



NEWS

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A Statement from Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

December 14, 2015

WASHINGTON—In this blessed Advent season, we sing hopeful carols anticipating the miracle of Christmas. We have reason to announce the need for peace and goodwill throughout the world with even stronger voices this year, in light of the recent mass shooting in San Bernardino. Violence and hate in the world around us must be met with resolve and courage.

We pray that family and friends facing the pain of loss and the journey of recovery find strength in the compassion of their community. We draw especially close to the local Church, which has borne the burden of mourning the loss of those who died and of comforting their families, yet has the strength to reach out in love.

We are also reminded of those recovering from the shooting in Colorado Springs. Here, too, the Christmas story inspires us to give of ourselves, as Jesus gave up his body, so we may bring comfort and joy to those in need. We must not respond in fear. We are called to be heralds of hope and prophetic voices against senseless violence, a violence which can never be justified by invoking the name of God.

Watching innocent lives taken and wondering whether the violence will reach our own families rightly stirs our deepest protective emotions. We must resist the hatred and suspicion that leads to policies of discrimination. Instead, we must channel our emotions of concern and protection, born in love, into a vibrant witness to the dignity of every person. We should employ immigration laws that are humane and keep us safe, but should never target specific classes of persons based on religion.

When we fail to see the difference between our enemies and people of good will, we lose a part of who we are as people of faith. Policies of fear and inflammatory rhetoric will only offer extremists fertile soil and pave the way toward a divisive, fearful future. As Pope Francis reminded us in his speech to Congress: “The yardstick by which we measure others is the yardstick by which time will measure us.”

Confident in what Jesus asks of us, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops remains steadfast in our commitment to refugees, who are often escaping severe persecution. We will continue to support strengthening social services for persons with mental illness, but we must remember that only a small number of those suffering with these challenges pose a risk to themselves or others. We encourage responsible firearms regulation. And we will advocate on behalf of people facing religious discrimination, including our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Let us confront the extremist threat with courage and compassion, recognizing that Christianity, Islam, Judaism and many other religions are united in opposition to violence carried out in their name.

Keywords: Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, President, USCCB, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, violence, religion, peace, Christmas, encounter, mercy

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