



29 October 2015
Feast of St. Narcissus of Jerusalem

ANCC Bishop Calls for an End to Gun Violence

+ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

On behalf of the People of God and the clergy of the American National Catholic Church (ANCC), I wish to express grave moral and spiritual concern over what has been correctly called an “epidemic” of gun violence in the United States.

In two days, Catholic and Protestant Christians will celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints, in which we remember and honor those who have gone to be with the Lord. It is appropriate that we call to mind all the thousands who have died from gun violence.

Between 1 January 2013 and 2 October 2015—a total of 1,004 days—1,260 people have been killed and another 3,606 have been wounded by guns. In that same period of time, there have been 994 mass shootings.ⁱ The total of all deaths in U.S. wars, from Lexington to Afghanistan, is nearly 1,400,000. (The latest casualty fell in the final week of October.) Staggering as that number is, it’s in fact slightly less than approximately more than 1,500,000 people killed by guns since 1968.ⁱⁱ

Gun violence has become so commonplace that one British journalist concluded three years ago that the U.S. is in a *de facto* civil war.ⁱⁱⁱ After the latest mass killing on 2nd of October, this time at Oregon’s Umpqua Community College, a stunned President Obama spoke for many in this nation when he lamented that “somehow this has become routine...We’ve become numb to this... It cannot be this easy for someone who wants to inflict harm on someone else to get his or her hands on a gun.”^{iv}

This tragic state of affairs shocks and grieves every person of good will. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we Christians are especially saddened that so many acts of gun violence darken each and every day of the calendar.

In 1963, Saint John XXIII, whom God inspired to convene the Second Vatican Council, released *Pacem in Terris*, one of the most important encyclicals of the twentieth century. Written at the height of the Cold War and shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis, John’s encyclical was an eloquent plea for an end to the out-of-control nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold War has ended. But Saint John’s call for



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disarmament fifty years ago also speaks to the epidemic of gun violence plaguing this nation today.

John XXIII pointed out that genuine peace between nations can't be founded on the distrust that prompts the stockpiling of weapons. Instead, peace must be grounded in mutual trust. Such a state of affairs, he wrote, "not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good," as well as being in accord with the regulatory principles of "truth, justice, and vigorous and sincere co-operation."

The extraordinary proliferation of firearms in the U.S.—currently more than 300 million—is a stockpiling and as threatening to personal safety today as nuclear stockpiling was to international safety a generation ago. In both cases, the sheer quantity of weapons seduces us with a false sense of security that blinds us to the very real possibility of their frequent abuse. We put ourselves at physical risk if we do nothing to curtail gun violence. We damage our spiritual wellbeing too.

I invite my fellow Christians in all denominations and jurisdictions to join me in praying for legislation that aims at doing something about the proliferation of guns and gun violence in our nation. As Saint John XXIII said, Christians are called to "co-operate in the effort to banish fear." In this nation, right now, we honor that obligation to God and to our fellow citizens by controlling the number as well as the kinds of guns available. Our shared hope, in the beautiful words of the prophet Isaiah (60:18), is that "Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise."

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop
The American National Catholic Church

ⁱ "994 mass shootings in 1,004 days: this is what America's gun crisis looks like," *The Guardian* (2 October 2015).

ⁱⁱ "American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics," Congressional Research Service (2 January 2015): <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>; Louis Jacobson, "More Americans killed by guns since 1968 than in all U.S. wars, columnist Nicholas Kristof writes," *Punditfact* (27 August 2015): <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2015/aug/27/nicholas-kristof/more-americans-killed-guns-1968-all-wars-says-colu/>



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iii Henry Potter, "American gun use is out of control. Shouldn't the world intervene?", *The Guardian* (21 September 2013).

iv Maya Rhodan, "Obama Says Mass Shootings Have Become 'Routine' in America", *Time* (1 October 2015).