

from our viewpoint...

Shooting shows influence of evil

If anything, the shootings Friday in Aurora, Colo., show the existence of evil.

And evil is hard to understand. Science might give us a multitude of answers, none of them precise or comforting – or ultimately, satisfying.

Evil acts can be explained by mental disease, by physical problems such as a brain tumor, by various sorts of intoxication and resulting brain damage, by the environmental influence of a violence-prone society, media exposure, gun worship, video games, you name it.

The church, on the other hand, teaches that evil exists, both in the hearts of men and in the person of the Evil One, the antithesis of all that is good. The church teaches that, given the doctrine of original sin, evil lurks within us all, and that we are only as good as we are successful at resisting its temptations, from racism to assault to murder.

But what makes an apparently normal young man plan quietly to kill and maim his neighbors in a solid, working-class, ethnically diverse neighborhood?

The Evil One, or a bad case of the evil within us all? Perhaps it makes no difference. Once we recognize and admit that evil exists, do we need to know what sets it free? Or is it enough to recognize evil for what it is?

Both President Barack Obama and his challenger, Gov. Mitt Romney, acknowledged the reality of evil in the senseless violence Friday. But only the vast number of victims in this case elevates it above the ordinary, everyday violence of our world.

Killing and maiming, stealing and lying, abuse and neglect, are so common that we seldom remark on their evil nature. Man's inhumanity to man is legion. It's only when the victim count starts to add up that we seem to recognize it.

We all might be able to agree on the evil nature of the likes of Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, Josef Stalin and their ilk. Mass murderers and serial killers we recognize as evil.

But what about the prison guard who helped keep the Jews from escaping, or the police officer who looks the other way while his friends beat some prisoner senseless? The soldiers who, freed from restraint in the heat of battle, kill civilians or even their own comrades?

And how could our loving God, however you look at Him, allow evil to exist at all?

Does evil have to exist? The answer should be apparent, theology aside.

Evil does exist. And seldom is it seen more starkly than it appeared Friday.

But that was only the tip of the iceberg. It'd be easy to forget that humans are, mostly, noble creatures more likely to help their fellow man than to kill or maim him.

Still, we're reminded again and again that it may take only one small thing to release the evil within any one of us. Happens all the time.

And that should be cause for both prayer and watchfulness, repentance and celebration. For despite the presence of evil, that's not what we were intended for. We're better, far better, than that. Every evil event brings out the best, the very best in us; witness the woman who stayed behind to save her best friend from bleeding to death.

Evil is not in control; we are. But we cannot afford to let down our guard, because evil could be, probably is, right around the corner. — *Steve Haynes*



Many thanks to Robert the fix-it man

It was hot outside. And, unfortunately, it was hot inside, too. Well not altogether. We have a two-story house with two air conditioning units, and the one for the main floor worked just fine. The upstairs one, however, was on the fritz.

We put in a call to our heating, air conditioning, appliance and just about everything else repairman. He promised to come by as soon as he could. However, the temperatures were in the 100s and we weren't the only ones without air conditioning. He was trying, but ...

We understood, and felt we were lucky. While our bedroom was upstairs, we still had a spare bed downstairs. Of course, it had been our son's. He graduated from high school in 1999 and the room had been used only rarely since. The amount of junk it had collected was incredible. The bed was almost entirely covered by papers, books, photos, posters and cat hair.

The area around the bed was almost as bad. I had rounded up junk out of the living room a



cynthia haynes

• open season

few years ago and moved most of it into the unused bedroom until I could figure out what to do with it. It was still there, and I still hadn't figured out what to do with all that stuff.

I quickly moved small piles onto other piles to make mountains out of paper hills, then changed the sheets and covers. I brought our pillows down from upstairs and made a narrow path on both sides of the bed.

This would just be for a little while, so I didn't have to do too good of a job.

Soon Steve and I were sleeping in a double bed instead of our queen size and the cat was trying to get to her regular spot, which was entirely taken up by us. She was not amused.

Now, we've slept in double beds many times,

and while it's a little cozier than we're used to, we don't have a real problem with it. This time, however, we had to edge sideways to even get in bed. If we fell out, we might dislodge a pile that would bury us.

Our air conditioning man worked on the offending unit and had it going for a day before it had another fit.

We gave the poor man a break this time. We headed for a small lake near Emporia for a week with our daughter, son-in-law and most importantly granddaughter. The cabin there was air conditioned and the double bed had no piles on all sides.

When we returned a week later we spent the first night downstairs, since we had left the air off while we were gone. While we were asleep, the upstairs cooled off and we were able to return to our own room.

