



A Lament Against Gun Violence

The Officiant begins

Let us gather in a brief silence to offer our hearts and minds to our gracious God in prayer.

Opening Prayer (Officiant)

O God who Remembers, we hold before you all who have died from the plague of gun violence in our land. We remember those who have taken their lives with a gun, those who have died in school shootings and mass shootings, those who have died by a gun in the course of an argument or from abuse or by accident or during the commission of a crime.

We lift our voices in sorrow and frustration knowing that every life is infinitely valuable to you. Receive all who have died into the arms of your mercy, bless those who mourn with the hope of eternal life, and strengthen our hearts and our arms to bring an end to this scourge. This we pray in the name of the one who overcame the power of death, your son, Jesus Christ.^{li}

Amen

(Or choose one or more of the following prayers or excerpt a portion of a prayer for your service)

“Thus says Yahweh: a voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and bitter weeping. Rachel, weeping for her children, refuses to be comforted, for her children are no more.”

Jeremiah 31:15

Gracious Lord who loves us so perfectly, help us to better love you and each other. We weep for the gun violence that kills children and so many others, where guns replaced prayers and homes without you bred frustration. May hearts be changed through your Holy Spirit that justice, mercy, money and, yes, even guns might be used rightly under Heaven, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.ⁱⁱ

Amen.

Merciful Lord, we come to you heavy hearted, for we have heard the cries of the slain calling to us from the ground. We come remembering all the lives lost to the weapons of war that

have flooded our communities. We come reminded of the many bodies locked in jails and prisons all across this country. And we ask for your mercy.

Although we find ourselves in a broken world – a world in which hurting people hurt other people, it is no mystery that you are a God capable of healing our world through justice and fairness. Your own revelation has shown us that you stand firmly with those people whose backs are against the wall. Your own life demonstrates how you came from heaven to earth to redeem creation, our communities and our own lives. So we ask for this same redemptive power to be unleashed among us as it was on the day of Pentecost. May we be empowered by your Spirit to reverse the conditions that produce young men and women who are driven to resort to violence and destructive behavior in their fight to stay alive and struggle to remain free...

We cry out to you, heal our souls from this scourge of violence. Endow us with the courage to step down from the pulpits and out from behind our desks to seek the peace of the city. In the coming days and weeks as our leaders debate solutions, Lord we ask that you grant us the voice to speak truth power and demonstrate sacrificial compassion to the hurting.

Teach us your ways, O God. Bless us with the wisdom and strength to put down our swords and be peacemakers. Use us, work through us and, if necessary, work in spite of us to mend our nation's brokenness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Amen.

(James Martin, S.J.)

Community Prayer (said in unison)

Healing and Holy God, we gather today in common grief for the epidemic of gun violence. Be with all those who suffer from the lasting trauma that incidents of gun violence leave in their wake. Grant us strength and courage to live in hope of a better day, our minds fixed on the doing of your will, so that we, having been delivered from fear, may live in peace. All this we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.^{iv}

Officiant Our help is in the Name of the Lord;

People The maker of heaven and earth.

Officiant

Let us confess our sins to God.

Officiant and People

Almighty God, our heavenly Father:

We have sinned against you,

through our own fault,
in thought, and word, and deed,
and in what we have left undone.
For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
forgive us all our offenses;
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Psalm

(Choose one or more Psalms and instruct a recitation in unison)

Lector

Listen to the words of our forebearers

Psalm 31

- 1 In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame: *
deliver me in your righteousness.
- 2 Incline your ear to me; *
make haste to deliver me.
- 3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold; *
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.
- 4 Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *
for you are my tower of strength.
- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
for you have redeemed me,
O LORD, O God of truth.

Psalm 91:1-6

- 1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High *
abides under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 He shall say to the LORD,
"You are my refuge and my stronghold, *
my God in whom I put my trust."

- 3 He shall deliver you from the snare of the hunter *
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with his pinions,
and you shall find refuge under his wings; *
his faithfulness shall be a shield and buckler.
- 5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, *
nor of the arrow that flies by day;
- 6 Of the plague that stalks in the darkness, *
nor of the sickness that lays waste at mid-day.

At the end of the Psalms the response is:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

(Choose one or more as applicable to your circumstance)

Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

People Thanks be to God.

Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

(Other possibilities include Mic. 6:6-8, Ps. 13, Rom. 8:31-39, Eph. 4:25-5:2, Luke 4:14-21.)

People Thanks be to God.

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

People Thanks be to God.

Hebrews 13:20-21

May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

People Thanks be to God.

