



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

August 28, 2025
Feast of St. Augustine

Pastoral Letter on the Tragedy of Gun Violence

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

*"A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."*

— Matthew 2:16-18

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this Feast of St. Augustine, I find myself reflecting on his words about the ministry of bishop: *"What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me."* As I write to you today, in the wake of yet another school shooting here in the United States, I take consolation in our faith lived together as the Body of Christ. And yet, I share with you a profound sorrow and righteous anger over the senseless gun violence that has claimed the lives of two young children and left many others injured.

We cannot look upon such tragedy and remain unmoved. These children, killed even as they prayed at Mass, are in the truest sense, the Church's newest martyrs. Their deaths expose once again the moral and spiritual crisis in which our nation finds itself — a crisis marked by political paralysis, by the idolatry of weapons, and by a refusal to recognize that the so-called "right" to own guns has been placed above the lives of our children.

As Christians, our baptismal vows call us to love God and neighbor. To take up arms against children, or to defend systems that perpetuate such slaughter, is the complete denial of that baptismal promise.

As American National Catholics, we have borne witness to the distortion of Christ's command to love. We have seen how His preferential option for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized has been co-opted by movements that cloak themselves in the language of Christianity, yet preach a gospel of supremacy, exclusion, and fear. They proclaim a Christ who is unrecognizable to the Christian soul.

History continues to repeat itself when its lessons go unheeded. Hatred, violence, and indifference grow where love is silenced. But I believe we, as the ANCC, are called to be a clear and unwavering voice a visible sign of God's love in the world. We must work to end the rhetoric of division, to find common ground, and to welcome with compassion our immigrant sisters and brothers, our LGBTQIA+ siblings, and all those who have been radicalized by voices of hate echoing across our world.

On this feast, St. Augustine reminds us of the power of love to renew what sin destroys: *"People are renewed by love. As sinful desire ages them, so love rejuvenates them."* In another homily he exhorts us: *"If we receive the Eucharist worthily, we become what we receive."* As Catholics, we profess that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives — the Real Presence of Christ among us. That reality must take flesh in us. To receive the Eucharist is to become Christ's presence for the world: to be agents of justice, builders of peace, and bearers of love.

Today, in the shadow of yet another national tragedy, let us recommit ourselves to this mission. Let us embody Christ's love in our lives and work tirelessly for a society where children may grow in safety, where love is stronger than hate, and where peace is more powerful than violence.

May the God of peace strengthen us, may Christ's love guide us, and may the Spirit renew us in courage and hope.

In Christ's peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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