



**Society of the Sacred Heart™**  
**United States – Canada**

**Statement on Mass Shootings in El Paso and Dayton**  
**August 6, 2019**

In the wake of yet two more mass shootings in the United States within 24 hours, the leadership of the Society of the Sacred Heart in the United States – Canada Province joins its voice with the families of these massacres, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and people of good will from all faiths, who are demanding an end to the legislative paralysis that prevents common sense gun control from being enacted in this country.

As an organization committed to “revealing God’s love in the heart of the world,” we struggle to reconcile this senseless loss of life. We need to seek brave and compassionate solutions to mend the brokenness that causes such violence.

We join with and echo the USCCB and many other religious and civil groups in calling for:

- a total ban on assault weapons, which the USCCB supported when the ban passed in 1994 and when Congress failed to renew it in 2004
- measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases
- limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines
- a federal law to criminalize gun trafficking

“The USCCB also supports recent proposals to set a more appropriate minimum age for gun ownership and to ban ‘bump stocks.’ In addition, the USCCB supports holistic measures, such as the promotion of mercy and peacebuilding in our communities through restorative justice policies and practices, ongoing encounters and discussions at the parish level regarding violence in communities.” ([USCCB Background on Gun Violence](#))

Along with Pope Francis, we call for our legislators to overcome partisan differences and “go out and meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust and hope around you.” ([Pope Francis, January 1, 2014](#))

With all people of faith and compassion and for the victims of the massacres, their families and all those affected by these senseless acts of violence, we pray:

*Let compassion and courage be our companions in these days of shock and grief. We are called to be “[Artisans of Hope in our Blessed and Broken World](#).” Instead of looking away from the suffering, let us choose to be present to the ways that the abuse of power demands we become agents of advocacy and transformation. Let us be those who cultivate hope by acting with courage, while refusing to perpetuate cycles of violence in our speech, our use of social media and our actions. Let us be those who choose faith, not fear.*

As a Sacred Heart family, let us invoke the Novena of Confidence in this time of need for change in the hearts of those elected to govern, protect and lead, and particularly, for those impacted by gun

violence throughout the United States, especially in communities where mass shootings have replaced trust with fear.

**We pray,**

*Lord Jesus, through the intercession  
of Saints Madeleine Sophie and Philippine Duchesne,  
to your Sacred Heart, we confide this intention.  
Only look, and then do what your heart inspires.  
Let your heart decide.  
We count on it.  
We trust in it.  
We throw ourselves on your mercy,  
Lord Jesus. You will not fail us.*

### **Suggested actions:**

Though we are in the midst of the congressional recess this August, many congressional leaders are at the local level. Please be alert to town hall meetings in your local area or call your elected representative and insist on immediate action to stop the violence and harm.

You can call on our leaders to demand immediate action and gun violence protection by:

- **Calling congressional offices** directly or through the switchboard. If you do not have the direct number, you can reach U.S. representatives by **calling** 202-225-3121, and U.S. senators by **calling** 202-224-3121. Ask the operator to connect you to the individual office. Staff members will take note of your opinion.
- **Linking with local efforts** to push for legislative reform on ownership of assault weapons, background checks, civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines and laws on gun trafficking.
- **Joining prayer vigils and protests demanding change.**
- **Educating ourselves and others** on the history of gun violence in our country and the underlying issues that have prevented legislation despite the increase in mass shootings in our country over recent years and, especially, in recent months.

### **Suggested resources:**

- [Catholic Social Thought and Gun Violence](#): This reflection by Fred Kammer, SJ, on the Catholic social thought and gun control includes suggested ways to take action and a prayer to end gun violence.
- [Reflection on Racism and White Privilege](#): This article, written by Nancy Schreck, OSF, looks at unconscious racism and white privilege and includes suggestions for action and discussion questions.
- To learn more about the USCCB's position on gun control, including suggested political action steps, such as universal background checks and a complete ban on assault weapons, read the backgrounder: [A Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence](#).

- [LCWR Calls for an End to Gun Violence](#)
- [USCCB Statement following shooting in El Paso, TX](#)
- [USCCB Statement following shooting in Dayton, OH](#)

*If you have questions or would like more information, please contact [Meg Causey, RSCJ, Ph.D., director of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.](#)*