



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee

### Non-Nuclear Weapons: A Deterrence for Peace

Last week's column focused on nuclear weapons as a deterrence for peace. Glaringly, **non-nuclear weapons are also a deterrence for peace.** Consider Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX; Tops Friendly Markets store in Buffalo, NY; Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, PA; Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown borough, CT; Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC – to name just a few. Schools, supermarkets, churches, and synagogues should not be places where your life is at risk.

**It's easy to call out mental illness as the cause and to exclude other explanations.** “If you look at the data, people with mental illness are much less likely to be the perpetrators of mass shootings or violence than they are to be the victims. If you look specifically just at mass shootings, the percentage of people who actually have a diagnosed mental health condition is really quite small.” Red flag laws which exist in some states are a reasonable response to this situation. The laws protect those assessed to be “a danger to self or other people and enable the police to take their weapons or a family member to ask for the police to take the weapons from them or not let them purchase guns.” Mental health and gun violence can be part of the discussion but not the only part. (Jessica Gold, MD, MS, Dept. of Psychiatry at Washington University, St. Louis, *MedPage Today*, May 26, 2022)

**“The U.S. has the most civilian guns per capita of any country....** Research consistently links the presence of more guns with more gun homicides” (Julia Lund, MPH, and Vicka Chaplin, MA, MPH, *MedPage Today*, May 26, 2022). “More Americans died from gun violence in 2020 than during any other year on record: more than 45,000. That was a 25 percent increase from 2015 and a 43 percent increase from 2010.” (Blase Cupich, *America*, May 25, 2022)

“The size of the crisis and its sheer horror make it all too easy to toss up one's hands and declare: Nothing can be done. But that is the counsel of despair, and we are a people of hope. What do we hope for our children?... **We know that gun safety measures make a difference.** A 2021 Northwestern Medicine study found that the Federal Assault Weapons Ban prevented 10 mass shootings during the 10 years it was in effect. Researchers also determined that if the ban had remained in place in the years since it was allowed to expire, it could have prevented another 30 public mass shootings that killed 339 people and injured 1,139 more....

As I reflect on this latest American massacre, I keep returning to the questions: Who are we as a nation if we do not act to protect our children? What do we love more: our instruments of death or our future? The Second Amendment did not come down from Sinai. **The right to bear arms will never be more important than human life.** Our children have rights, too. And our elected officials have a moral duty to protect them.” (Article adapted from statement by Cardinal Blase Cupich, originally published on the website for the Archdiocese of Chicago, *America*, May 25, 2022)

There are basic steps including background checks, waiting periods, and banning assault-style weapons which can help protect our families. **We must demand that Congress pass legislation to protect families now.** Sign on to add your voice. (*Parents Together Action*, May 26, 2022)  
[https://act.parentstogetheraction.org/petitions/congress-must-act-gun-violence-is-killing-our-children/?source=direct\\_link&](https://act.parentstogetheraction.org/petitions/congress-must-act-gun-violence-is-killing-our-children/?source=direct_link&)