

The man accused of dragging a six year old to death entered the courthouse this week wearing a bulletproof vest. Our community repudiates acts of theft and violence that can lead to the heinous murder of a completely innocent child, but we also found ourselves protecting the alleged perpetrator from a vengeful act of violence. Some things are just not compatible. In this case disregard for human life is incompatible with respect for human life. That bulletproof vest demonstrated in a small way the goodness at the heart of our community that struggles to behave consistently in its respect for life. We will protect from violence even the alleged perpetrator of an unspeakable crime.

Whenever incompatible views present themselves, we have to decide what to do. We can ignore them and do nothing. We can try to change the other's point of view. Or we can reassert our opinion and let the opposition stand.

Almost every family knows incompatibility. One generation disapproves the hairstyle of another, or their language, or their living arrangements, or their spending habits. Sometimes families keep quiet too much, or they say things they regret. We're usually better off to acknowledge the differences and talk about them, even if the two sides never agree.

In the early church two sides formed as Christianity grew apart from Judaism. Some beliefs simply remained incompatible. Some people based their entire lives on the first five books of the bible; others became devoted to the person and teaching of Jesus. Families divided. Communities separated.

Jesus' own community took sides over fasting. John's disciples fasted, Jesus' did not. According to Mark, Jesus seized this opportunity to teach by way of patches and wineskins. When something is old, you can't just patch on something new. Everything will be lost. Sometimes you just have to throw out what is old. These were hard words for the fledgling Christian community that hated to let go of Judaism.

As a church we continually face the incompatibility of our beliefs with some of society's. Vatican II's last document, *The Church in the Modern World*, recognized that the church is part of a culture undergoing a storm of change. We bring religious experience to society, but we also learn from society. The council said the church had to read the signs of the times and to dialogue with the modern world.

As a church, as a family, or as individuals, we often face views incompatible with our own. Sometimes they challenge us to throw out the comforts of our past. Sometimes they enable us to hold more firmly the sacred ground on which we stand.