

“BLINDED BY DAYLIGHT”: DIAGNOSIS OF A CRIME SPIKE

While a little bit embarrassed to admit it, at least in a few Hollywood films, I have **rooted** for the **bad guys!** **Ocean’s 11** (starring the Rat Pack in 1960 and in the star-studded Ocean’s Eleven 2001 remake) comes to mind because the **clever thieves** hatched such an elaborate Las Vegas casino heist. Unrealistic? Of course– but it worked for me! And the Oscar-winning 1995 film “**The Usual Suspects**” had me completely **off the trail** of the villain until the closing credits– he had been center stage the entire time! Granted immunity for agreeing to talk to the FBI, petty thug Roger “Verbal” Kint spills the beans about a mysterious Turkish crime lord named **Keyser Söze**. In fact, he created the tale *ex nihilo* from disparate details culled from a messy bulletin board in a borrowed LAPD office. The FBI **releases him!** end. The film’s closing line: “The **greatest trick** the **Devil** ever pulled was convincing the world he **didn’t** exist.”

The **etiology** of evil is complex on many levels, though elementary at its core. If we accept the premise that good and evil have existential reality, then we must choose. While readily admitting that one ought to always **choose the good**, it presumes that human beings **agree** at least in principle on **what** is good! Cops /robbers, white hat/black hat, angels/devils. But it is the **mindset** that draws my attention today. We have all seen the news reports of **flash mobs**–not gathering to sing a song in a mall– but to **loot** and **rob** stores, sometimes in broad daylight. In one case, 30 thieves rushed *en masse* into a Home Depot to steal– ready or not– **hammers and crowbars!** Why, except to arm themselves for future “grab and go” acts? And I suspect the theft was organized all through social media. We had our own ‘grab and run’ theft in Maplewood and Burnsville– copy-cat thefts, in this case involving televisions, tablets and hoverboards.

What motivates such actions? Here, believe it or not, medieval philosophy offers an answer. It is a principle of philosophy that **every agent** acts towards an end, meaning that there is **purpose** in life. The world is not random. There is a **goal**, an “end” towards which we strive. **St. Thomas Aquinas** further stated that “every agent acts for a good” (*Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 2-3). This means that **all action** is directed towards a good, **at least as** we **perceive** it. The bank robber acts for a “good,” insofar as he sees the acquisition of money as being in his interest at that moment. The college student drinking to excess believes that it will be fun to let loose after mid-terms, etc. Though both actions are **objectively** wrong (evil), the agent (person acting) does not or **cannot see it** that way, given their error of judgment a poorly formed conscience.

What has happened? It is impossible to analyze in a single column a host of issues, though it may be possible to paint a general picture. In a recent conversation with a **college administrator**, I learned that the number of parents insisting on speaking with the college president due to a disciplinary action levelled against their college-aged son or daughter is staggering. That **never** would have happened a generation ago. Parents intervene directly to **defend the bad actions** of their college children at an alarming rate– despite incontrovertible evidence of under-age drinking and clear residence hall expectations. Suddenly, the “bad guys” have become those applying the clear policies. Too often, parents are defending the **indefensible**. Similarly, a very few who feel that society has oppressed them, choose to exact justice individually, only hurting their cause.

Six years ago last Friday (love those time-stamped photos!), while on a brief pilgrimage to Milan, the late Bishop Sirba and I paid an **impromptu** visit to **Pavia**, 28 miles south. Though not on our original itinerary, we wanted to **venerate the tomb** of St. Augustine. Having finally found the church, we learned that Blessed Severinus **Boethius** was buried in the same church. Surprise! He

was a noted philosopher who died (†524) a century after Augustine. Boethius' writings delved into the thorny issue of the **nature of evil**, trying to understand its allure. In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, (Book IV), he wrote: "...for men cannot raise to the transparent light of truth their eyes which have been **accustomed to darkness**. They are like those birds whose sight is clear at night but **blinded by daylight**. So long as they look not upon the true course of nature, but upon their own feelings, they think that the freedom of passion and the impunity of crime are happy things." I interpreted this to mean that for one contemplating an evil act, the evil that they commit appears to be good to them. In their blindness, their **objectively evil** actions appear good.

As a nation, we have become **blinded by daylight**. We have allowed too many young people to justify their actions based upon historic ills which—though real—**cannot justify** present illegal and anti-social behavior. We remain silent as our **law enforcement** community is universally tainted as the "bad guys," based upon the **unjustifiable** actions of a small percentage. Historic ills need both to be acknowledged and rectified, but not at the expense of law-abiding citizens. Basic standards of **acceptable behavior** apply to all, beginning in our schools. Enough of **excusing** and "covering" for bad behavior. Such excuses only reward it. We cannot "root for the bad guys." Rather, we must instill virtue and accountability across the board to everyone without exception.

- I am pleased to introduce **Mark Lundquist** as our new Director of Security. Mark comes to us after a long career in law enforcement, including with the St. Paul Police. He is a man of faith and character and will assist us in developing and implementing appropriate policies and protocols that ensure both a **safe and welcoming** environment for all who come through these doors.
- The staggering numbers are difficult to comprehend, but I am pleased that the Twins signed the electric **Byron Buxton** to a long-term contract, heavily laden with incentives. For a player of his talent to slip away would be devastating. The **incentives** kick in if he achieves certain milestone levels. His one problem has been staying healthy and the contract clearly was written with that *caveat* in mind.
- The **Major League Baseball** lockout is disappointing— they can ill afford missing games in 2022— the fans will recoil against a strike.
- Assisted suicide by **random** lot? The Island of **Jersey** (a British Crown dependency, pop. 107,800) is located just miles from Normandy, France. In March, a randomly selected **citizen jury** voted 18-5 to **legalize** assisted suicide. That vote moved the proposition to the island's Parliament, which voted 36-10 to approve assisted suicide "in principle." In 2018, the neighboring island of **Guernsey rejected** a similar proposal. Sadly, **assisted suicide** calls are growing. Being pro-life extends to all stages of life.
- By now, all registered members should have received a pre-Christmas mailing, including a **postcard insert** listing the times for all Christmas season Masses and confessions. You may wish to place it on the **refrigerator** for easy reference! Due to Christmas falling on a Saturday, **carefully note** the times. I also make an end of the year appeal and wish to thank you in advance for your generosity.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector