

**The shootings at Virginia Tech, the mouth of Don Imus, and the exoneration of the Duke University lacrosse team have got people talking about what is wrong with our society, our families and ourselves.**

**Our prayers go out to the students, faculty, staff and families of Virginia Tech, which suffered the greatest rampage by a single gunman in the history of our country. People blame the gunman, his parents, the faculty, video games, gun shops, movies, the government and more.**

**In five syllables, Don Imus slandered the Rutgers University women's basketball team, revealed himself as a racist, and ended a career as a controversial broadcaster. His downfall has provoked an outcry against the lyrics of some rap music.**

**The lawsuit alleging that some white members of Duke's lacrosse team raped a black woman has been dismissed, and the media are being criticized for rushing to judgment when the case first came to light a year ago.**

**All these incidents, all involving colleges, should help us reflect on what we affirm and what we deny. We should say no to violence, racism, and false accusations. We should say yes to education, compassion, and the truth. However, in the heat of the moment, we often fail. We fail the people in our families, classmates at school, we fail the poor and we fail ourselves. When we cheat at work or we overspend, we say yes to a way of life that eats away at who we are, and we are the body of Christ.**

**Just before I baptize someone, I ask 3 times, "Do you believe?" But just before that, I ask 3 times, "Do you renounce?" Whenever you renew your baptismal promises, you get the same questions. Do you renounce Satan, his works and empty promises? Will you say no to the false promises of racism and violence? Will you say no to hatred and lying? Before you can say what you will believe, you have to renounce what you will no longer believe.**

**Jesus asked Peter 3 questions, too. He asked, "Do you love me?" Peter was offended by the repetition, but Jesus probably still felt a little perturbed about the 3 questions Peter heard during the passion: "You aren't one of this man's disciples, are you?" "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Peter should have said yes to all 3 questions, but instead he said no. Jesus posed 3 more questions, not just about discipleship, but about love.**

**The recent incidents at schools of higher learning are asking us similar questions: Whose disciple are you? Will you reach out to those who are so troubled they may resort to violence? Will you stop repeating racist jokes? Will you take the time to learn the truth before judging another person's actions? In other words, "Do you renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his empty promises?" Once you renounce, then you can love.**