



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #293 — DEC. 18, 2012

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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When a President Must Try to Heal a Nation...

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 18, 2012)

Presidential biographer David Maraniss called this speech Obama's "Gettysburg Address." I think he is not far wrong. Now, if Congressmen only had backbones!

"Obama Newtown Speech: President Addresses Vigil for Sandy Hook Shooting Victims" (w/ video and full text), by Huffington Post

Dec. 16, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/16/obama-newtown-speech_n_2313295.html)



President Obama spoke at a prayer vigil in Newton, Connecticut on Sunday in honor of the victims of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Below, read Obama's full remarks as provided by the White House:

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Governor. To all the families, first responders, to the community of Newtown, clergy, guests -- Scripture tells us: "...do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away...inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

We gather here in memory of twenty beautiful children and six remarkable adults. They lost their lives in a school that could have been any school; in a quiet town full of good and decent people that could be any town in America.

Here in Newtown, I come to offer the love and prayers of a nation. I am very mindful that mere words cannot match the depths of your sorrow, nor can they heal your wounded hearts. I can only hope it helps for you to know that you're not alone in your grief; that our world too has been torn apart; that all across this land of ours, we have wept with you, we've pulled our children tight. And you must know that whatever measure of comfort we can provide, we will provide; whatever portion of sadness that we can share with you to ease this heavy load, we will gladly bear it. Newtown -- you are not alone.

As these difficult days have unfolded, you've also inspired us with stories of strength and resolve and sacrifice. We know that when danger arrived in the halls of Sandy Hook Elementary, the school's staff did not flinch, they did not hesitate. Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach, Vicki Soto, Lauren Rousseau, Rachel Davino and Anne Marie Murphy -- they responded as we all hope we might respond in such terrifying circumstances -- with courage and with love, giving their lives to protect the children in their care.

We know that there were other teachers who barricaded themselves inside classrooms, and kept steady through it all, and reassured their students by saying "wait for the good guys, they're coming"; "show me your smile."

And we know that good guys came. The first responders who raced to the scene, helping to guide those in harm's way to safety, and comfort those in need, holding at bay their own shock and trauma because they had a job to do, and others needed them more.

And then there were the scenes of the schoolchildren, helping one another, holding each other, dutifully following instructions in the way that young children sometimes do; one child even trying to encourage a grown-up by saying, "I know karate. So it's okay. I'll lead the way out." (Laughter.)

As a community, you've inspired us, Newtown. In the face of indescribable violence, in the face of unconscionable evil, you've looked out for each other, and you've cared for one another, and you've loved one another. This is how Newtown will be remembered. And with time, and God's grace, that love will see you through.

But we, as a nation, we are left with some hard questions. Someone once described the joy and anxiety of parenthood as the equivalent of having your heart outside of your body all the time, walking around. With their very first cry, this most precious, vital part of ourselves -- our child -- is suddenly exposed to the world, to possible mishap or malice. And every parent knows there is nothing we will not do to shield our children from harm. And yet, we also know that with that child's very first step, and each step after that, they are separating from us; that we won't -- that we can't always be there for them. They'll suffer sickness and setbacks and broken hearts and disappointments. And we learn that our most important job is to give them what they need to become self-reliant and capable and resilient, ready to face the world without fear.

And we know we can't do this by ourselves. It comes as a shock at a certain point where you realize, no matter how much you love these kids, you can't do it by yourself. That this job of keeping our children safe, and teaching them well, is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors, the help of a community, and the help of a nation. And in that way, we come to realize that we bear a responsibility for every child because we're counting on everybody else to help look after ours; that we're all parents; that they're all our children.

This is our first task -- caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right, we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged.

And by that measure, can we truly say, as a nation, that we are meeting our obligations? Can we honestly say that we're doing enough to keep our children -- all of them -- safe from harm? Can we claim, as a nation, that we're all together there, letting them know that they are loved, and teaching them to love in return? Can we say that we're truly doing enough to give all the children of this country the chance they deserve to live out their lives in happiness and with purpose?

I've been reflecting on this the last few days, and if we're honest with ourselves, the answer is no. We're not doing enough. And we will have to change.

