

February 28, 2016 Repent Homily:

Brothers and sisters, in many popular tales of science fiction, one of the key components of the story is the so-called "Time Machine". For example, in several episodes of the long running series, "*The Twilight Zone*", the main character is sent back in time and is a witness to a tragic historical event.

Use your imagination! Envision a reporter representing one of the major news outlets (CNN, Fox News, etc.) traveling back in time and turning up at the scene of the tragedy recorded in today's gospel reading: the collapse of the tower of Siloam that killed eighteen construction workers. An aggressive reporter may not be interested in determining if there were any survivors or if family members were notified in the wake of the tragedy. Instead, he'd look for something more newsworthy. "Who is responsible? "Who screwed up? Who do we hold accountable for the deaths of the workers?" "Who do we blame? The architect? The construction manager? Were the workers themselves negligent?" "Was it an act of sabotage? Was it an "act of God"?"

By singling out the culprit the reporter can make the reading public feel much better about themselves... Right?

In today's gospel (Lk.13:1-9), Jesus warned his listeners about comparing themselves to others and of growing complacent concerning their own need for reform. Let me quote Our Lord: "Or those eighteen people who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell on them... Do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" (Lk.13:4-5).

In truth, the most effective response to evil on every level is to look within ourselves, examine our conscience and recognize our need for conversion. Consider for a moment those who "escaped" a tragic end on 9/11. They may have called in sick or arrived at work after the collapse of the towers. Were the many victims unrepentant sinners and those who escaped death without fault? By no means! Those who survived could very well have re-examined their lives and undoubtedly pondered the unusual circumstances of their life and may have turned to the Lord in gratitude for sparing their lives. But everyone, without exception, needs to repent!

There is a lesson in tragedy for everyone. The only lesson to be learned is one of alertness and a change of attitude. Complacency must be avoided at all costs. We recall St. Paul's words in today's second reading "Whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall." (1Cor10:12). At a time when very few Catholics avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) we would do well to once again heed our Lord's warning: "If you do not repent, you will all perish".

Amen!