



THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF SILENCE

January 11, 2011

It was impressive to see members of Congress and their staffs fill the steps of the nation's capitol to remember victims and survivors. Jared Loughner's Tucson shooting spree killed six, leaving eleven others injured. Hundreds stood on the Capitol steps...respectfully...mournfully...in silent tribute.

President Barack and First Lady Michelle Obama came forward ceremoniously from a capitol exit to lead the silence. The silence, which was indeed silent, lasted ninety seconds after which the Obamas retreated through the same doorway. A few more awkward moments passed...then Congressional aids and staff began to disperse as well.

A nine-year-old girl, a federal judge, a man who died protecting his wife, and three other women were brutally murdered by Loughner, but Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was his real target. Shot in the head at close range, "Gabby," as they call her, was still struggling for life. Other victims were doing the same, families at their bedsides. But rather than being interceded for in prayer or remembered by name, they were remembered in silence. Silence. No words...no acknowledgement of God...no encouragement...no hope or perspective...nothing but silence. Watching from the hospital rooms and homes of the grieving, what did they gain from that? How does one feel after a moment of silence? Comforted? Confident? Filled with renewed hope and strength? My guess is that one feels nothing when nothing occurs.

President Obama has been clear in his intention to eradicate faith distinctions from the public discourse in order not to make any one "feel badly." in the midst of the latest tragedy, he has steered the nation around another corner subtly but profoundly.

Presidents from George Washington to George W. Bush have always led us in prayer for our American family; Soldiers in combat, victims of terrorist attacks, the sick and dying in public service, astronauts killed in flight. We have ALWAYS interceded in prayer. But this president who claims to be a follower of Christ has rejected any expression of his personal faith in public, even to ask God's help for those on the brink of death.

Death is a clear barometer of what we believe. For parishioner or priest alike...death separates the true from the false. A loved one is dead. That jarring reality provokes private and public responses that reveal not what we say but what we actually believe.

Anyone who has attended a funeral of a friend or loved one where God is not acknowledged can attest to the fact that there are no answers...no words of comfort if one does not believe in eternal life and a merciful God.

The approach to death by the Left was clearly revealed after the tragic death of Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota. Wellstone was a champion for the secular Left. As his televised memorial service began, millions were stunned to see the spectacle that ensued. The altar on which Wellstone's body was laid was turned into a political platform. Speakers shouted political slogans while attendees waved banners. As the President of the United States, George W. Bush, rose to pay tribute, he was booed. There was no holy hush in the face of death...no uniting as human beings in a shared experience. Rather than humble sorrow, there were shrieks of defiance in the face of what should have been a profound reminder that one day we will all be dead.

“Grief counselors” began to proliferate during the outbreak of Columbine-style school shootings. What did “grief counselors” tell students whose friends had been brutally slain? What was the syllabus? The template? What hope did they give? “Express your feelings?” “Talk to someone?” “Remember the good things?” They were empty words in the face of tragedy.

If there is no God, how about this truth: Your friend or loved one is dead. You will never see them again. They are extinct. Gone forever into oblivion. You only live once...enjoy it while you can. What you accomplish here is all there is. Death must be avoided at all costs. There is nothing worth dying for. No love of country or friend...no principle worth the sacrifice. All there is, is now...so do what you want...get all you can. It doesn't matter how you live...just live to the fullest. There are no rules that matter...no moral boundaries worth keeping. You live and then you die and then it's all over. Life has no meaning. Death is the end.

If grief counselors could counsel honestly, that's what they should say. They can't invoke the teachings of the Christian faith and the nature of its God. Public schools must embrace implied atheism in order to please the secular left...ever powerful in education, the judiciary and now the executive branch.

So when the President chooses not to express his confessed faith to pray and intercede for those struggling for life and chooses instead a meaningless “moment of silence” it is a profound expression.

By doing so, he has rendered not only death meaningless, but life itself.