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"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."—Edmund Burke.

Our Nation

To United States president assassins, past, present and, God forbid, future:

How can your crazed mind be made to understand that you can kill a man but you can't kill the president of the United States?

Four times now you have mortally wounded the nation's chief executive. Yet the office of president of the United States has remained filled and the nation has gone on.

You have, to be sure, rocked the ship of state. Each time, the ship shudders. But each time she has stabilized herself and has sailed on. So it will be this time. So it would be again, if your madness should erupt yet once more.

Thirty-five presidents, four assassinated. That is a rate of one in nine. It is appalling enough of itself, but all the more so in the light of what we so proudly hail as the American way of life.

We like to think that our system of government and society is the most enlightened the world has seen. An assassination shakes our faith in that system. Is the price of individual freedom the freedom for an individual to put a shot through the head of state?

Brutal as it sounds, perhaps that is the price. To prevent you, the assassin, from firing the fatal shot would require a police state condition that would be absolutely intolerable and would completely negate our precious democracy.

Still, neither can a society that believes itself to be civilized tolerate your madness. What can be done to stop you? It is humanly impossible to identify you in advance. Or is it?

For you—the potential assassin—are one of us, or will be in the generations to come.

That is why you—each of us, really—must be led to understand that the American system of government is not like any other sort of government—not a kingdom, not a dictatorship, not a state ruled by a power elite.

The United States, rather, is a democracy, a republican form of government, based on the consent of the governed; a government of laws, not men. None of this source of power can be destroyed, the way a man, however high or however low, can be destroyed.

On this funeral day, when the nation's grief is deepest with the burial of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, it is for us, the living, to search our own hearts, and in the process thereby to strengthen our faith, in ourselves, in our trust in God.

In this way lies the only hope of preventing you, the assassin, from infecting the American society with the cancer of hate.

Faith in Law

The slaying of Lee Harvey Oswald adds a bizarre, brutal postscript to the tragic story of President Kennedy's assassination.

Some, in grief and anger over the murder of the president, may call it old fashioned frontier justice. But no man may take the law into his own hands, once the law has started on its slow, careful path to justice.

One crime, however monstrous, and however it may shake the nation and the world, cannot justify another crime, even the shooting of an accused, disreputable assassin in the basement of a city jail in Dallas, Tex.

If we have faith in law, we must let the law take its own deliberate course.