

Samuel Rodriguez's Urgent Plea in Wake of Christian Executions in Oregon

We live in dark times. The Umpqua Community College shooting targeting Christians speaks to a world spiraling into anarchy, embracing chaos, empowered by hatred and expressed through violence.

I humbly call upon our nation to broaden our collective lens and address the issue of intolerance toward people of faith—especially when directed against followers of Christ, both domestically and abroad. Although it would be premature, and arguably intellectually inappropriate, to establish a moral equivalence with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and elsewhere who suffer from government and terrorist-sponsored persecution, the tragedy in Oregon does expose the need for vigilance.

Accordingly, as a nation, we must repudiate all religious bigotry—without exception. More than ever before, we must stand committed to protecting our God-given and constitutionally protected right of religious liberty.

The discussion should not be limited to guns, laws, rights, mental illness and prevention. At the end of the day, our conversation must compel us all to address the issue of sin, resulting in hatred, intolerance, animosity, bigotry, apathy, complacency and murder.

Moreover, as a people we must likewise evaluate the messages about Christianity that stem from popular culture, media, educational institutions and government. We must create a firewall and repudiate all vestiges of anti-Christian rhetoric and actions.

For such depictions and expressions carry the potential to serve as fodder for those driven by hate to act with violence against the followers of Jesus. Today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity or even worse—death.

Finally, as Christ followers, it behooves us to pray for and assist the families impacted by this horrific act of violence. We pray that the strength of the Father, the grace of the Son and the comfort of the Holy Spirit will bring peace and healing as together we stand upon the promise of Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

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