

There is something pathetic about a man who murders a Catholic priest, and then calls his granny, asking her to sell her house so she can post bail for him. But, 'pathetic' is too weak a word if this man has done what police and prosecutors allege: the right word might be 'heinous.' It's not only heinous that he would murder a priest in the church rectory, for no apparent reason, but also cause suffering before killing him. It is ~~also~~ heinous that the alleged murderer would then plead 'not guilty' by reason of insanity. I can't wait to hear the defense explain why he's insane: is it because he was on a cocktail of hard drugs before he committed this awful crime? Or perhaps he'll claim that chronic use of ~~hard~~ drugs took his mind away and therefore he didn't know what he was doing: unable to know that torture and murder are wrong?

If Gary Bullock's mind was in a moral fog when he murdered Father Eric, it was because he chose to be in a moral fog. This alleged killer is not just sick, what he did was evil. I'm not sure it lets him off the hook to hear what a harsh upbringing he may have had, or if he was bullied when he was a youngster, because even victims make choices about how to respond to unfair or cruel treatment. We are human beings endowed by our Creator with a will: we thus make choices, choices that become habits, habits that become lifestyles, lifestyles that determine our destiny. For the most part, Gary Bullock chose his destiny.

There are a number of murders in the Bible. In fact, the first family, Adam and Eve, had two sons, Cain and Abel. When Abel's sacrifice was deemed acceptable to the Lord and Cain's not, Cain became insanely jealous of his brother. The Genesis story says, "So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? and if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.'" He did not master it!

Because Cain's ability to master sin was in a strange and paradoxical way, limited. He couldn't do it. Could that also be the case with Gary Bullock? Could he be a part of the collective disintegration of our culture? a culture that is convulsing with disorder and violence, vivid scenes of which are burned into our psyches every day through movies, television, video screen and electronic games. A culture saturated with guns and an increasing number of individuals who seem to brandish them with a glee—even against our own elected government. A culture that is running headlong after every form of mind numbing drug.

Father Eric's death may be part of a larger and alarming picture. But lest I sound like a doomsday prophet, I remind you what the apostle Paul wrote to the Roman church, in chapter five, "But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..." In which case, a lot of grace should be coming to Humboldt—soon, I hope.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment