

September 17, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960) was a French philosopher and writer. He lived during interesting times. Camus was born in French Algeria to a mother of Spanish origin who was half deaf and a father who was a poor agricultural worker. His father died one year later in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne. Camus was a young man when World War II broke out and Germany occupied France.

Camus contribution to Philosophy was the idea of the absurd. It expressed the human desire for clarity and meaning in a world that offered neither. Happiness is fleeting and human life is subject to mortality.

What happened at the Navy Yard on September 16<sup>th</sup> is an example of the absurdity of life. A lone gunman enters the Navy Yard and murders twelve innocent people, one of whom was shot in the back as he tried to escape that tragic morning. Happiness ended that morning for twelve families whose loved ones died before their time. What meaning can possibly be expressed other than the absurdity of it all.

In his novel, *The First Man*, he draws upon his own life experience to create the character of Jacques Cormery. Jacques finds himself standing at his father's grave in a military cemetery. He could not muster any real feeling for his father because he never knew him. His father died in battle when he was one year old. It was his mother's wish that brought him there.

"Around him, in the vast field of the dead, silence reigned. At that moment he read on the tomb the date of his father's birth. Then he read the two dates, "1885-1914," and automatically did the arithmetic: twenty-nine years. Suddenly he was struck by an idea that shook his very being. He was forty years old. The man buried under that slab, who had been his father, was younger than he."

It is absurd that the son should be older than his father. This is true because the absurdity of the world allowed a terrible war to cut short his father's life. The absurdity of the world also allows death to reign in school houses and workplaces across the country, from Columbine to Newtown Elementary, from the Aurora Movie Theatre to the Washington Navy Yard.

Some argue for gun control, but the evil is deeper than that. The murderer will kill using any means. When someone loses their way, they turn around and walk backwards to a point they recognize. Somehow we lost our way. The God of Love has been removed from society. Without God, we have become more and more dangerous to each other, even passing laws that permit abortion and euthanasia. What message are we conveying about the sanctity of life when violence is all around us?

Jacques Cormery began to search for meaning in this world. He said, "There is a terrible emptiness in me, an indifference that hurts." To be indifferent to all this only hurts.