



ARCHDIOCESE
OF ST. LOUIS

Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

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TASK FORCE ON GUN
VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Prayer For Victims And For An End To Gun Violence

Through the Stations of the Cross



Thank you for joining us today for an Archdiocesan-wide day of prayer and reflection. Last year, over 250 people in the St. Louis area were killed by gun violence. In times of trouble and suffering, prayer is a refuge. As we walk with Christ today, we'll remember victims across our community.

While many sensational incidents of person-on-person gun violence are reported in the news, unfortunately there are far more gun deaths from suicide. These are often undercounted or mischaracterized because of shame, stigma, and silence around mental health. This silence can create the false impression that gun violence does not cross racial or geographic boundaries across our Archdiocese. But the families and friends of suicide victims are not without pain and we remember them today as well.

All gun violence is a profound violation of human dignity that calls for solidarity, compassion, and action. The Gospel repeatedly challenges believers to see Christ in those who suffer most.

OPENING PRAYER

*Loving God, Source of Love, Comforter of the Afflicted,
be with us tonight as we journey in the footsteps of Jesus
as he goes to his suffering and death.
As we reflect on the suffering of Jesus,
help us to feel the pain and humiliation that he felt,
so that we may be moved by the great sacrifice he made
for all humanity.
Send us your Spirit to enter our hearts
so that with compassion
we may listen and respond to the plight of others
who carry burdens, crosses, despair, and loss of dignity.
Send your Spirit to be with us as we travel this journey together.
Awaken our hearts
that we may accept your challenge to create the world anew.
We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
as one God, forever and ever.*

Amen

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Martha's Hall (<https://saintmarthas.org/>)

- Since 1983, Saint Martha's has worked to end the cycle of domestic violence. We empower women to take control of their lives and secure a better future for themselves and their children.

Mercy Neighborhood Ministry Resources ([https://www.mercy.net/practice/mercy-neighborhood-ministry-resources/](https://www.mercy.net/practice/mercy-neighborhood-ministry/mercy-neighborhood-ministry-resources/))

- Mercy Neighborhood offers an abundance of resource throughout the St. Louis area.

Cardinal Glennon Hospital (<https://www.ssmhealth.com/cardinal-glennon>)

- Serves children in need of health care throughout St. Louis.

Children's Services Coalition of St. Louis (<https://www.csc-stl.org/>)

- CSC members work together to promote the delivery of high-quality social and behavioral healthcare services for Missouri's children and their families through advocacy, collaboration, and communication.

The BRIC (Bullet Related Injury Clinic) (<https://www.thebric.org/>)

- Community-based clinic in St. Louis specializing in helping people heal after they have been injured by a bullet. "We provide holistic care for anyone dealing with the impact of a bullet to support your mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Whether you have been shot, someone you love has been injured, or there has been a shooting in your community, we are here for you."

Behavioral Health Response (<https://bhrstl.com/>)

- Crisis support, mental health counseling, suicide intervention/prevention, resource referral, 24-hour hotline
- Justice and Crisis Response Unit: street triage co-responder model where a trained J-CRU clinician partners with a St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department officer. Our clinician travels on calls related to behavioral health such as mental health, substance use, trauma, quality of life events, self-sufficiency incidents, and more.
- 911 Diversion program helps the community obtain crisis phone services if an emergency response is not needed.

Crime Victim Advocacy Center (<https://www.supportvictims.org/>)

- Victim advocacy, trauma-informed counseling, support groups, legal assistance, fundraising for crime victims fund (support for victims of all types of crime, including violence).

Be SMART for Kids (<https://besmartforkids.org/>)

- The Be SMART campaign was launched in 2015 to promote responsible gun ownership in order to reduce child gun deaths. Whether you're a gun owner, or you know someone who owns a gun, there is a role for everyone in the conversation around secure gun storage. Be SMART is a framework that parents, caretakers, and community leaders can follow to help keep their communities safe.

MOURNING & REMEMBERING LIVES LOST

CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER:

Dear God, source of all light,
we are surrounded by the darkness
of the injustices experienced by your people,
the victims of senseless gun violence,
the families and friends of those needlessly taken,
the first responders, medical personnel, and social workers who deal with
tragedy daily,
the teachers who prepare for the unspeakable, the children who live in fear,
the people of faith seeking answers to ceaseless trauma,
and those who seek help in their hopelessness.

