

Articles of Interest
For
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If only someone did something about the murder of 19 children

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by [NCR Editorial Staff](#)



People visit a memorial outside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, May 25, the site of a mass shooting. An 18-year-old man shot and killed 19 children and two teachers and injured several more people. (CNS/Reuters/Nuri Vallbona)

It all just feels so hopeless. Another mass shooting in America. At least 19 elementary school children and two of their teachers murdered in Uvalde, Texas. A space designed for learning turned instead into a killing field. A community that will never, ever be the same. Survivors and family who will carry unimaginable grief, trauma, heartbreak for generations to come.

And yet, and yet, and yet. We know all too well how this song goes. "Thoughts and prayers" will be on offer aplenty. But the NRA and other gun lobbies will exert pressure on Congress. Passage of sensible gun control measures will be deemed out of reach. It's just too radical, of course, too inimical to our exceptional, untouchable American ideal of liberty.

The chorus repeats, awaiting a new verse. Uvalde will be followed by somewhere else, just as it was preceded by Buffalo, and Sacramento, and San Jose, and Colorado Springs, and Indianapolis, and Rock Hill, and Boulder, and on, and on.

If only, if only. If only someone could take the country by the shoulders and scream the scream of a mother, or a father, or a grandparent, or an aunt, or an uncle now looking to years and years of pain and someone always missing from their kitchen table.



Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio comforts people in Uvalde, Texas, outside the SSGT Willie de Leon Civic Center, where students had been transported from Robb Elementary School after a mass shooting May 24. (CNS/Reuters/Marco Bello)

If only, if only. If only someone could speak with a voice of unquestioned moral authority and say, "No more, not again, we must do

something this time!" We are better than having to send our children — our children! — off to school each day, knowing that any 18-year-old can walk in with an assault weapon and annihilate them. Some of the bodies in Texas were so damaged they couldn't be identified without genetic testing.

A voice of moral authority. You certainly wouldn't see it in [the statement](#) the U.S. bishops released May 24 after the mass murder. Three short sentences, not even given the simple weight of an episcopal signature, but instead attributed to the bishops' spokesperson. Worse yet, it included only a very bland call to find ways "to understand this epidemic of evil and violence" behind mass shootings in America. No mention of the need for gun control measures, or of any specific call for Congress to, you know, actually do something.

Perhaps it is sadly illuminating that this horror occurred only four days after San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone announced [his decision](#) to ban House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, from receiving Communion in his archdiocese, over her support for legalized abortion. What canonical punishment awaits the politicians, mostly Republicans, who largely refuse to vote for any significant form of gun control?

It's hard not to conclude that one party's efforts toward a culture of life have episcopal backing, while the other's does not. What a lasting shame that the seamless garment movement was so tarred and feathered for decades by the church's pro-life wing. People would not consider the church political if it had criticized both parties more equally, and also supported them more equally, when they sought to defend and promote human life and dignity.

At least a few bishops responded to the murders in Texas more seriously than their organization in Washington.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, for example, [called](#) the shooting a "massacre" and said such shootings "are a most pressing life issue on which all in society must act."

Chicago Cardinal Cupich pointedly [asked](#): "Who are we as a nation if we do not act to protect our children? What do we love more: our instruments of death or our future?"

And Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, responded [with what sounds like holy anger](#).

"Don't tell me that guns aren't the problem, people are. I'm sick of hearing it," he said on Twitter. "The darkness first takes our children who then kill our children, using the guns that are easier to obtain than aspirin. We sacralize death's instruments and then are surprised that death uses them."

We're sick of hearing it, too. We're also sick of hearing the same song, always with a new verse — but always one where more of our children are butchered and no one in authority does anything. How long must this song go on?

Catholic sisters join outcry over Texas shooting, call for stronger gun control

25 May 2022

by [Chris Herlinger](#),
[Gail DeGeorge](#)



People react outside the SSGT Willie de Leon Civic Center, where students had been transported from Robb Elementary School after a shooting, in Uvalde, Texas, May 24. (CNS/Reuters/Marco Bello)

U.S. Catholic sisters' congregations joined in the widespread outpouring of sorrow and pain over the shooting in Uvalde, Texas, the site of the worst U.S. school shooting in 10 years on May 24. The congregations added their voices to that of [Pope Francis](#) and some Catholic bishops and other faith leaders in calling for stronger gun control efforts.

In their statements, the congregations — noting other recent acts of mass gun violence including one in Buffalo, New

York, 10 days earlier [on May 14](#) — are stressing that words of prayer are not sufficient, and called on lawmakers to enact tougher gun control measures.

"With broken hearts, we stand with the mothers and fathers and all loved ones grieving the children and teachers whose lives were brutally taken at school in Uvalde, Texas," the [Sisters of Mercy of the Americas](#) said in their May 25 statement about the mass shooting in Uvalde that resulted in the [deaths of 19 schoolchildren and two teachers](#).

"We stand with the community of Uvalde, who must bear this tragic burden and loss. We grieve, but not as those who have no hope. And we pray because we believe there is another way for us to live, a way rooted in love, in faith, in nonviolence, and a way that holds all human life sacred and holds all communities beloved."