Since I've been President, this is the fourth time we have come together to comfort a grieving community torn apart by a mass shooting. The fourth time we've hugged survivors. The fourth time we've consoled the families of victims. And in between, there have been an endless series of deadly shootings across the country, almost daily reports of victims, many of them children, in small towns and big cities all across America -- victims whose -- much of the time, their only fault was being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We can't tolerate this anymore. These tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change. We will be told that the causes of such violence are complex, and that is true. No single law -- no set of laws can eliminate evil from the world, or prevent every senseless act of violence in our society.

But that can't be an excuse for inaction. Surely, we can do better than this. If there is even one step we can take to save another child, or another parent, or another town, from the grief that has visited Tucson, and Aurora, and Oak Creek, and Newtown, and communities from Columbine to Blacksburg before that -- then surely we have an obligation to try.

In the coming weeks, I will use whatever power this office holds to engage my fellow citizens -- from law enforcement to mental health professionals to parents and educators -- in an effort aimed at preventing more tragedies like this. Because what choice do we have? We can't accept events like this as routine. Are we really prepared to say that we're powerless in the face of such carnage, that the politics are too hard? Are we prepared to say that such violence visited on our children year after year after year is somehow the price of our freedom?

All the world's religions -- so many of them represented here today -- start with a simple question: Why are we here? What gives our life meaning? What gives our acts purpose? We know our time on this Earth is fleeting. We know that we will each have our share of pleasure and pain; that even after we chase after some earthly goal, whether it's wealth or power or fame, or just simple comfort, we will, in some fashion, fall short of what we had hoped. We know that no matter how good our intentions, we will all stumble sometimes, in some way. We will make mistakes, we will experience hardships. And even when we're trying to do the right thing, we know that much of our time will be spent groping through the darkness, so often unable to discern God's heavenly plans.

There's only one thing we can be sure of, and that is the love that we have -- for our children, for our families, for each other. The warmth of a small child's embrace -- that is true. The memories we have of them, the joy that they bring, the wonder we see through their eyes, that fierce and boundless love we feel for them, a love that takes us out of ourselves, and binds us to something larger -- we know that's what matters. We know we're always doing right when we're taking care of them, when we're teaching them well, when we're showing acts of kindness. We don't go wrong when we do that.

That's what we can be sure of. And that's what you, the people of Newtown, have reminded us. That's how you've inspired us. You remind us what matters. And that's what should drive us forward in everything we do, for as long as God sees fit to keep us on this Earth.

"Let the little children come to me," Jesus said, "and do not hinder them -- for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Charlotte. Daniel. Olivia. Josephine. Ana. Dylan. Madeleine. Catherine. Chase. Jesse. James. Grace. Emilie. Jack. Noah. Caroline. Jessica. Benjamin. Avielle. Allison.

God has called them all home. For those of us who remain, let us find the strength to carry on, and make our country worthy of their memory.

May God bless and keep those we've lost in His heavenly place. May He grace those we still have with His holy comfort. And may He bless and watch over this community, and the United States of America. (Applause.)



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<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
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20121217-01	8:50	MarthaH	Guns and Schools
20121217-02	10:37	Jim	Re: Our Boon or Doom? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #292)
20121217-03	16:29	SteveB	Plan B? (to Republicans) & Dominos Pizza
20121217-04	17:53	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple (Major Meat Weekend Precipitates Monday Salad Day)
20121217-05	23:56	Tom	Photo: Go Out & Enjoy Nature #7
20121217-06	23:57	SteveB	Photo: Cats Imitating Art #4 (Joseph Ducreux, <i>Self Portrait Yawning</i> , 1780)
20121217-07	23:58	MarthaH	Cartoon: Christmas #2
20121217-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Andean Condor over Colca Canyon, Peru

20121217-01	8:50	MarthaH	Guns and Schools
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The shock is over, and the yellow school buses roll again this morning, dragging a bit perhaps in unified sadness and loss of more innocence. Certainly every teacher and retired teacher's focus today is on classrooms everywhere. We are all saying "I knew that kid"--withdrawn, hugging walls, friendless...and our society will treat broken bones but not damaged minds as too costly? What could I do to protect the students in my room if I heard shooting down the hall? Where and how would we survive, perhaps? What about the irrational and/or irate parents who shout and stop in the office? Did they dislike a grade a child earned from his work ethic and attitude? Blame a classmate for a shun of "her child"? What prices we pay...then we can throw in the gun debate, too. Along with a lot of trite phrases, I DETEST. "Guns don't kill people...." Why is our society so focused on them? The 2d Amendment's intent had to do with when there were immediate needs and no electronics to summon help, nor policemen handy on the frontier. Vs. now???? I grew up with hunting guns in our household, shot from an early age, and never thought of them as weapons when "things" went wrong as they always do. What household needs an AK-??? as a right? Our culture has turned so macho that they are all right with tattoos, tough guys, etc...but this was also a child, 20, and he had issues that could have gotten some help, perhaps... There were signs. We can't turn schools into armed camps to protect anyone. They are called PUBLIC schools! Children deserve to grow up with protecting adults, not selfish ones! The right-wing Supreme Court justices tout the intent of the Founding Fathers but don't read history? Hmmm....I believe that unless the NRA sanctions it, there won't be any gun law changes...Money rules...at what cost? I am a believer that whenever and wherever it is my time, I will die, but protecting the innocent children is the job of the adults...Where is the public will? OFF my soapbox...except to note: Write your members of Congress with your stand!

