There have been too many tragic mass murders in the last century in American history, spurring on lots of talk of gun control. I'm not about to deny there should be gun reform to an extent. Background checks, mental health checks, references attesting to good, non-violent character to get a weapon seems to make sense. However, the problem is not how people are killing, it is the fact they are killing. We cannot put restrictions on everything that kills (even forks would be prohibited then) and arson and cars can, like guns, kill a great mass of people very quickly. What we need to do, though, is get to the root of the problem. Why is there such violence? Why are people killing? The answer is the devaluation of life prevalent in today's culture.

We have people playing God. In many places around the world, society has legalized abortion and euthanasia, laws which in themselves devalue life, so no surprise life isn't valued as it should be since society has already "legalized the right to kill" in many ways. Because society is trying to tell its citizens that truth is no longer objective, but subjective, these citizens can now legally choose whether or not the unborn child is a child or not, and whether or not they should live themselves. Society thinks the line is drawn there, but it's wrong because once somebody can choose who they perceive as worth living in the child and in themselves, who is to stop them from broadening this view to everyone else around them? Mother Teresa once said: "We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, of killings, of wars, of hatred. If a mother can kill her own child, what is left but for us to kill each other?" How true! There is nothing more disturbing and unnatural than a mother abandoning the one human that is most innate in her to protect, proving herself worse than the animals. How then can we be surprised with the amount of violence now if such an atrocious crime is deemed normal?

This message that can stem to violence can also be found in our culture's music, in its movies, its video games, its books, the advertisements in the mall and on TV, the magazines, and news to name a few. I'm not going to touch base on all of them, but I will touch base on some. Let's start with video games. I'm not about to say that everybody who plays those types of video games is going to turn out violent themselves. I know plenty of people myself that do all those things and aren't violent. However, I do think that spending long hours immersed in this form of recreation can help desensitize you to real-world violence. And while it is true, many are able to distinguish reality from these fictional games, it is also true that some who, perhaps, have mental health problems, will not have such an easy time distinguishing, which, of course, can lead to some serious problems.

Dr. Mark Appelbaum (chairman of the American Psychological Association's [APA] Task Force on Violent Media), said that while there was still not enough evidence to prove video games are linked to actual acts of violence, he did say, "…the link between violence in video

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games and increased aggression in players is one of the most studied and best established in the field." And the report stated: "No single risk factor consistently leads a person to act aggressively or violently. Rather, it is the accumulation of risk factors that tends to lead to aggressive or violent behavior. The research reviewed here demonstrates that violent video game use is one such risk factor." (APA, 2015) So, from this we can draw that, while violent video games may not necessarily lead to violence, if the child is affected by other risk factors such as a broken home, abuse, bad influences, mental health problems, etc. then frequent exposure to violent video games and movies can, potentially, help lead to violence.

Some say a culture is oftentimes portrayed by its music. Well, if that's the case, no wonder there's such violence in America when we have artists like Eminem who easily get away with songs like *Murder, Murder*, in which he spouts out very violent lyrics, talking of shooting a police man, saying things like, "All I see is blood and murder, my mind state". How such lyrics could have any type of positive influence on a young, developing brain is beyond me. In studies accumulated by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), they found certain types of music, particularly heavy metal, were connected to an increase of suicide, reckless behavior and stereotyped attitudes toward women. In one study, performed in 1999, they asked 345 mothers whose children attended a public school, if they thought the violent messages in rap music contributed to school violence. 47% answered in the affirmative. (American Academy of Pediatrics, Paragraph 9) If we want our children to grow up valuing life, we need to address this problem in the music industry. We need to make sure our children are surrounded with positive messages, not messages promoting violence, disrespect toward authority and law, and lustful behavior. And we need to make sure our children understand why such violent, impure, and hateful messages they are receiving through such music and other sources is wrong.

What also disconnects people from reality is social media. Facebook, for instance, offers you your own page where you can basically build up your own virtual fan-club. Don't get me wrong, social media is almost essential for small business owners and staying in contact with friends and family that don't live nearby.There are a lot of advantages to be sure. However, one of the many disadvantages is the egotistical and addictive nature of it, as well as the disconnect to reality. There was a case of a woman who got stuck inside a burning car in Beaverton, Oregon. (Riverio, KPTV) In response, people got out their phones and recorded it. Why?

Well, probably to post on their Facebook walls, Youtube channel, Instagram, whatever, for more than likely the fame: the likes, the shares, the feeling of popularity, becoming known. Here, a woman is getting seriously injured, and instead of reacting with heroism or even pausing to at least pray, they are getting out their cellphones as if this were the times of the

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Roman Colosseum and this was just a show and not a life at risk. How utterly corrupt! How shameful! That our generation reacts in such a way as if this weren't reality at all, but a show on T.V. they're simply recording to later replay.

There is a great sense of self-entitlement and self-absorption in today's youth. The problem this self-absorption has is that it makes any life that is outside of the individual and their own circle of friends and family unimportant. Hence, the above story. Maybe if they were connected to this lady in a personal way, they would have responded with more concern, but because she was a stranger, empathy was completely lacking. They probably did not stop to consider that this woman had a family that cared about her, that her life was important. Many probably saw self-fame. Some probably were un-phased, or at least not as phased as they probably should've been. I doubt the realism really even hit many of them. Surely, they couldn't have been too traumatized if they were still able to hit "record" on their phones during the episode. But that isn't normal. It isn't normal to be so desensitized to violence and the loss of life that you respond in such a selfish way.

Now let's look at the lack of a proper family foundation. The lack of a good family foundation, especially, is a huge disadvantage to building a good character. Why? Because this family structure is supposed to implement in the child morals and discipline, something many in today's world are lacking. In a study on broken families, it was found that neighborhoods with a high-crime rate were also characterized by a lack of father-figures in the home. However, they also found that in neighborhoods where there is a high amount of religious-practicing individuals, the crime rate was lower and that a strong parental bond with the child decreases the chances that the child will commit a crime (Marripedia).

At the root to all of it though is selfishness, pride, and the devil's response: "I will not serve". Many people no longer have God at the center of their lives, just themselves. Religion is lacking, or at least the practice of it. The Church is undergoing a serious crisis and even some of the clergy are spewing out this same nonsense our culture is, this nonsense which will only lead to destruction. We will not stop these mass murders if we do not teach our children their Faith, which teaches them to value life, all life, not just the life that matters to them, not just the life they deem important or see as life, all life including their own.

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