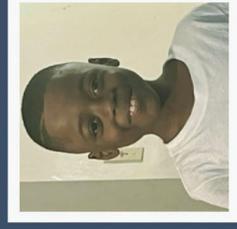
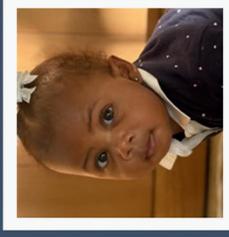
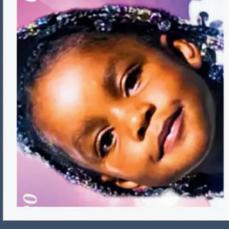
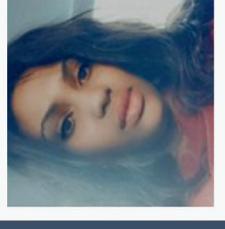
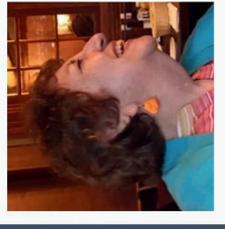
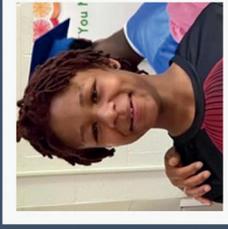
Surround us and fill us with your Spirit, who is Light.
May our reflections on the mystery of Jesus's death help us to see God's desire:
violence is not answered with violence;
death is not answered with the language of death.
In the silence of the cross,

the uproar of weapons ceases and
the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue and peace is spoken.

We desire to be your presence to the least among us
and to know your presence in them as we live in the hope of the Resurrection,
to bring justice and peace to the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.



References:
National Gun Violence Memorial <https://gunmemorial.org/>
St. Louis Post-Dispatch <https://graphics.sltoday.com/apps/homicide-tracker/2025/>



FIRST STATION:
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas! ... Let [Jesus] be crucified!" (Matthew 27:21–22)

D'ujan, 14, was a freshman at Northview High School, where he was excelling academically. D'ujan was always curious and eager to learn, with dreams of exploring the world. Beyond his academic and artistic interests, he cultivated a deep love for health and fitness and found joy in the peaceful pursuit of fishing. D'ujan was hit by a stray bullet inside his home in Glasgow Village. Police said several people in the area were shooting at each other when he was fatally struck.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, though innocent, you were unjustly condemned to death. Today, throughout our cities, other innocents are unjustly put to death, with callous or careless disregard for human life. We pray for the innocent who lose their lives due to anger, hatred, and prejudice.



FOURTEENTH STATION:
JESUS' BODY IS PLACED IN A TOMB

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory? (Luke 24:26)

Five months after he was wounded in a senseless act of violence with his family after celebrating his mother's birthday, Richard, now 11, died of complications from being shot. In a news conference announcing his passing, the children's grandmother, said they are begging for someone to come forward with information or for the shooter to turn himself in. "Jordan and Richard fought when they were born," Neal said. "They were born both at one pound and just a few ounces, and they beat all of those obstacles to be killed in a senseless shooting. For what?"

ALL: Christ Jesus, you were gently laid in your burial place by those who loved you. They experienced profound loss, anguish, and overwhelming sorrow. We pray for every family member and friend who attends the burial of one lost to gun violence. We pray especially for the survivors of gun violence, whose lives are changed physically and emotionally by trauma.



**THIRTEENTH STATION:
JESUS' BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

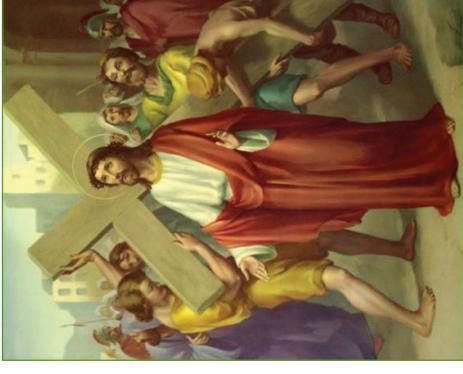
LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." (Luke 22:19)

After a birthday celebration for his mother, Jordan's father turned into a gas station and their vehicle nearly collided with a maroon sedan. That vehicle appeared again minutes later as the car approached Bircher Boulevard and Ruskin Avenue just north of Interstate 70 in the city's Mark Twain neighborhood. Someone in the vehicle opened fire. Jordan, 9, died from his injuries immediately after the shooting. His brother Richard, then 10, and their father were also shot and injured. The shooters were never found.

