

Goodness and virtue must not give way to violence and fear

The following remarks were delivered by Bishop Denis J. Madden at the Ecumenical Service of Healing for Baltimore City, held Jan. 7 at Coppin State University in Baltimore.

God tells us something very important in the First Book of the Old Testament, that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

In this Christmas season we are reminded that God came among us and shares in our humanity and at the same time we have a share in his divinity, which means we can do “Godly” things – things that are beyond our human inclinations.

In 2015 Pope Francis visited “Ground Zero” in New York where the two towers fell, taking over 2,000 innocent lives. At that site, the pope reflected on the horror of the violence committed on 9/11 – the pain and fear that spread throughout the land. But at the same time he reflected on the **goodness and virtue** that rose from the ashes of those towers. While hundreds were trying desperately to flee those burning buildings and save their lives, others were fighting their way up the stairs to try and see if they might save lives – the lives of strangers.

Stories also abound of how some who could have saved their own lives stayed behind to comfort and give strength to coworkers and friends trapped in the buildings.

Goodness and virtue would not give way to violence and fear.

Just weeks ago here in Baltimore, a young man was killed in a robbery. The morning of his funeral the parents of this victim of violence sent word to me that they wanted prayers offered at the funeral Mass for those who had taken the life of this, their only child.

At the end of the funeral, as the coffin was placed in the hearse, the parents said their lives now would never be the same without Alex and quickly went on to say that the lives of the parents of those who took their son’s life also would never be

the same and for this they were sorry.

Goodness and virtue would not give way to violence in Baltimore that day.

It's not so much a question of how can we change those who commit violent acts as it is a question of how can I live a virtuous and good and decent life in the midst of daily tragedies.

How can we - not by our words alone but by our actions - let the world know that **virtue and goodness** are on the rise in Baltimore?

If parents of a murdered son can show such goodness, can we not in our own humble way strive to make Baltimore a light to the nations?

Every loving act, every act of kindness and forgiveness will help demolish those walls of violence. I may not be able to control others but I do have a say over my own thoughts, words, and actions.

We must and we can do this - for my dear dear friends we are made in the image and likeness of God.