The Mercy Sisters statement added: "Even as we offer solidarity through lament and prayer, we refuse to accept a world in which thoughts and prayers are offered without meaningful policy change to address the crisis of gun violence in this country. While we grieve alongside the families and community in Uvalde and those still grieving in Buffalo, we renew our call on state legislatures and Congress to enact more comprehensive laws limiting access to deadly weapons."

In its statement, the [National Advocacy Center](#) of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd said an initial reaction "is to cry out and to pray," adding that the center "offers our prayers for the souls of the dead. We offer prayers for solace and peace and recovery for the injured and those who witnessed the shootings. And we offer special prayers for the heartbroken families, friends and communities."

"We also pray for an end to the violence and the hatred," said Fran Eskin-Royer, the executive director of the center, which is the Sisters of the Good Shepherd's advocacy arm. "But God does not move mountains alone. God works through us. We are God's tools. We are God's clay," she said in the statement.

Eskin-Royer added: "Surely there is a multitude of reasons for each act of violence — racism, mental illness, broken relationships. But one common element more often than not is the use of guns. We do indeed have a gun problem in America. There are too many guns and they are too easy to get."

"If we as a nation are ever to heal and if we are ever to reduce or eliminate these massacres, we must enact gun control," she said. "We must use the laws already on the books and we must pass additional common-sense legislation such as strengthening background checks and banning assault weapons."

In its May 25 statement, the General Council of the [Adrian Dominican Sisters](#) called for prayer but also what it termed "common sense gun safety laws" in the wake of the recent shootings. It also noted that a third incident — the day after the Buffalo shooting that killed 10 — occurred at a Presbyterian church in Laguna Woods, California, resulting in one death and five injuries.

"Our hearts are broken and enraged that another community in our nation has suffered the ravaging impact of mass murder at the hands of easily obtainable rapid-firing weapons," the statement said.

"We do not know what motivated the 18-year-old to massacre 19 elementary school children and two teachers, injuring

numerous others, including his grandmother. We do know that no other country in the world not at war has rampages like this on such a shatteringly recurring basis."

The statement asked how "many children and adults whose lives have been taken by gun violence in the last decade might still be alive today if our nation had common sense gun safety laws? A majority of Americans support common sense restrictions on gun ownership."

The Adrian Dominicans called "on members of Congress to take immediate action to do just that: enact legislation that bans access to militarized assault weapons with high-capacity ammunition magazines, provides for background checks, and restricts concealed weapons, among other steps."

Catholic sister congregations are among the religious organizations in the forefront of gun-control efforts in the United States, pushing at the corporate level for changes in gun safety measures. For instance, Sr. Judy Byron, an Adrian Dominican sister and director of the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, helped lead a cadre of faith-based investors of Sturm, Ruger & Co. to have the gunmaker report on its efforts to improve gun safety. A shareholder resolution at the annual meeting May 9, 2018, backed by more than a dozen shareholders required the company to produce such a report.

The widespread reaction and anger in the wake of a shooting that killed that 17 students and staff members at a Parkland, Florida, high school in February 2018 prompted big institutional investors to back the proposal, and it passed. Smith & Wesson shareholders approved a similar resolution.

When the reports proved disappointing in their disclosures, Byron, other congregations

and faith-based investors as part of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#) have since pushed for changes in a hard-fought, albeit incremental effort, to effect change at companies within rules allowing shareholder action by the Security and Exchange Commission and in the face of the powerful gun lobby.

In the wake of the tragedy May 24, other Catholic organizations added their voices to the cries for Congress to take action. In its May 25 statement, the lay-led [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#) said, "We are heartbroken, fearful, angry, and weary as we grapple with the continued epidemic of gun violence in the U.S."

"As a network of individuals and institutions committed to justice and peace, we join the entire country in our outrage that our nation has not committed itself to ending such tragedy and horror, and in praying for the victims, their families, and those responsible — and in hope that we can collectively [take action](#) to reduce gun violence," said Christopher Kerr, the network's executive director.

He added that gun policy "is not a core issue area of the Ignatian Solidarity Network. However, we feel it is essential to create a pathway for our network to express their weariness, fear, and anger to their elected officials, letting them know that people of faith demand action to drastically reduce gun violence in our country."



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Pope Francis heartbroken after Texas school shooting, calls for an end to gun trafficking

25 May 2022

by [Christopher White](#)

[Vatican](#)



Pope Francis uses a cane as he begins his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican May 25, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

ROME — Pope Francis on May 25 said his heart was "broken" after at least 19 schoolchildren and 2 adults were killed in Texas in America's latest school shooting and called for an end to the trafficking of firearms.

"I pray for the children, the adults killed and their families," said Francis at the conclusion of his Wednesday general audience. "It is time to say enough to the indiscriminate trafficking of guns."

"Let us all commit ourselves so that such tragedies can never happen again," he continued.

The pope's remarks came a day after an 18-year-old gunman entered Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on May 24 and opened fire on second to fourth grade elementary students in the deadliest school shooting in the United States in a decade.

Earlier in the day on May 25, Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio, Texas, took to social media to ask for Francis' support.

