

Being the Church in a Time of Crisis

After yet another mass shooting this week, the immediate search was for some identifiable cause and, thus, some way to cobble together an explanation—however frail or illegitimate—for a tragedy of this kind. To find a cause suggests that there might have been a way to prevent such actions. But causes and explanations never seem to come; nor do effective ways of prevention.

In the service of Baptism, which defines the path and trajectory of a faithful life, we pray for each and every person these possibilities: “Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.”

These are often taken as sentimental words, appropriate only to the moment. But they are so much more than this, for they frame the whole of our lives in desires and habits that leave no room for violence. And, if taken seriously—deeply and profoundly seriously—they open our lives to grace and hope no matter the nature of our past, or our circumstances, or any other factors that might appear to be a cause. There is a greater truth, which we recite and practice. This prayer answers our tragedies.

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the church historian Martin Marty observed that the church was heroic simply by being the church, by maintaining and proclaiming the triumph of love in the event of Jesus Christ. This seems on any ordinary day altogether prosaic—hardly heroic at all. But the Gospel, the good news of God, redeems even the worst evil we can accomplish. And it’s this that we have to share and this that we have to show to others,—as the church alone can so richly and effectively offer.

Peter Vanderveen

The Episcopal Church Responds



Office of the Bishop
The Rt. Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 8:38-39

As a community we are sickened and horrified. There are times in life when you just cannot find the words. As we confront yet another wave of death and violence I simply cannot believe the pain. Collectively we are all asking ourselves “Why?” Why such rage? Why are so many dead? Why is our nation once again left in mourning?

We offer our prayers for the more than 50 killed, more than 400 wounded and all those affected by this horror. As we celebrate the Eucharist and Daily Office in our parishes we collectively offer our prayers and plead for God’s wisdom and guidance. We believe in the knowledge that God was with them as they left this earthly journey in pain, yet, this scourge of violence cannot, cannot, continue. When will we look at one another through the eyes of Jesus Christ so that we may truly become instruments of God’s peace?

As a people of God, we will offer our hourly prayers. But we must do more.

We must resist the urge to polarize the issue along lines of race, religion and politics and instead come together as a single church and a single nation. I am asking the people of this diocese to place aside our political divisions and

find a way to come together as a community and live out the message of Jesus Christ to the world. As it is written in Ephesians 4:2-3 *“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

As a people of God, we will offer our daily prayers. But we must be prophets of peace.

So long as people look to solve their disagreements with violence this needs to be our single greatest priority. The violence that rained down upon the crowd in Las Vegas reflects the worst of the sin and brokenness of our human condition. I am asking that we devote a portion of our Diocesan Convention to re-commit ourselves to the work of diffusing violence in our hearts, in our community, our nation and indeed throughout our world, including the role that guns play in this problem. Only then can we truly live into our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

I ask that we become voices of reconciliation in a hurting world. We seek to be the face of Christ to the world. For the next 30 days may we pray the Lord’s Prayer and the Prayer of St. Francis. In addition to prayer, may we become prophets of peace. We need to pray we have the courage to confront evil in this world. I ask that the Diocese of Pennsylvania now become a place that engages the world in peace and encourages respect for the sanctity of human life. We will find a way to shine a light in the darkness in the name of Christ. We have no other choice.

In Christ,
The Rt. Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez
XVI Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

www.diopa.org

Statement from the Anglican Communion Primates Meeting in Canterbury

To Bishop Dan Edwards of the Diocese of Nevada.

We were greatly distressed to learn of the dreadful events in Las Vegas last night. The scale of the loss of life and the numbers of injured is truly shocking. We are sending our deepest condolences to you and to the people of your diocese – in particular, the people of Las Vegas.

We are praying for the families and friends of those who have died and for the many people who have been wounded. We remember, too, everyone else caught up in this tragedy – including the emergency services (first responders). We pray that the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with the people of Las Vegas as they endure this trauma.

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