

A PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

ICE SHOOTING IN MINNESOTA



Dear Siblings in Christ,

As I conclude my time in the Land of the Holy One, my heart is heavy, and my prayers are restless.

Today, as I prepare to return home, I lit a candle in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is a sacred place that holds both the cruelty of the crucifixion and the unimaginable hope of the resurrection. There, I prayed for our nation, for our leaders, and for our people.

In recent days, our common life has been pierced by violence and fear: a shooting of an innocent, Renee Nicole Good, that has shattered lives and communities, and the deeply troubling incursions and protests at schools, places that should be sanctuaries of learning, safety, and hope. The targeting of schools and the terrorizing of children strike at the very heart of our moral imagination. This is not simply a political crisis. It is a spiritual one.

As people of faith, who seek to follow the Prince of Peace, we proclaim that every human being is made in the image of God, endowed with dignity that cannot be revoked by fear, vengeance, or power. When lives are lost through violence, when children are made afraid in the very places meant to nurture them, when communities are destabilized through intimidation and force, something sacred is being violated.

I grieve for those who have been killed and injured. I grieve for families who now carry unbearable loss. I grieve for children who are learning too early what fear feels like. And I grieve for a nation in which cruelty is increasingly justified as policy, and force is wielded without regard for its human cost.

Let me be clear: the use of intimidation, militarized presence, or violence, especially in and around schools, is unconscionable. It represents an egregious disregard for human dignity and a callous indifference to the lives of the most vulnerable among us. No objective, political or otherwise, can justify taking life, terrorizing children, or fracturing communities in this way.

I confess that I do not have easy answers for how to heal what feels like a tearing of the fabric of our common life. But I do know this: silence in the face of injustice is not an option for the Church. We are called to shine light into darkness, to speak truth even when it is costly, and to stand with those who are afraid, targeted, or harmed.

The Good News of Jesus Christ compels us to resist the normalization of violence and cruelty. Jesus stands always with the wounded, the frightened, the outcast, and the oppressed, not with the forces that demean, dehumanize, or destroy. To follow Christ in this moment is to refuse complicity, to practice courageous compassion, and to insist that love of neighbor is not an abstraction but a concrete moral demand.

I call upon our communities of faith here in Missouri to pray fervently, to grieve honestly, to act nonviolently, and to advocate persistently for policies and practices that protect life rather than endanger it. I urge leaders at every level to choose restraint over retribution, care over coercion, and justice rooted in mercy rather than vengeance.

May God give us the courage to see clearly, the strength to speak truthfully, and the resolve to protect the dignity of every person.

May we never be silently complicit in the face of injustice.

In hope, sorrow, and faith,
The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson
XI Bishop of Missouri



*O God,
you have bound us together
in a common life. Help us,
in the midst of our struggles
for justice and truth, to confront
one another without hatred or bitterness,
and to work together with mutual
forbearance and respect;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*