



May 25, 2022

My Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Just one week apart, this country has witnessed acts of unspeakable violence and evil in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas. The killings in Buffalo were clearly and unambiguously an act of racist violence, specifically targeting shoppers in a supermarket in a predominantly black part of the city. They were killed only because they were black, by a killer motivated only by the same hatred for people of color which we have seen in places across our country over and over. They were wonderful people, and they were taken from us by an explosion of racist hate. The killings in Uvalde yesterday targeted children at school, and became the second most violent school shooting in our history. We will never know the motive, if a motive is even conceivable, of a killer who deliberately targets elementary school boys and girls. They were beautiful children, and they too were taken from us beyond our understanding. The faces of Buffalo, and now the faces of Uvalde - almost all of them African American and Latino - are imprinted on us now, and all of their gentle souls have joined the great cloud of witnesses which surrounds us and prays for us and compels us toward greater justice.

It is unquestionably obvious that the killers in Buffalo and Uvalde were figures of great evil. They were people driven by the very worst impulses imaginable. At baptism, we ask those who would choose the Christian faith if they will “renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God,” and we ask them if they will “turn to Jesus Christ ... and put their whole trust in his grace and love.” In those baptismal promises we vow that we will not allow the evil in this world to mark us and define us and determine the ways that we live with one another, but that we will order our lives by the gospel of Jesus Christ and the love of God. It comes to us again to consider how we will live out our baptismal life and covenant in a culture so broken, in which such racism and hatred and violence are constants in our sight, and in which access to guns is an absolute. There is something fundamentally broken in America. There have already been 213 mass shootings in our country this year, 27 of them in schools. That is the world and culture in which we have been called into the Christian life.

After Buffalo we were called to prayer for the victims and for their families. After Uvalde we are called to prayer for the victims and for their

families. That we are doing. But we must also be passionate advocates for protective legislation, and for the kind of reasonable and realistic gun control across America that we have in New York. We must call out evil where we see it, and we must vote, and join our efforts to defeat those who perpetuate the violence and unbounded evil that takes life after life after life. It may be all we have, but the gentle people of Buffalo and the innocent children of Uvalde demand of us at the very least this much.

With every good wish, I remain

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy" with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

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