

“LET THE CHILDREN COME UNTO ME”: TRUSTING IN THE LORD AMID TRAGEDY

For once, I spent a day without looking at the news, whether on television or the internet. It was mostly a “media free” day, occupied with several errands off campus and an Archdiocesan Zoom meeting. Only late in the afternoon did I become aware of **yet another** mass shooting, this time in an **elementary** school in Uvalde, Texas. Scripture passages immediately came to mind: our Lord’s words in Matthew 19:14, “Let the **children** come to me, and do not prevent them; for the **kingdom of heaven** belongs to such as these.” And the second passage, Psalm 13 (*Quamdiu Domine*) rang in my head: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” I could add a third, as Saint Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption.” How could the **Lord not be grieved**, with such violence and murderous thoughts seething in the hearts of some of His people?

The next morning, our Holy Father addressed the tragedy at the end of his Wednesday General Audience: “My **heart is broken** by the massacre in the elementary school in Texas.” He spoke of the “indiscriminate trade of arms,” and “imploring all so that these tragedies will never be able to happen again.” This mind-numbing helplessness characterizes the aftermath of yet two more mass shootings just ten days apart, first in Buffalo, NY and then last Tuesday in **Uvalde, Texas**. Questions flood my mind in rapid succession, and in no particular order: Copycat murder from Buffalo? Mental illness? Domestic dispute? Eventually, these details will emerge, as they always do. **How long, O Lord?** Gun violence has become so routine as to numb even the most sensitive of consciences. Has this become “business as usual” in our nation? What ought to be our response?

The **Chicago Sun–Times** has gone to the lengths of keeping a running tally, complete with graphics, in their database. If the fact such a database exists is not troubling enough, the website allows an individual to filter the search by date, cause, race/ethnicity and even includes a yellow dot on a map, locating each victim. Check it out for yourself ([click here](#)) and then ask yourself what has brought us to this point? I am quite familiar with a search engine such as this, only the fields include baseball statistics: BA, H, HR, RBI and ERA! Or people familiar with surfing **Zillow** know that red dots identify homes for sale, yellow for recently sold. **Chicago** recorded **793 homicides** in 2021— including the July 4th weekend in which over 100 people were shot, 19 fatally. *Quamdiu, Domine!* I am not intending to denigrate any one city, but only to indicate how **commonplace** violence has become. There’s no simple solution; the root causes are many.

What began as a warm late spring day at an elementary school 80 miles west of **San Antonio**, morphed into an **unspeakable** tragedy for the youngest and most innocent in our midst. The list has grown painfully long. Many identify Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999 as the turning point, the beginning of a new threat **deep from within** the soul of a troubled nation. One could easily add: Sandy Hook in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012; Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe, Texas, both in 2018. I refuse to name the most recent perpetrator in this column, as it only draws more attention to the **heinous crime** against nine and ten-year-olds. Nor can I fathom the **depth of trauma** these innocent children will suffer for years to come. How would I explain this to my child?

Intellectually, one can fathom that we live in a society in which **none** of us is **completely safe** from the threat of terrorism, home-grown or foreign. Nevertheless, we are called to lead our lives absent the **grip of fear** overpowering our God given desire to love and to be loved. Otherwise, we will have lost, and evil will have triumphed. That is not the Christian conviction. There are things that communities **can do**, as difficult as the conversations may be. **Parental social media monitoring** is crucial, with active parents who are aware— as difficult as that is— of what is going on in their children’s lives. Local leaders and communities can debate safety measures in schools, gun legislation, mental health protocols and a host of related issues. These must be discussed **candidly** without demonizing each other, respecting both our U.S. Constitution and using our common sense. We can strive to ensure the protection of all schools, with on-site security.

This latest tragedy is not simply about the sheer number of fatalities. Statistics reveal that in 2021 an average of 117 Americans died in traffic accidents each day, 42, 915 total in 2021. That too is staggering. But this is **qualitatively different**. We assume risk as part of the reality of driving on the open road. We also take

precautions. I cannot imagine driving without a seatbelt, so ingrained is that in my routine. Today's senior citizens recall the days when they crawled under their desks during the Cold War era drills. Today, similar drills are conducted— but as much from an enemy within as from a possible foreign attack. Last Tuesday's tragedy reinforced that this “new normal,” cannot remain so. Nor should we accept that our children are unsafe while merely learning their multiplication tables. Please God, we must pull together and do better. The *status quo* is unacceptable.

- On the day of my ordination in 1989, my mother was precisely **one week younger** than I am on ordination weekend 2022. Not that there's anything wrong with that! Oh my!! Where have all the years gone? I am incredibly blessed, in my priesthood and service among you here at the Cathedral. Congratulations to our five new priests.
- Top ten? No more. The United States **no longer** boasts a single city in the top 10 by **metro population**, perhaps for the first time in my lifetime. New York City clocks in at #11. China, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, India and Bangladesh each has one or two cities in the top ten. How many of the top ten can you name? (see answers below)
- Mark your calendars. On Sunday June 19, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, we will hold a **Eucharistic Procession** (with hymns led by the Choir) at the conclusion of the 10:00 am Mass. The route exits the front door, towards the back courtyard via Dayton Ave. (quieter than Selby!) with a stop at the statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe and then returns to Church for final benediction.
- My seminary classmate **Fr. Mike Byron** died just days after returning from a pilgrimage in Greece. Please pray for the Byron family, parishioners and staff at Pax Christi in Eden Prairie. We took “deanery tours” to visit Archdiocesan churches—at least 25 times— visiting **every single parish** at least once. I drove; he recorded our impressions, compliments, criticisms, and quips about myriad ecclesial edifices. “Look at the dust bunnies everywhere!”(me); “The Easter candle is five years old!” (he). Priests always have opinions! If we disagreed—which we did **plenty** of times— it was always with a smile! *Requiescat in pace.*

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector

Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, Sao Paulo, Mexico City,
Cairo, Mumbai, Beijing, Dhaka, Osaka