

St. Mary's Episcopal Church (Anglican)



2062 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96826-2219
Phone: 808-949-4655

To the beloved 'ohana of Saint Mary's:

Aloha kākou,

I write this at 3:19 pm on Tuesday, May 24, 2022 from my office at the church. My two elementary-aged sons have been home from school for about an hour. At this moment, they're likely playing in the neighborhood or playing video games. Either way, another elementary-aged child or two will pop up in our living room window and ask if our boys can play. This is how it is most days.

In the small community of Uvalde, Texas, the families of 18 elementary-aged children have learned that their kids aren't coming home. For the second time in about a decade a young man with a gun has entered an elementary school and killed children.

This is the 39th shooting at a place of education in the United States since the start of this year alone.

In 2018, on what was both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day that year, I received a text from one of the youth at my former parish. He was hiding somewhere on his high school campus, listening to the sounds of an assault rifle get closer and closer and wanted me to pray for him. He, and his brother, were both students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, two towns south of Boca Raton where I lived at the time.

Both of them survived. Many of their friends did not.

I sometimes refer to my generation as a kind of "gap generation." My age cohort are a little too old to be Millennials and too young to be Generation X. I'm not sure what to call us, but I am quite certain that my generation was defined by the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado on April 20, 1999. This was because we witnessed an astounding act of violence and both the perpetrators and victims were our age.

It wasn't the first school shooting of my memory (that would be the one from Jonesboro, Arkansas), but it was the first one to set the stage of what would be repeated a rage-inducing and nauseating number of times.

I am angry. I don't know about you. But I am angry that this is the world in which we live, which we are supposed to simply accept.

We are called, as baptized people, to live our lives defined by the future vision we get from the scriptures: a world where there is "no mourning or crying or pain", "where death is no more" (Revelation 21), and where our weapons are turned into farming tools—because not only are they rendered useless, but we don't even remember how to use them for purposes of violence (see Isaiah 2:4). This means that one place where we Christians can start in rebuking the demonic forces of this world is in rejecting weapons and violence. And we can hold other Christians accountable in this.

As it says in Wisdom: "God didn't make death." (Wisdom 1:13) "Death entered the universe only through the devil's envy." (Wisdom 2:24) Death is a defeated enemy and we are called by our Lord Jesus to have no part in Death's machinations.

There will be more to say. Right now, the challenge is to not only pray for the victims and their families, but to also pray for the families of the young man who carried out this violence. To also pray for our elected officials, those we might even consider "enemies." We are called by our Lord to love them all. That's paramount at this time.

I am currently considering hosting some form of service on Thursday (the Feast of the Ascension). I will keep you posted. In the meantime, if you want to talk or pray with me, I will be available tomorrow and all week. Office or phone call or text or email are all acceptable. But tonight, I'm going to spend time with my kids knowing that many tonight will not be able to do so.

Pray for our country. Pray for our children.

And as we'll read on Sunday: "Come, Lord Jesus."

—Fr. Charles+