

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson
St. John's Episcopal Church
24th February 2018
Lent 2 B

Mother Theresa said something like this: "I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things."

Over and over and over *ad nauseam*, in the days following Columbine, Newtown, Orlando, Las Vegas, and, now, Parkland, Florida, we have heard our illustrious leaders intone, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families."

Over and over and over *ad nauseam*, in the weeks following Columbine, Newtown, Orlando, Las Vegas, and, now, Parkland, Florida, we will have witnessed our illustrious leaders do absolutely nothing.

Alyssa Alhadeff, 14

The hands of our Congressional representatives, our executive branch, our governor and our state legislature are covered with the blood of innocent people.

Because in their *inaction*, *they are complicit* in the horror of mass murder. Complicit.

Scott Beigel, 35

And if we do nothing, if we throw up our hands and say, "There's nothing I can do to change this," if we don't at *least* send an e-mail or a postcard to Congressman Moolenaar, or pick up the phone to call his office with our outrage, we, too, are complicit.

"Forgive us, gracious God, for the sins committed on our behalf."

Martin Duque Anguiano, 14

My lovely, loving people. *This cannot go on.*

The banning of powerful weapons such as the AR-15 *is not a political issue*. It has *nothing* to do with the Second Amendment. *Nothing*. Rifles such as the AR-15, used in Parkland and previous shootings, were designed for one thing and one thing only: *To kill people.*

Nicholas Dworet, 17

The AR-15 was not designed for self-protection or deer hunting, it were designed during the Viet Nam War to kill as many people as possible in as short a time as possible.

Why are our legislators and executives so cowardly, so disgracefully craven, so greedy for campaign contributions and a few votes that they are willing to lay down the lives of innocent children – students and teachers and coaches - in a blood sacrifice?

Aaron Feis, 37

Thoughts and prayers. Thoughts and prayers.

It sickens me.

This is not a political issue, it is a *moral* issue, and we must respond.

Jamie Guttenberg, 14

Because God yearns for abundant life, the protection of the innocent, a world without fear.

Chris Hixon, 49

And let us not denigrate the dignity of mentally ill people by excusing this killer because of his anger and depression: If he had not been able to legally purchase this weapon it is quite possible that there would be fewer lives lost. Yes, he might have found another, less powerful weapon, but the loss of life would not have been so tragic.

Cara Loughran, 14

And let us not forget that mental health services have been cut and cut and cut again since Ronald Reagan took office. Fifty-six percent of American adults with mental illness did not receive treatment in 2015. Over 1.7 million youth with depressive episodes did not receive treatment. *

Other countries have people who are mentally ill yet they don't experience horrific shooting sprees.

Luke Hoyer, 15

And let's not blame the school patrolman, or the FBI or other local authorities who could and *should* have sounded an alarm. Yes, they must be held accountable for *their* inaction. But again: If he had not been able to purchase this gun or one like it there may have been far fewer dead.

Carmen Schentrup, 16

This gun is a weapon of *war*. It does not just shoot a hole in the body, it rips it apart. It is not a gun for hunting nor for self protection. It is a gun for killing people.

Peter Wang, 15

How can our Congress not respond?

We should arm *teachers*?!? So they can find their gun in their locked desk drawer, control the adrenalin, tell terrified children to get out of the way, pray their shot is accurate, and then pray a SWAT team won't confuse them for the original killer?!? This makes sense?!?

How many more deaths will it take?

Gina Montalto, 14

The way we care for our children is a moral issue. It is not a political issue, though it has become so.

I believe it has become a political issue because of money and power. That's it. Politicians who receive millions of blood dollars are terrified that they might lose their jobs if they speak up for reasonable firearm legislation.

Joaquin Oliver, 17

Well, I'll tell you what: I will do all I can to help them lose their jobs if they continue to sacrifice our children to the satanic worship of guns.

Our own Congressman, John Moolenaar, receive over \$10,000 in contributions of blood money. Chump change, compared to Marco Rubio's Three Million, but I will still hold him accountable.

Alaina Petty, 14

People, my people, *please*.

Pray for the victims and their families, yes. To be sure.

Meadow Pollack, 18

But pray that we all may be changed and that our transformation will inspire us to *work* for change.

This simply cannot go on.

Helena Ramsay, 17

Rachel is weeping for her children. And across Florida mothers and fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends are weeping for their children.

Alex Schachter, 14

As one said, "We are children. You adults must fix this." And the children are showing us how.

Yes. Let's act like adults. And let us pray that hearts will be changed and that voices will be raised and that those voices will be heard and responded to.

Now is the time. The Kingdom of God is at hand. It is up to us, *all* of us, to demand action.

In the name of Christ,

Amen.

* Source: <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america>