

SEPTEMBER 12 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

Paul starts out with a confession, and it's a really grim confession. I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was a man of violence. Paul went to the leaders of the synagogue in Jerusalem and asked them for letters, authority to persecute all those who believed in the way. Believing in the way were believers in Jesus Christ. Paul became a one-man wrecking crew.

Can't imagine how he would go all the way from Jerusalem on the way to Damascus, and then he had that conversion experience. But until then, he was breathing fire and brimstone.

It seems so strange that in the name of religion, a religion which is supposed to profess a love of God and to show God's love to people, should use the same topic or same theme in order to become violent to other people. Violence seems to be right in our very DNA. And sometimes it just absolutely shocks me how, in the name of religion, we can not only brand a certain type of people as being evil, as being cruel, as being people that need to be wiped off the face of the earth. But it is true. It happened in those days, and it happens still today.

Yesterday, the 11th of September, was the infamous 9/11, a time when the Twin Towers in New York City were brought down. The very next day, in papers all across the world, in English and in French, in Spanish and Italian, in German and in Hindi, they asked one question: "Why did these men do such a terrible thing?" Now, all of us asked that, but they went on to explain. They said, "Why did these men do these things when these men were so intelligent as to synchronize four planes to attack at the same time? Why on earth did these men do these things when they were so talented, when they could fly planes, commercial jetliners, and move from one place to another? They could easily have commanded any salary they wanted. They could have lived their lives in peace, in luxury, and comfort. Why did they do this?"

You know, 25 years ago, that happened. Till today, we really do not have an answer. There are so many explanations. They are like an onion with layers after layers after layers. And all we can do is to peel them, and we don't come to an end.

But we have some idea in our Gospel today, where Jesus says in order to condemn, in order to correct, in order to change somebody's way of living, first of all, you need to change yourself. I can't come and tell somebody else that they need to change their life when I cannot see my fault, my error, and my need to become a person of integrity myself. And Jesus will use that absolutely outrageous example: How can you remove the speck from your neighbour's eye when you've got a log in your own eye as well?

And sociologists have studied it and studied the whole case over and over again. And they said, you know, in the Middle East, and for that matter in the Far East—whether it's China, Cambodia, Vietnam—all these places, they have got an animosity because of one reason only: it is because the West thinks that they are superior. And because of that animosity, they will lead to terrorism.

And what is this? I in Canada over here and in the Western world think we've got some great values we live by. And the values that we live by are freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of movement, freedom to move from one province to another province with nobody bothering to contact or ask us why. We've given, though we've got a long way to go, equality to women and giving them respect.

Now what we want to do is to take the same values and insert them into the values and customs and traditions and religion and a way of life on a different culture and a different tradition and a different country altogether. And we have to realize that these countries have been vast civilizations before we were—civilizations before even Canada and

America and South America were out of the forest areas and with roads and pavements and buildings and cities. They had a civilization that goes back four, five thousand years before Christ. So they obviously had a tradition and a culture, and now suddenly we want to come and insert.

And perhaps, and I'm not saying that our values are second rate or less than theirs, but in order to allow people to adopt or even acknowledge our values, we need to show them from the way you and I live our lives. If we go in with nuclear weapons, with force, with toppling governments, we know that we will go nowhere. And we have seen that in Vietnam, in Korea, in so many countries in South America—that governments have been toppled because they do not seem to progress or promote the values that we have here in the West.

As again, I'm saying, it does not mean to say we are second rate. Quite the contrary. I'm so proud of the freedoms that we have over here, and the relative tranquility and peace in which we live in. But by the same token, the countries in the Middle East say, You think that you have got all these great values, why do your cities have the highest rate of murders per day?

And so finally, what it comes down to: show us in your way of life. And Paul in the letter to the Galatians, chapter 5 verse 22, tells us: "Our lives must be one of joy, peace, love, generosity, kindness." If we do that, then we don't have to go out and tell other people, you know, this is the way you have to live. People will look at us, people will admire us and say, "Yes, that is exactly what we have to do." And having done that, they will say, "God is in heaven and all is right with the world. We will be at peace with one another."

But the moment you and I try to use force, nuclear power, toppling of governments, we will get nowhere but the same vicious circle of violence, anger, and more recriminations.
God bless you all.