ALL: Christ Jesus, after an agonizing death, your body was taken down from the cross and released into the arms of your mother and your closest friends. They mourned your loss, struggling against despair. We pray for families who are called to identify a son, a daughter, a brother, sister, mother, or father whose life has been ended by senseless violence. We pray that they will recognize your face, Christ Jesus, in the desperate yet sacred moments of their grief and that they will know hope.



**SECOND STATION:
JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: And carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull. (John 19:17)

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office received a report of an unresponsive man lying in a driveway in Robertsville. Upon first responders' arrival they discovered 46-year-old Jared suffering from a gunshot wound. He was transported to Mercy Hospital in Washington, Mo., but was later pronounced dead after succumbing to his injuries.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you were made to carry the cross, a heavy burden, but also a cruel weapon. We pray now for those whose lives are deliberately and violently ended while they go about their day-to-day activities.



**THIRD STATION:
JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

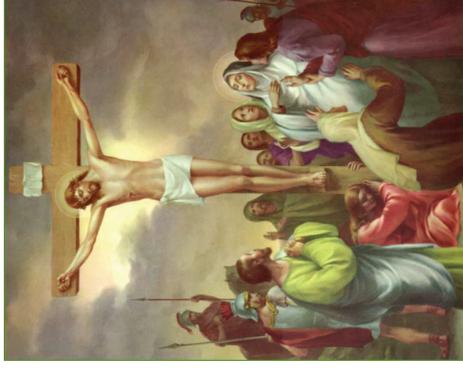
ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: I am troubled now. Yet what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. (John 12:27–28)

Officials were alerted to reports of gun shots in unincorporated South St. Louis County. When police arrived at the scene, they located 19-year-old Daniel, a former Mehlville High School student, suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. First responders transported Daniel to the hospital, but he died from his injuries. Two minors who are aged 16 and 17, were taken into custody in relation to the shooting death.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell as you carried your cross ever closer to your death. We pray for our teens who unknowingly fall, never to get up again, whose deaths should never have happened at such a young age.



**TWELFTH STATION:
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)

(All kneel together for a reflective pause, and then rise.)

Ophelia, a 9-month-old girl, was shot and killed in a murder-suicide. Her mother said that Ophelia was an active and energetic baby, and she had learned to pull herself up to a stand. She was also ready to walk, according to her mother. The shooter was identified as the baby's father who was pronounced dead at the scene. The father was described as suffering with mental illness but had no history of violence.

ALL: Christ Jesus, after hours of agony, you gave up your spirit. We pray for trauma doctors and nurses everywhere, who daily care for victims of violence and who, after every effort has been made, must pronounce children, women and men dead.



**ELEVENTH STATION:
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

St. Louis police responded to a shooting in South St. Louis. Russell, 63, an army veteran who let friends battling addiction and financial struggles stay with him, was accused by a neighbor of stealing \$20 from a wallet. The neighbor became enraged, retrieved a pistol and shot Russell in the chest. Witnesses said the shooting happened right in front of three children, ages 6, 5 and 3.

(Lights Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, when nails pierced your hands and feet, they were struck with the force of the sins of humankind. Did the onlookers understand the part they played as each nail was struck? Do we, even today, accept our personal connection to the nails that were struck? We pray for all who suffer from domestic abuse. In the home - where they should be most loved - they are most abused. We pray for the awareness to be shocked and outraged by domestic violence and the courage to step in to protect those who are abused.



**FOURTH STATION:
JESUS ENCOUNTERS HIS MOTHER**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary ... "You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35)

Elijah's curiosity led him to tinker and explore. Just 16, he dove into fixing bikes, cars, and anything that sparked his mechanical interest, his hands always busy with the next project. He was riding his bicycle in the Walnut Park East neighborhood of North St. Louis when he was shot. He was able to run toward Lillian and Beacon Avenue where he was located by officers. He later died at a hospital.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, on your way you were met by your mother Mary, a presence of brave, enduring love. We pray for all women today – wives, daughters, mothers - whose lives are ended all too soon by violence. We are confident that in their final moments of fear and pain, Mary is with them, just as she was with you. Comfort them; receive them into your arms. We pray also for the families left with unending grief and loss.



