



## PRAESENTATA CURIA

Allocutio 25 May 2017

“Seek out and talk to every soul”

The Manchester bomber was about the same age as St. Francis of Assisi had been when he began his extraordinary conversion and work back in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Two young men who were questioning, two young men driven by a passion, two young men even willing to die. But what a difference in outcome. Neither produced any offspring that we know of but the legacy each has left is so different.

Young people can have mixed thoughts and can react very strongly to what they perceive. It is not just the islamist problem. It can be a University student who is annoyed and takes an automatic weapon into a University campus and slays many. Or it used to be idealists in Ireland who took bombs onto the streets of the North or Britain for other objectives before the Good Friday agreement.

How can we get young people to turn their energies and idealism into something positive and good like St. Francis? Frank Duff after all was still a young man when he got the Legion of Mary started.

Contact with people is essential. Some of those who do such evil acts are often loners, people who avoid dealing with others. Maybe that is because they are already wounded by something and have a residual anger that can make them more vulnerable. So maybe they need non-threatening contacts that can help them come out of their shells and begin to talk and open up. And then maybe in that environment they can become open to other possibilities.

One advantage you have in the hostels I believe compared to street contact is that you can build up a relationship with someone. You may meet the person many times and so a trust can develop which may give the chance to show them a good way and build up their confidence. But even the once-off contact on the street, if the person receives a friendly contact and goes on their way feeling better about themselves, can also play a part.

A modern researcher has commented, “Across three studies regarding lone-wolf killers, one can conclude that many lone-wolf terrorists have some or all of the following characteristics: a mental illness, vocational problems, high-stress levels, problems with intimate partner relationships, social awkwardness, violent communications, and high intelligence. Many lone-wolf terrorists can be said to have had difficulties functioning adequately in everyday life and maintaining healthy relationships. These characteristics may or may not be defined as a mental illness, but these problems can be improved by utilizing skill building as a component of wellness services for those at risk for violence.”



# Allocutio



Every human being is vulnerable. Like computer systems there are flaws and viruses, be they moral, psychological or spiritual, that can get in and infect. Most of us can examine our conscience and see them. Then we ask why and we see another truth. “Unless the branch is grafted to the vine it will wither and bear bad fruit”.

Our Lady bore a great fruit. We must ask her help so that we too bear a good fruit. We must ask her help that in every contact we bring her Son and his grace with us. That is the healing grace of love. Not any love or abusive love but the good love of God. That love always delights in the other and has a real care and good will towards them. And it wants the other to connect to the great source of all love, God.

Cutting young people off in a terrorist attack is not a case of bearing good fruit. Machine-gunning a class of primary school children down is not good fruit. It would have been better had that young man met a girl who would have cherished him loving her and having children with him and providing life into the future. And indeed sometimes the project of marriage and begetting family is as good a fruit as any since it opens up many options in the future for God.

But the problem is this that some souls deprived of love cannot see that. Killing themselves and others is a way of dealing with their pain and they have a perverted way of getting others to share in that pain. Just think of the pilot on the German-wings plane! What a pity he had not met the companions who would have led him another road.

Every contact of love with them can help undo a tendency to go down such a road. You will never know what your contacts of friendship and love for others can do. Don't start with religion or prayer. Start with interest and care and love. Later you can give an account of the love of God that inflames you, that gives you your hope. But first give love because when you give a genuine love you are giving them God.