

A Desperate Need for True Education

Again on Friday we witnessed **another massacre**, this time played out in a movie theater.

Much could be said of this latest of what are becoming “normal” tragedies, but **one aspect particularly grabbed our attention**. On July 20th, the *Washington Post* made this report of the perpetrator:

Holmes, 24, had shown scholarly promise.... He'd earned a merit scholarship out of high school.... He had graduated from college with honors. ...He'd gone to graduate school at the University of Colorado at Denver.

And on the same day the AP reported, “**In academic achievement, he was at the top of the top,**” recalled [University of California] Riverside Chancellor Timothy P. White.”

In short, by most standards, **Mr. Holmes would be considered a *highly educated young man***.

These facts, along with the memory of the shootings in **Columbine High School** and **Virginia Tech**, beg the questions: ***What does it mean to educate and what does it mean to be educated?*** Does attending top-notch schools, achieving outstanding test scores, participating in extra-curricular activities, and all that we commonly associate with a good education guarantee that one is *educated*?

We do not aim these questions first and foremost at educational institutions, or at the educational system. On the contrary, we hold that every American adult must face these questions, since the challenge of education regards the handing on of what a society holds to be most valuable to new generations.

We affirm that every educational endeavor has its foundation in the *hypothesis* it offers young people for the *reason for their existence*. It seems to us that almost universally we now offer young people the **achievement of success** as the most trusted hypothesis for the reason to live.

We find this hypothesis *terribly insufficient* for equipping young people adequately for life.

Real education means an introduction to all of reality and most importantly to its overall *meaning*, as Luigi Giussani points out in his book, *The Risk of Education*. Only by re-evaluating what we offer to young people regarding the *meaning* of all of reality, *including the meaning of their own lives*, can we begin to authentically face the root of such recurrent tragedies. For this reason, we urgently invite anyone of good will to engage with us in the attempt to rediscover the essence of a truly human education.