July 6, 2023

Dear Sisters, Associates, and Colleagues of SSND,

As has become commonplace in the United States, tragedy struck in Baltimore, Maryland, at a celebratory gathering over the pre-4th of July holiday weekend due to gun violence. Two people were killed, and multiple people were injured as shooters opened fire on a large block party after midnight on Sunday, July 2.

We share in the sorrow of the families of Aaliyah Gonzales and Kylis Fagbemi, the two people who were killed, and the 28 others who were injured. We recognize the trauma that will stay with the people that lived through this event in South Baltimore's Brooklyn neighborhood for years to come. Their suffering touches all of us.

Earlier this year, you recall that gun violence also killed Maya, a resident of our co-sponsored Marian House ministry in Baltimore. She was shot and killed in her car, and the resultant crash injured her two young children. We continue to pray for Maya's family and the Marian House community as well as for people that manifest their hopelessness and anger by violent means.

When administering and teaching in the schools of Baltimore after coming to the United States in 1847, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, Mother Caroline Friess and their sisters could never have imagined a society where such violence occurs regularly and with weapons that kill so quickly and easily.

The gun violence experienced in these communities specifically mentioned and in other communities throughout the United States and Canada, diminish our collective freedom and humanity and our ability to share in the oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. How sadly ironic to reflect upon this as the United States celebrated its "freedom" on July 4th.

On July 4 we celebrate a notion that has not yet been achieved for people of color and for people oppressed by poverty and inequity. As the suffering of our brothers and sisters here and around the world brings sorrow to our hearts, it also impels us to pray and to work for justice and peace all the more earnestly. Our resolve is strengthened, and we embolden our mission to empower women and girls through education and opportunity and to uphold the dignity of all life.

Please join me in prayer and action, as you are called to, in the days ahead. May God bless you for your contributions in upholding human dignity and caring for creation and for your witness to Jesus' love.

Charmaine

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