

May 25, 2022

Dear Friends,

Thus says the Lord:

A voice is heard in Ramah,

lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;

she refuses to be comforted for her children,

because they are no more. (*Jeremiah 31:15*)



Christ Church  
Glendale

*Deep Roots, Growing Faith*

*An Episcopal Parish at*  
965 Forest Avenue  
Glendale, OH 45246

These bitter words are cited in Matthew's gospel as the prophesy fulfilled by King Herod's order to kill all the male children in and around Bethlehem two years old and younger, in his futile attempt to eliminate the 'threat' from the infant Jesus. They are words we read each year when we remember the Holy Innocents, just three days after Christmas Day. They are words that seem appropriate today as well.

Our commemoration of the Holy Innocents is never just about the children in Bethlehem *millennia* ago. It is a time to remember all those, especially children, whose lives are lost in acts of violence for which there is no explanation or reason. Today the number of the Holy Innocents has grown by 21—19 school children and 2 teachers, gunned down in their elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, by a young man who we can only assume suffered from a deep and dangerous psychosis.

The gaping question 'why' with which we are all struggling today, is only a little smaller than the gaping hole of grief that threatens to consume the mothers, fathers, siblings, and other family members of those whose lives were snuffed out in an instant yesterday. The question is a gaping and yawning chasm into which we can only stare, and ask the Holy Spirit to help us support, through the unbreakable chain of prayer, those for whom the very purpose of living seems to have been taken away.

We must continue to be vigilant and diligent in our support of those with mental illness, remembering that to have a mental illness in no way makes homicidal figures out of all who do. Most of us with mental health diagnoses share as deeply and genuinely in the pain of this moment as anyone.

We must reconsider our approach to the possession of firearms designed with the sole purpose of inflicting as much death and carnage in as little time as possible. They may have a place in our military arsenal; they do not have a place on our streets, in our

homes, or in our schools. But having that debate in this moment will not satisfy the voice that cries out in Ramah; it will not stop the weeping of the Rachels of Uvalde.

What we can do today is to stop, turn off the news, the endless collection of talking heads whose spinning of events easily cause our heads to spin. Set aside twenty-two minutes of silence, if you can (one minute for each person who died at the school, including the assailant), or eleven minutes (thirty seconds for each person), and listen to your own breath, the beating of your own heart, the gift of your own life, and remember what a precious gift it is. If you need a 'mantra', the ancient prayer of the Church 'Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy' may work well.

Nothing we do or say will bring back the Holy Innocents of Uvalde, or Buffalo, or any other place you name where senseless tragedy has struck. But if we give the conscious gift of our own time to remember those whom God holds in the holy hands of creative love, we are doing what we can to be even a pin prick of light that says to the darkness 'your shadow may great, but you cannot win.'

Here is a prayer, adapted from the Collect for the Holy Innocents in the Book of Common Prayer. Perhaps it will offer some comfort.

We remember today, O God, the slaughter of all innocent victims, most especially those killed in Uvalde yesterday. Receive, we pray into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might frustrate the forces of wickedness we see around us, establishing instead your rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, how lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

May the souls of all the faithful departed, by the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Faithfully,

*Daniel +*