



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

16 February 2018

A Pastoral Letter from Presiding Bishop George R. Lucey, FCM, on the Parkland, Florida Shooting

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the holy season of Lent, is a day in which we reflect upon the fragility of life.

A tragedy in Parkland, Florida, this Ash Wednesday brought that message home in a shocking way. A disturbed young man entered a high school with a semi-automatic weapon, killing 17 students and faculty and wounding many others. May perpetual light shine on those who were slain and bring comfort to those who grieve for them.

This is a horror with which we've become too familiar. According to the "New York Times," there have been 239 school shootings since the 2012 tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Many of them involved the use of semi-automatic weapons.

Additionally, shooters armed with semi-automatic weapons recently have killed dozens of innocent persons in theaters, nightclubs, and open-air concerts.

As I celebrated Mass on the day following the Florida tragedy, I was struck by the appropriateness of the appointed reading from Deuteronomy. In it, Moses presents to his people two choices: life or death. If they love the Lord, he tells them, and obey God's commandments, they will live and prosper. If they do not, they will perish—not at the hands of an angry and vengeful God, but from their own disdain for both God and God's precious gift of human life.

"I have set before you life and death," Moses says, "the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him." (19b-20a)

It is my heartfelt prayer that this latest squandering of human life prompts our nation, citizens as well as lawmakers, to choose life by curtailing the proliferation of semi-automatic weapons of death. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we Christians are especially called to cherish our fellow humans and treat them with the respect and dignity properly owed creatures made in the likeness of God.

God grant that our lawmakers enact public policy that chooses life and avoids the curse of self-destruction. God grant that each and every one of us, enlightened by God's grace, come to affirm with gratitude and joy the preciousness of life.

Signed on the Friday After Ash Wednesday.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George R. Lucey, FCM".

Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop