



**Statement from
The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain
Bishop of Sioux Falls
August 5, 2019**

In response to mass shootings carried out in El Paso, TX and Dayton, OH

The tragic killings of so many innocents in El Paso and Dayton this past weekend tear at the heart of us all who, as people of faith, believe in the sanctity of all human life. Our prayers are with the injured and their families and with the families and friends who have lost loved ones. It is impossible for most of us to comprehend the depth of their sorrow. May Our Lady, who sorrowed at the death of her Son, console and encourage them.

We pray for the repose of the souls of those whose God-gifted lives have been taken from them through these evil actions. May they rest in peace.

We ought also to acknowledge the courage and professionalism of law enforcement, first responders, and the many others who, with caring hearts, reached out to those in danger. They, along with those caught in the horrific scenes who acted bravely to save strangers, have been ministers of hope.

Given the many such similar tragedies over recent years the questions inevitably arise as to how could such atrocities continue to happen and what might be done to diminish them. Surely and importantly those responsible for these reprehensible acts must be held to account through our system of fair and impartial justice.

It must be a priority for our public officials elected and appointed, counseled by professionals in their fields, to seek to address mental health issues. They also need to evaluate whether troubled persons can too easily access firearms which have been used in these mass murders. These recurring incidents have become a cancer in our nation. Racism, dehumanization, and violence have no place in a free and open society. Most especially, such actions must never be viewed as justification for political or ideological venting or unjust discrimination.

Laws and their enforcement, however, can only do so much. Humble recognition that, left to our own fallen nature, such tragedies are likely to occur in our current culture is needed. The ultimate antidote is the recognition that God alone is the giver of life and that there is moral Truth that requires the respect for the dignity of all persons.

The ultimate law is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. When we do so, even with all our diversity, we can respond to evil with charity and seek to better assure a safe and more stable society.

‘Be not afraid’ the angel assured Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, and Jesus assured the apostles on the sea and in the upper room. Our Lord encourages us these unsettling days to be not afraid.

Jesus over and over again said, ‘peace be with you’. When our trust and hope is in Him, peace can be ours, perspective can be received and the grace to cope with the passing tragedies of life is made possible.

Be not afraid, peace be with you.

May Our Lady, mother of consolation and peace, be with us all.