FIFTH STATION:
SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

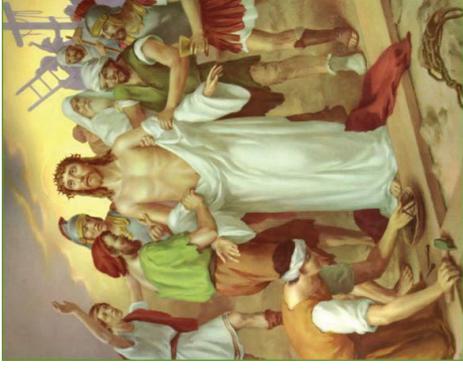
ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country ... to carry his cross. (Mark 15:21)

Nicki, 77, was a teacher and librarian, but her true love was caring for her children and grandchildren. She volunteered for everything from room mother to Girl Scout leader. Her passion for acting started at a very young age. She was active in community theatre and besides performing, Nicki directed, worked on costumes, sets, and in box office. According to the police department, officers responded to a call of a shooting at Nicki's home. Police say they believe her husband shot and killed Nicki before turning the gun on himself and firing.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, Simon was pulled from the crowd to help you carry your cross. We pray that when called upon, as Simon once was, we will not turn our face. Help us find the courage to assist another in desperate need of help, even as you were along that holy walk to your death.



TENTH STATION:
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: For creation awaits with eager expectation ... in hope that [it] would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21)

Aubreyonna, 4, was home with her grandmother, two aunts and two other children when they all went to sleep. Police say both aunts awoke to one gunshot and found Aubreyonna, a gun, and a two-year-old at the foot of her grandmother's bed. The grandmother admitted she slept with the gun under her pillow and left the gun unsecured.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, after the torture of carrying your own weapon of death, you suffered the further degradation of being stripped of your clothing. We pray for those whose deaths by violence remain unsolved. Like you, Jesus, they are left naked. We pray also for those whose actions contribute to another's death or injury; may they come to repent their actions.



**SIXTH STATION:
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet." (Luke 15:22)

Terrill, 25, was found lying on the sidewalk with multiple gunshot wounds, police said. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Police later took a suspect into custody, saying in charging documents that Terrill's death occurred while the suspect attempted to rob him of his automobile.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell a third time, despite the help of Simon and the support of the women. Though faltering, you continued the long journey of your Passion. We pray for police, fire-fighters, and emergency personnel who day after day are called to scenes of violence, so often too late to prevent them. We pray that you remain with them, keep them safe, and give them the hope that allows them to continue compassionately in their roles as first responders.



**SIXTH STATION:
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 8:48)

Micheala, 27, was fatally shot in south St. Louis. Police found her with multiple gunshot wounds; she died at the scene. Her family said Micheala never met a stranger, loved everyone and was a true free spirit. They say her beautiful smile, bubbly personality and love for her family and friends will be deeply missed.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, another woman - perhaps even a stranger - bravely stepped from the crowd and boldly wiped the sweat and tears from your face. We pray that we might be the Veronicas among our friends and acquaintances, and in our neighborhoods; that we might recognize the signs of domestic abuse and act to protect those in need of safety.



**SEVENTH STATION:
JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.
(John 8:7)

Kelsey, 25, was shot in Affton after an argument with a man she had been in a romantic relationship with. The man shot Kelsey, a certified nursing assistant, after arguing with her late at night. Police arrived at her home after receiving a disturbance call and found her with a gunshot wound. She died later at a hospital.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell again; you took upon yourself the fullness of our humanity, even pain, doubt, exhaustion, and fear. We pray for the elderly and the youngest among us whose lives are taken in acts of senseless violence.



**EIGHTH STATION:
JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children ..." (Luke 23:28)

Natasha, 46, found joy in home projects, arts and crafts with her grandchildren, and decorating her home with a unique style that was truly her own. Her strong sense of community and passion for justice, demonstrating her commitment to the causes she held dear. An adult daughter tried to contact her mother for Mother's Day, but was unable to reach her. Hazelwood police said. Police were asked to check on her well-being, and the officers found that her husband shot Natasha to death and then killed himself.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you warned the women you encountered not to weep for you but to be concerned with repentance and judgement. We pray for the prosecutors, judges and juries who must hear the stories of those whose lives have been taken; may they judge honestly and fairly.