



USFRANCISCANS

FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PO BOX 61128 | NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 02746 | (860) 759-2427
exec@escofm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | June 17, 2016

May the Lord give you peace! This is the traditional greeting of St. Francis of Assisi, one that has been adopted over the eight centuries of the Franciscan Order by its members. It signals one of the main themes in the life of our founder and his followers: the call to be instruments of peace.

This week, here in the United States, we once again find ourselves dealing with yet another instance of the seemingly endless stream of senseless violence in our land. This time with 49 innocent deaths, and an equal number of injuries, at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. There have been 182 mass shootings this year alone. These shootings have taken the lives of 288 people and injured another 673. Six of these shootings have taken place since Orlando. These tragic moments serve add to a culture of fear in our nation that makes us suspicious of anyone we define as “other.”

As Franciscan friars in the United States, we of course, join our voices to the chorus of those offering thoughts and prayers for the victims in Orlando. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our LGBT brothers and sisters as they grieve and try to make sense of this tragedy. To them we say clearly: we stand with you.

But, there is another chorus we would like to join our voices to today; that of the voices calling for sensible gun reform in America. Discussion of gun reform always seems to lead to loud voices on both sides, so loud that no one really listens. We often try and reduce the public discourse to a simplistic black-and-white version of the issues. This is not helpful or productive. But, surely, we can all agree that there are some acceptable, sensible measures that can be enacted right now.

More than 35,000 people die in the United States each year to gun violence. When it comes to mass shootings, the weapon of choice has become assault-style weapons which have one purpose alone – to kill large numbers of people. There is no place for this type of weaponry in the daily life of citizens. It is not a weapon of defense or of sport. It is only a weapon of mass killing. We encourage our President and our legislators, to once again ban these assault-style weapons in our country.

There are also sensible measures that can be taken on the issue of background checks. It should not be more difficult to vote, get a driver’s license, or purchase cold medicine at the drug store, than it is to buy a gun. Universal background checks for all gun purchases no matter where they happen is a reasonable expectation when buying a weapon.

These two common sense reforms enjoy the support of an overwhelming majority of Americans, and are a sensible first step in reducing the violence of a gun culture run amok in the U.S.

It is time that we stand up as a people and say enough is enough. We strive to live up to our call to be instruments of peace in our world. We support these sensible measures to help us become a more peaceful, less fearful, society.

It is time for the President and the Congress to act. We ask them to act now!

May the Lord give us peace!

PROVINCIAL MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Very Rev. David Gaa, OFM
St. Barbara Province
Oakland, California

Very Rev. Jack Clark Robinson, OFM
Our Lady of Guadalupe Province
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Very Rev. James Gannon, OFM
Assumption BVM Province
Franklin, Wisconsin

Very Rev. Jeffrey Scheeler, OFM
St. John the Baptist Province
Cincinnati, Ohio

Very Rev. Kevin Mullen, OFM
Holy Name Province
New York, New York

Very Rev. William Spencer, OFM
Sacred Heart Province
St. Louis, Missouri

Very Rev. Robert Campagna, OFM
Immaculate Conception Province
New York, New York