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Bin Laden Is Killed!

Michael Sean Winters | May. 1, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

As soon as CNN announced that the President would be addressing the nation on short notice, on a Sunday night, and that the address had nothing to do with Libya, my mind leapt at the possibility. Either Kim Jong Il or Castro or bin Laden was dead but, of that triumvirate of evil, the first two would not require a speech by the President. It must be bin Laden.

As we waited for the speech, the news broke, but it broke not like a levee or an egg. The news did not rush through in one swoop. It dribbled out. Depending on which channel you watched, the differing headlines captured the moral significance of a particular piece of information. Some said, ?Osama bin Laden dead.? Others said, ?Osama bin Laden killed.? Which was it? The fact of this evil man?s demise is cause to raise a glass no matter the circumstances, but truly evil men should not be allowed to die in their beds. As the details were filled in, it became clear that he had been killed by U.S. Special Forces, ground forces no less, operating in conjunction with the Pakistani intelligence services. He did not die of a stroke or a heart attack. This was no drone strike. Bin Laden was able to see the men who were about to kill him. Like the workers on the upper stories of the World Trade Center, he had time to contemplate his death but, unlike those innocent victims, he had a moment to recognize that justice had finally found its way to his compound in suburban Islamabad. He could hide no more.

I do not normally take delight in the death of a fellow human being. Nor do I support the death penalty. But, if there was one man on the planet whom it was important to kill, not to just let die, it was Osama bin Laden. You should not be able to murder well nigh to 3,000 Americans and others with impunity. If you commit such a crime, you should fear every moment of every day that U.S. Special Forces will come crashing through the door to bring you to justice. I am sure bin Laden knew better than to be captured alive. (Given the legal nightmare of Guantanamo, thank God he was killed on the spot!) It took a long time to track bin Laden down, too long, and it is impossible not to think that we might have reached this happy day earlier if we had not detoured through Baghdad. But, this is no time for recriminations. It is time to celebrate.

As I write these words, images of young people streaming into the streets in front of the White House chanting ?USA? and singing the National Anthem are coming onto the television screen. If it were not so late and I did not have an early morning, I would drive down myself. Vengeance is not a healthy emotion, I know. Assassination is against the law, to be sure. But, better to indulge and go to confession. I am glad Osama bin Laden did not die in his bed, as I am glad Hitler did not die in his bed and as I am distressed hat Stalin and Mao did. Men who commit such evil do not deserve normal considerations of human sympathy or civilized respect. The world is well rid of bin Laden. It is a great day to be alive.

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