Thank you to Robert, the fix-it man. We are lucky to have you. The cat appreciates your efforts, too. Those people were getting sweat all over her bed.

Senator calls on secretary to release details

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) has called on Attorney General Eric Holder to immediately appoint a special counsel, free from the appearance of politics or undue influence, to investigate the "avalanche" of recent national security leaks originating out of the Executive Branch.

"The numerous national security leaks reportedly originating out of the Executive Branch in recent months have been stunning," wrote Sen. Moran in a letter to the Attorney General. "If true, they reveal details of some of our Nation's most highly classified and sensitive military and intelligence matters, thereby risking our national security, as well as the lives of American citizens and our allies. If there were ever a case requiring an outside special counsel with bipartisan acceptance and widespread public trust, this is it."

TEXT OF THE LETTER:
The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530
Dear Attorney General Holder:

The numerous national security leaks reportedly originating out of the Executive Branch in recent months have been stunning. If true, they reveal details of some of our Nation's most highly classified and sensitive military and intelligence matters, thereby risking our national security, as well as the lives of American citizens and our allies. If there were ever a case requiring an outside special counsel with bipartisan acceptance and widespread public trust, this is it.

Press reports indicate that there could be many sources to the leaks within the Administration. In fact, in Jo Becker and Scott Shane's New York Times story, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will" the reporters state they interviewed, "three dozen of [Obama's] current and former advisers." Tom Ricks' recent New York Times review of David Sanger's Confront and Conceal mentions that "Mr. Sanger clearly has enjoyed great access to senior White House officials, most notably to Thomas Donilon, the national security adviser. Mr. Donilon, in effect, is the hero of the book, as well as the commenter of record on events."

You have an important role as a member of the President's national security team, and no Administration should be expected to investigate itself impartially on such a grave and sensitive matter in the midst of an election. Therefore, your recent announcement that two U.S. Attorneys would lead criminal investigations



jerry moran

• in Congress

into the instances of unauthorized disclosures of classified information does not ensure a full and thorough investigation free of influence. The U.S. Attorneys are under your personal supervision. An outside special counsel, with the appropriate independence and authority, would ensure that the investigation remains untainted by even the appearance of a politics or undue influence.

Our request for a special counsel is in keeping with the precedent of asking for a neutral investigation when there is either a possible conflict of interest or extraordinary circumstances. In 2005, when President Obama was a sitting senator, he requested a special counsel to investigate the Jack Abramoff scandal, saying "FBI officials have said the Abramoff investigation 'involves systemic corruption within the highest levels of government.' Such an assertion indicates extraordinary circumstances and it is in the public interest that you act under your existing statutory authority to appoint a special counsel."

In fact, in the Valerie Plame matter, then-Senator Obama went beyond the call for a special counsel, seeking a Congressional investigation, arguing in a letter:

"[t]he United States Congress has a constitutional responsibility to provide oversight of the executive branch, whether a law has been broken or not. It is time for Congress to fulfill that constitutional responsibility in this matter by initiating a thorough investigation. We recognize that a criminal investigation is underway and that a special prosecutor contin-

ues to present testimony before a grand jury. These actions in no way preclude Congress responsibility to provide oversight. We urge you to exercise your authority as Congressional leaders by requesting the appropriate committees to begin oversight hearings and an investigation immediately."

In 2007, then-Senator Biden called for a special counsel to investigate the destruction of the CIA enhanced interrogation tapes, stating that the "easiest, straightest thing to do is to take it out of the political realm, appoint a special prosecutor and let them decide, and ... call it where it is. Is there a criminal violation? If there is, proceed. If not, don't."

In 2003, then-Senator Biden joined a letter calling for an outside special counsel in the Valerie Plame investigation, concluding that, "Public confidence in the integrity of this investigation would be substantially bolstered by the appointment of a special counsel." Then-Senator Biden maintained that even if that case were being handled by professional career prosecutors, the integrity of the inquiry might be called into question if individuals with a vested interest in protecting the White House were still involved in any matter related to the investigation.

If the bar for an outside special counsel were met in the cases of Valerie Plame and Jack Abramoff, it is far exceeded here. We are not talking about a single, isolated instance of a leak; rather, we are looking at "an avalanche of leaks" on national security matters. On a matter of this seriousness, there is clear precedent to appoint an outside special counsel when there is the potential for a conflict of interest, the specter of political influence, or other extraordinary circumstances. As this is clearly the case here, we request that you appoint an outside special counsel immediately.

where to write

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