

# For Christians, the ends do not justify the means



On May 31, 2009, George Tiller was murdered in the lobby of his Lutheran church in Wichita, Kansas. Tiller was notorious for performing abortions when the child in the womb was near or even at viability.

Shortly after the first news reports of Tiller's death, I began receiving emails from readers of the About.com Catholicism site asking if the Church would consider Tiller's killing to be murder. So I wrote an article explaining why Tiller's murder could not be justified.

My article elicited a response from an unexpected source: a non-Catholic (indeed, atheist) author who would, the next year, become identified with the term "alt-right" and go on to organize and lead the infamous August 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

I won't use his name here, because thankfully he and the movement he founded have faded into obscurity over the last four years (though, sadly, they have been replaced by others with views just as odious). But I bring up this author's response to my article on George Tiller's murder because it may remind us of something that we too often forget: While "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" may be a common political maxim, it isn't a Christian principle.

The future founder of the alt-right argued that the fact that the Catholic Church would say that George Tiller's murder wasn't justified was proof that the Church did not believe what it has always taught about abortion. If the Church truly believed that abortion is murder, he argued, it would applaud the killing of Tiller and others like him. The end – stopping

abortion – justified the means used by Scott Roeder, Tiller’s self-appointed judge, jury and executioner.

In two follow-up articles, I reminded him (and my readers) of one of the principles at the heart of Catholic moral theology: We cannot do evil that good may come of it. But as I read the comments on his article and on mine, I noted with dismay that some Catholics either accepted his argument outright or expressed their wish that they could do so.

His argument was not only morally flawed but a lie: Not long after, he would come out of the closet praising Margaret Sanger for her racial views and for having the foresight to create an organization that would advance eugenics – read: target Blacks and other minorities (including recent Catholic immigrants) – through the promotion of birth control and, later, abortion. Of course, he wasn’t really trying to make a morally sound argument but, as would become clear over the next few years, to leverage the anger of pro-life Catholics at men such as Tiller in order to radicalize them to advance his own agenda.

And, sadly, he succeeded with some. But in doing so, he did nothing more than politicians and activists of all stripes routinely do in order to advance their agendas: draw us away from the moral principles at the heart of our faith by getting us, first, to mistake political ends for our ultimate end and, second, to come to believe that those political ends justify any means used to bring them to fruition.

“In my beginning is my end,” wrote T.S. Eliot in “East Coker,” the second of the poems that make up his “Four Quartets”; but more importantly, “In my end is my beginning.” Man has, the Church teaches, only one true end: to know, love and serve God. All other ends – all of the goals of our life – must be ordered to that true end.

If we do that – if we find the beginning of our every action,

word and thought in knowing, loving and serving God – those who wish to enlist us in advancing their own agendas by scrambling our moral compasses will find it much harder to do so. That's a lesson that's always good to keep in mind, but perhaps never more so than now.

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