it's running. Sometimes it's hiding. Both are perfectly fine. But sometimes it may mean fighting.

I want to help people and I would never want to be in a position where I don't know what to do in order to save lives. I'm not a doctor, nurse, EMT, police officer or SWAT. I'm a veteran who cares about the people around me. I'm a lay person whose protection sensor is set to high. I'm a warrior.