



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

25 May 2022

Memorial of St. Bede the Venerable

In the name of the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit!

When Matthew the evangelist tried to describe King Herod's slaughter of the Bethlehem innocents, the recollection of the event left him so dumbstruck with horror that he could only quote a passage from the prophet Jeremiah:

Thus saith the Lord: A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were no more.

Once again, there's weeping in the land, this time over the savage murder of school children in Uvalde, Texas. The tragedy is second only to Sandy Hook in the sheer number of victims. It's the 27th school shooting this year alone, and it comes just days after the tragic murder of 10 people in a Buffalo store.

The heartbreaking regularity of gun deaths in this nation, and especially the murder of innocent children, breaks our hearts and wearies our spirit. We cry out with the psalmist:

*How long, O Lord, will you forget us forever?
How long will you hide your face from us?*

At this point we know little about the Uvalde shooter, but it's hard not to imagine that he was psychologically ill. Yet we know that the percentage of mental illness in the United States is comparable to percentages in other countries. What isn't comparable is the easy accessibility of weapons in this nation. There are 393 million firearms in civilian hands in the United States, a number that outstrips the total population by nearly 70 million.

We are drowning in a sea of guns, which makes tragedies like Uvalde all the more likely. And Rachel still weeps.

As followers of the Prince of Peace, we must reaffirm and strengthen our alliances with all people of good will to persuade lawmakers to finally, at long last, better regulate both the types of weapons on the market and their accessibility. We must do everything we can to reach out to troubled individuals, especially youths, who might be tempted to duplicate the carnage of Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Uvalde. We simply must take as our own the task of ridding the nation of the blight of gun deaths. We are indeed the keepers of our sisters and our brothers, especially those who, like our children, are most at risk.

So let us pray for these latest victims and their families. Let us pray also for the young man responsible for this tragedy. But let's roll up our sleeves and put our faith in action by at long last stopping the carnage.

Then Rachel's weeping will finally cease.