

Statement from Bishop Schaefer on the shootings at Pulse Club in Orlando



Yesterday, just a few hours before the end of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly under the theme "Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters"(Amos 5:24), and less than fifty miles from where we were meeting in Daytona, hate once again reared its ugly head. I have no doubt today that God's tears are rolling down like a flood following our nation's worst mass shooting in its history at Pulse in Orlando.

As Christians, we turn first to Jesus, who endured the agony of the cross to redeem and reconcile the world and who, even now, consoles and leads us as we walk in the shadow of that cross. Join me in praying for the victims of this atrocity, their families, the family of the shooter, all the first responders, chaplains, hospital staffs, and for the city of Orlando. Remember, "...the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26).

But, we can no longer afford to let it end there. In his sermon at the assembly's closing Eucharist on Sunday morning, Pr. William Flippin, Jr. reminded us that as Christians we DO NOT have the right to remain silent. He is right. Our baptismal covenant summons every Christian to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. The time for action is here. We cannot keep voicing kind sentiments and kicking action down the road. While this shooter appears to be an individual extremist affected by extremist rhetoric, right now there is no direct evidence that he was part of a terrorist group. The American Muslim Community Center, a mosque in Longwood, Florida, said the mosque stands with Americans and "senseless violence has no place in our religion or in our society."

There are deeper issues here. Church, it's time to be clear about honoring and speaking up for the basic human rights of the LGBTQ community and reasonable gun control in this country. How many hate crimes against the LGBTQ do we need to tolerate? How many humans need to be massacred by commonly available assault weapons before we come to our senses?

Two of my own daughters have school connections with two of those who died.

There is an entire generation that needs to hear a clear and uncompromising word from the church: Every human being shares in the image of God and, therefore, shares the same dignity without regard to racial or ethnic distinction, family status, age, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, or differing abilities. Period. This senseless violence must end.

Our prayer and our clarion call to action as Christians is that justice may at last roll down like waters.

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Florida-Bahamas Synod
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