20121217-02	10:37	Jim	Re: Our Boon or Doom? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #292)
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A follow-up on your robot story...

Video: "The Wrong Automation" (<http://www.youtube.com/embed/xWMkOwq2qIU?rel=0>)

20121217-03	16:29	SteveB	Plan B? (to Republicans) & Dominos Pizza
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I'm forwarding the Domino's deals (below, <http://www.dominos.com>) because I will no longer patronize them or Papa John's, so you are welcome to them. Universal health care is too important for grandstanding games. (Chick-fil-A I'm thinking about, but, so far, their chicken salad sandwich outweighs their religious fanaticism and anti-gayness.)

The Republican Plan A (R for Romney? E for Election?) failed. I told you it would. People are just not that stupid.

Now, what's Plan B? Anarchy?

Notes from a conversation with Dominos:

SteveB: I'm sorry to say I won't be eating any more Domino's pizzas. I read that your founder is suing the federal government (and Obamacare) over the contraception issue. To my mind, he can take his right-wing politics and shove them up his pepperoni. Your workers and customers (even former customers like me) deserve better!

Dominos: Domino's founder Tom Monaghan sold the company in 1998 and today has no active affiliation with our company. The media often neglect to note this fact. His views are not our views. Domino's Pizza has made no public statements about health care, as we are still waiting to see how the final rules will affect our network of small business owners. Domino's is not a political company; it is not a religious company -- we are a pizza company.

SteveB: I'm extremely happy to read this! Thank you for the quick, apolitical reply! You have my business, still.

This is the story AP is putting out, and I think it's very misleading! These people are sure hurting your business and good name! And, besides, I thought we were all for contraception, anyway, especially for the other guy. Mr. Monaghan should stick to pizza.

"Tom Monaghan, Domino's Pizza Founder: Obamacare Lawsuit Filed Over Mandatory Contraception Coverage" by AP

Dec. 17, 2012, (<http://www.wptv.com/dpp/news/national/tom-monaghan-dominos-pizza-founder-obamacare-lawsuit-filed-over-manadatory-contraception-coverage>)

(DETROIT) The founder of Domino's Pizza is suing the federal government over mandatory contraception coverage in the health care law.

Tom Monaghan, a devout Roman Catholic, says contraception isn't health care but a "gravely immoral" practice.

He filed a lawsuit Friday in federal court. It also lists as a plaintiff Domino's Farms, a Michigan office park complex that Monaghan owns.

Monaghan offers health insurance that excludes contraception and abortion for employees. The new federal law requires employers to offer insurance including contraception coverage or risk fines.

Monaghan says the law violates his rights, and is asking a judge to strike down the mandate. There are similar lawsuits pending nationwide.

A message left Saturday for Monaghan's attorney, Richard Thompson, was not immediately returned.

The government says the contraception mandate benefits women.

20121217-04

17:53 Ben

Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple (Major Meat Weekend Precipitates Monday Salad Day)

Some tasty looking stuff on the menu today, but after debauchery at Cooper's BBQ in Llano, TX (as well as leftovers therefrom) it seemed meet and right (get it?) to invoke a Salad Day:



Some Kind of Salad

20121217-05 23:56 Tom Photo: Go Out & Enjoy Nature #7



20121217-06

23:57

SteveB

Photo: Cats Imitating Art #4 (Joseph Ducreux, *Self Portrait Yawning*, 1780)



20121217-07

23:58

MarthaH

Cartoon: Christmas #2



<http://wanderinggaia.com/2010/08/13/flight-of-the-condors/>



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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