

OF LOVE, JOY and TERRORISM

Thoughts from the past ...

by Vic Berez

Birthdays are a time to reflect on the past, as well as looking toward the future. Five years ago today, I wrote two short postings that I'd like to reflect on again. On that day, we read in the news about the terrorist attack at Beslan, Russia. Also, an anniversary of the 9-11 tragedy was fast approaching. For my wife and I, that weekend was quiet and normal ... family and church, each a welcome respite ... at a time that also happened to be my 65th birthday. The first piece I wrote was about family and childhood innocence:

We went on an *adventure* with our 2½ year-old grandson. It was a *cousin's party* which takes place more-or-less annually. My wife and several of her cousins get together with their extended families. This time among the attendees were six little ones from one to three years old. It was both exciting and comforting to sit and watch their boundless joy, as they ran and played. They watered the flowers *and* each other. They played *ring around the rosie* and enjoyed falling down in a pile. And, they explored the *forest* ... that small clump of bushes along the back fence of the very urban yard where the party was held. In a world of wars and terrorism and the multitude of other disasters we adults create, it's great to think about how much nicer the world would be if we all exhibited the unqualified love and joy of little children.

The second piece was a lot less pleasant. Unfortunately, it is a typical tale of our time, inspired by that Sunday morning's sermon which sounded to me a bit like a rant against Muslim fundamentalism. Here it is:

Throughout the history of mankind, violent people (mostly men) have continually committed atrocities in the name of their god. Such violence has always existed. Today we call that kind of violence *terrorism*. Whether it was our Cro-Magnon ancestors *getting off* by clubbing Neanderthals, or *barbarians* sacking Rome (or later Christians sacking Rome), or Hitler exterminating Jews and Gypsies, or self-proclaimed *martyrs* crashing airplanes into buildings, or Chechens annihilating school children in Beslan, or Christians and Jews in collusion in Israel to bring on *Armageddon* by antagonizing Palestinians, or Hindus similarly bating Muslims on the Asian subcontinent ... I don't believe these actions, often by self-proclaimed *fundamentalists*, are based on a sense of moral commitment to their god. These are simply the responses of people who are not able to control their most primitive instinctive reaction to any situation that does not gratify them. They simply proclaim to all by their actions, "It's my way, or the highway."

Can we ... the good guys ... end this? I'm afraid not. I suspect *Dubya* was right. This thing that we now call the *war on terrorism* can never be *finally* won. Some of those who perceive themselves as downtrodden will always react violently and justify their violence as the will of their god. In this way new *terrorists* are continually created. Our only hope is to keep what we today call *terrorism* under control by (1) minimizing the number of people who rightfully feel downtrodden; (2) effectively working with people of good will around the world to reduce the opportunities for creating mayhem; and (3) standing tall in our faith, and in our efforts on behalf of freedom and prosperity throughout the world.

We must not fear terrorists ... for their objective is to instill fear. We must simply view them as the unavoidable embodiment of evil in our midst. As such, we must do our best to marginalize them without falling to their level. And finally, we must pray to God that we can persevere on those occasions when we fail to keep under control those all too human tendencies we call *terrorism*.

Since 2004, our family has grown with the addition of four more grandchildren. Each of them brings us great joy. These five young kids are why we're hoping, praying and working for a world and a people that can, throughout their lives, freely experience the unqualified love and joy of children. Let's each help facilitate an evolution of mankind beyond the primitive urges that motivate fundamentalists and terrorists ...

... as we look to the future.