



Gun Violence in the United States: A Kyrie

After Parkland, Florida, February 14, 2018

When we fail to advocate
for gun law reform;
for sensible restrictions on purchase
for limiting the power of those who benefit from the gun industry
Lord, have mercy.

When we project blame for gun violence on to
those with mental illness,
those who are strangers,
those who are immigrants
Christ, have mercy.

When we fail to work for a "dis-armed" society,
To advocate for justice, health care, education for all,
To learn to talk through fears and communicate across boundaries
To work to establish a "Just world for all"
Lord have mercy.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sin, and lead us to life in peace and abundance.

Or

In Christ, who makes all things new, we are forgiven our sin and given courage to create new ways of peace and justice in our world.

They are All Our Ancestors Now:

Creating Litanies of Lament and Empowerment to Address Gun Violence in the US

A Litany is an ancient Christian pattern of prayer which is used to call on the power of the communion of saints to intercede with God for the needs of the living. Saints are called by name, and the community responds: Pray for us!

The point of a litany is to bring the spiritual power of those who have died to bear on the situation of the present moment. The form of a litany is call and response, with a rhythm

established between leader and responders. The number of names and simplicity of responses allows those praying to go deeply into the moment in order to bring into the space all those they call upon. Saints, ancestors, witnesses are invited in to share the burden of lament or urgency, to contribute wisdom, comfort, hope.

Litanies are a right-brained activity, (although in recent years prayer leaders often burden them with information). It is the rhythm that helps to create a space for grace; for memory, imagination, and spiritual encounter to do their work.

The cloud of witnesses to gun violence in the last 20 years in the US is enormous. Since the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, there have been 70 mass shootings; there has been only one year without a mass shooting; most years have multiple shootings. (Mother Jones' statistics have been used in preparing this material; there are other ways of counting and presenting the material <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/>)

A litany calls on those who have died: our prayers may encompass traditional saints, ancestors in family or struggle, the cloud of witnesses to the Holy, to Christ, to the Spirit at work in the world, but here, especially, all those who have died in events of gun violence in the US.

Children, youth, teachers at school, devout folks at prayer, adults at work, elderly and their caregivers in nursing homes, music lovers at concerts, dancers at clubs,— their lives violently ended; their futures lost.

They are all our ancestors now: peculiarly American ancestors, whose diverse lives were lost to a peculiarly American confluence of rage, hate, mental illness—and most critically—easy access to guns.

Below are the makings of a "Make Your Own Litany" of those who have died since the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. There are 70 names of places listed in reverse chronological order, with the numbers killed included. You may use all 70; you may divide them into categories; you may focus on schools or houses of worship, for example—whatever works in your context. Using all 70 may seem daunting, but it may set up the spiritual space for prayer, lament, confession, even hope for change.

Context: Give some thought to what you are praying this litany for: Solidarity with victims? Wisdom to know how to change? Empowerment to make changes? As with all prayers, clarity of purpose is a help to give voice, although sometimes we must rely on the Spirit to pray for us.

Responses: the classic is "Pray for us"—others could be "Pray with us", "We Remember You", "We mourn for you", *¡Presente!* (*inspired by justice movements in Central and South America, including School of the Americas Watch*) and many other possibilities

Names: *(included is a possible way of presenting them, with city or state, when available. Use as much or as little information as seems good to you).*

The Stoneman Douglas High School **Seventeen**

The Pennsylvania Carwash **Four**

The Rancho Tehama Five

The Texas First Baptist Church Twenty six

The Walmart Three

The Edgewood Business Park Three

The Las Vegas Strip Fifty Eight

The San Francisco UPS Three

The Pennsylvania Supermarket Three

The Florida Awning Manufacturer Five

The Rural Ohio Nursing Home Three

The Fresno Three

The Fort Lauderdale Airport Five

The Washington Cascade Mall Five

The Baton Rouge Police Shooting Three

The Dallas Police Shooting Five

The Orlando Pulse Nightclub Forty nine

The Kansas Excel Industries Three

The Kalamazoo Six

The Colorado Planned Parenthood Clinic Three

The Colorado Springs Three

The OR Umpqua Community College Nine

The Chattanooga Military Recruitment Center Five

The Charleston Mother Emmanuel Church Nine

The WI Trestle Trail Bridge Three

The Marysville-Pilchuck High School Five

The Isla Vista CA Six

The Fort Hood (2014) Three

The Alturas Tribe Four

The Washington Navy Yard Twelve

The Hialeah Apartment Seven

The Santa Monica Six

The WA Pinewood Village Apartment Five

The Mohawk Valley NY Five

The Sandy Hook Elementary Newtown CT Twenty-seven
The MN Accent Signage Systems Seven
The WI Sikh temple Seven
The CO Aurora Theater Twelve
The Seattle Cafe Six
The Oikos University killings Seven
The GA Su Jung Health Sauna Five
The Seal Beach CA Eight
The Carson City, NV IHOP Five
The Tucson Six
The CT Hartford Beer Distributor Nine
The Parkland WA Coffee Shop Four
The Fort Hood (2009) Thirteen
The Binghamton NY Fourteen
The Carthage, NC Nursing Home Eight
The Kentucky Atlantis Plastics Six
The Northern Illinois University Five
The Kirkwood MO City Council Six
The Omaha Westroads Mall Nine
The Crandon WI Six
The Blacksburg Virginia Tech Thirty-Two
The Salt Lake City Trolley Square Six
The Lancaster Co Amish School Six
The Capitol Hill WA Seven
The Goleta CA Post Office Eight
The Red Lake MN Ten
The Brookfield, WI Living Church of God Seven
The OH Damageplan Show Five
The Meridian Lockheed Martin Seven
The Melrose PK Navistar Five
The Wakefield MA Seven
The Tampa Hotel Five
The Honolulu Xerox Seven
The Wedgwood Baptist Church Eight
The Atlanta Day Trading Spree Nine
The Columbine High School Thirteen

Eternal rest grant unto them, O God, and let light perpetual shine upon them. May they all rest forever in your Peace. (Traditional prayer for the dead)

Response to Gun Violence Prayers written by the Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Faith formation: Curator of Worship and Liturgical Arts, United Church of Christ.



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