"Holy Father Pope Francis, say some prayers for the souls of our little ones killed today and two teachers," [he tweeted](#). "Uvalde is in mourning. The families are having a very dark time. Your prayer will do good to them."

Francis has repeatedly [used](#) pointed words when speaking against the weapons industry. In 2015, he [expressed](#) dismay at those who produce weapons and call themselves Christian.

Following the Texas school massacre, a spokesperson from the U.S. bishops' conference issued a statement saying "there have been too many school shootings, too much killing of the innocent."

"Each of us also needs to search our souls for ways that we can do more to understand this epidemic of evil and violence and implore our elected officials to help us take action," the statement continued.

In an unusually long and forceful [statement](#), Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago said "America is awash in guns. We have more firearms than people."

"As I reflect on this latest American massacre, I keep returning to the questions: Who are we as a nation if we do not act to protect our children? What do we love more: our instruments of death or our future?," he continued.

"The Second Amendment did not come down from Sinai. The right to bear arms will never be more important than human life. Our children have rights too. And our elected officials have a moral duty to protect them," Cupich concluded.

In 2017, Cupich [launched](#) an anti-violence program in Chicago with a goal of reducing gun violence in the city, which received the backing of Francis.

"Walking the path of peace is not always easy, but it is the only authentic response to violence," the pope wrote at the time.

To date in 2022, there have been at least 77 [incidents](#) of gun fire on school grounds in the United States.

Following the Texas shooting, U.S. President Joe Biden [pledged](#) to pass "common sense" gun laws and urged Americans to stand up to the country's powerful gun lobby.

"What struck me on that 17-hour flight what struck me was these kinds of mass shootings rarely happen anywhere else in the world. Why?," the president asked on May 24, after

arriving back in Washington after a trip to Asia.

In Rome, the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, [Joseph Donnelly](#), issued a statement saying "we are witnessing a sickness, and the face of evil."

"We continue to pray for these blessed children and other wonderful people who were killed and their families," said Donnelly. "We are crushed by this loss."



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Pelosi vs. Cordileone isn't only about abortion. It's about women and bishops.

27 May 2022

by [Phyllis Zagano](#),
[Religion News Service](#)



Pope Francis presents a gift to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., during a private audience at the Vatican Oct. 9, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

In October 2021, Pope Francis initiated a two-year "Synod on Synodality," aimed at finding out what Catholics and others think about the church. He may get more than he asked for.

Preliminary results indicate one thing: Women are fed up. They like Francis well enough, but they are not much interested in what bishops and priests have to say.

Why?

The latest [kerfuffle](#) between San Francisco's Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is at the tip of a very big iceberg.

Pelosi's perceived support of legalized abortion at the federal level collides with Catholic teaching. Hairsplitters who support her will argue that she does not support or promote or procure abortions, she simply supports current American law and works to preserve it.

Hairsplitters on Cordileone's side will argue that because Pelosi is perceived to be, as they say, "pro-abortion," she creates public scandal and therefore must be denied access

to the Catholic sacrament of Communion. They say the *Code of Canon Law* trumps U.S. law.

But Pelosi and Cordileone's battle may be seen more broadly as one battle in a decades-long disintegration of trust between women and the bishops.

Some say it all started with Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, which ignored the recommendation of his own Pontifical Commission on Birth Control. Eight years after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved the first oral contraceptive pill, the pope took some 7,000 words to say "no" to contraceptive measures beyond what came to be known as "natural family planning."

Catholic women in the United States and around the world ignored the pope's decision. You didn't have to track sales of "the pill" to realize what was going on. Jokes about the size of Catholic families suddenly became a gauzy memory. Women were clearly listening to the opinions of the men in the pulpit, then returning to their homes to manage their private matters as they saw fit.

Once women began to bypass church teaching on birth control, they found other reasons to ignore the bishops. At the top of that list are clerical sex abuse and the subsequent episcopal cover-up. But there is also the question of allowing women to be active participants in Masses, and the ordination of women.

The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* decreed any layperson could perform the duties of lector and acolyte, or altar server. It took another decade [before the Vatican agreed](#) that "any layperson" included women. To this day, many bishops around the world want women kept away from the altar, despite Francis'

updates to the law that allow women to be formally installed as lectors and acolytes.

Ordaining women as priests is not a discussion the hierarchy is going to have, but ordaining women as deacons is a distinct question. Women were ordained as deacons in the early church. No matter: The naysayers connect the two orders, saying because women priests are definitively forbidden, so also are women deacons. (They overlook the fact that their logic fails. If the two orders are so connected, then the historical fact of ordained women deacons may be used to argue for women priests.)

The arguments over ordination, altar servers, lectors and birth control are all debatable, however. The definitive nature of church teaching on abortion is clear.

But all the same, for a bishop to make a public event out of a private discussion is unseemly. Before she was elected to Congress, Pelosi had five children — after the FDA approved the birth control pill. She is proud of her Catholic heritage.

Pelosi is the most powerful Democrat in the Congress. Would Cordileone, or any other bishop, prefer a non-Catholic? Or is the problem that Pelosi is female?



Phyllis Zagano

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