Let us pray with confidence as our Savior has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Final Supplication

God of love and God of compassion, your people are in distress. We rely on your presence and care to sustain those who are in pain and in a state of fear.... We pray for peace and comfort for the community. And, we pray for all whose lives are disrupted by inadequate mental health care and the scourge of gun violence. You are the God, the creator, the giver of life. Your Christ came so that we may enjoy abundant life. Your Holy Spirit breathes life into our very beings. You surely weep when life is abruptly interrupted or ended. We come to you with this petition: that you sustain us, that you are gracious unto us in such times of distress, and that you guide us as we seek to live in a way that reflects your will for a life of justice for all people and creation. Answer us in this call and hear our prayers O God.^v *Amen.*

People Gracious God, hear our prayer

Ending Collect

O God, your providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those, both night and day, who work to end gun violence and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's compassion, toil; and courage through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Appendix I

Additional Prayers

God, our hearts are broken with pain at the senseless deaths caused by gun violence. Families mourn, children live in fear, and some in our nation respond by arming themselves with more guns with greater capacity to end life. Our disconnection and alienation has caused some to turn to guns for protection and safety. We ask that you touch our hearts with your love, heal our brokenness, and turn us away from violence toward peace. Help us to transform our own hearts and to seek peaceful ways of resolving our differences. Let our hands reach out and connect with those who feel alone, those who live in fear, and those suffering from mental illness. Let our voices be raised asking our legislators to enact gun laws to protect all in our society, especially those most vulnerable. Let our pens write messages demanding change while also scripting words of hope and transformation. We ask this in the name of the God who desires that we live together in peace. *Amen*

(Sisters of Mercy)

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Against Gun Violence

God of the slain,
God of the murdered and the victim,
The voice of lamentation echoes across the land.
Wailing beside graves opened too soon,
Weeping beside stains of blood
From the dead and the injured
Pouring forth from bullet wounds:
The child shot,
The suicide,
The domestic assault,
The gang violence,
The mass murder,
The long night of death made easy by guns
And automatic weapons.
The long night of sorrow made easy
By reckless access to machines of slaughter.

Source of justice,
Rock of strength and truth,
You call upon us to stand
In the name of common sense and reason:
To witness on behalf of the innocent and the cut down –
The widowed, orphaned and bereaved –
To answer the scourge of senseless loss,
To advocate for gun control,
To remove military weapons from a civilian population,
To return sanity to our laws, our policies and our lives.

Bless those who dedicate themselves to gun control.
Grant them fortitude and perseverance.
May the work of their hands never falter
Nor despair deter them from their holy calling.

Bless those who are mourning the dead.
Grant them solace and comfort.
Bless those who are healing from the trauma of gun violence.
Grant them lives of health and prosperity,
Joy and peace.

Blessed are You, God of All Being,
Who summons us to choose life,
First, choose life,
Above all,
Choose life.

(2016 Alden Solovy tobendlight.com.)

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Christ, you wept over a city. We are in deepest despair. As we weep over the dead and injured killed by guns, in anguish, we recognize the blood stains of hatred. We hear the sounds of fear, the echoes of gunshots — once again, once again.

Christ, you came to bring us peace. We turn to you in overwhelming sorrow. How can we end this nightmare of violence? How can we build a world of inclusion, of solidarity? Give us the grace to reflect deeply and to work ceaselessly to heal the hearts; to stop the guns; to cherish all God's children.

Christ, you endured violent suffering to bring us light. We pray for the dead, may they rest in peace. We pray for the wounded, may they find healing. We pray for our nation, may we end the hate. We pray for our global family, may we learn we are one.

Amen.

(Education for Justice)

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A Prayer for Charleston

Count the broken hearts, dear Lord,
Count the shattered dreams.
Count the grieving family
And the parishioners who have lost their leaders.

Count the blood spattered bibles, mighty One.
Count the places of prayer and service
No longer a sanctuary.
Count the people robbed of refuge
By hatred and violence.

Count the lives, nine in all,
Taken from friend and kin
Count the many
Who will never be the same.

We do not know these people
But they are our brothers and sisters.
Our traditions and faiths are different,
But we serve God as they serve God.

We hope for a better day
As they hope for a better day.

We teach people to love their neighbors
As they teach people to love their neighbors.

We have a dream just as they have a dream.

Help us show the world
That love is mightier than hate
And piety can vanquish prejudice.

May all our prayers
Join together in resolve to banish hatred from the world
And bring us closer to You,
May we create a world of goodness and godliness every day. Amen

*(By Rabbi Mark Greenspan
The Rabbinical Assembly
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Appendix II

Additional Sources for Liturgical Consideration

The Brady Plan

<https://www.bradyunited.org/>

DC Interfaith Gun Violence Prevention Network

<https://daviscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GVP-Interfaith-Network.pdf>

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

(Prepared by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Prevention Ministry)

<https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/07/PPFGVPEmergencyResponseKit.pdf>

ⁱ 1 Sources: Bishops United Against Gun Violence, Liturgical Resources, <https://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org/resources/liturgical-resources>; “Service of Prayer and Lament in Times of Violence,” Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, <https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/>
2 Episcopal Diocese of Newark

ⁱⁱⁱ James Martin, SJ

^{iv} Sources: Bishops United Against Gun Violence, Liturgical Resources, <https://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org/resources/liturgical-resources>; “Service of Prayer and Lament in Times of Violence,” Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, <https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/>

^v (*The Rev. Karen Georgia A. Thompson*
General Minister and President, United Church of Christ)