

The Day of Judgement Draws Near
 Advent II
 December 5, 2021
 The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

Hana St. Julian, age 14.
 Tate Myre, age 16.
 Madisyn Baldwin, age 17.
 Justin Shilling, age 17.

They took their last breaths on this earth, this week.

Six other students and one teacher are wounded, three of the students and the teacher are now home, alive, scarred and no doubt forever changed. Three students remain in the hospital two girls who are 17, one with chest wounds and the other with neck wounds, a 14-year-old boy is still in the hospital with gunshot wounds to his jaw.

Stop for a moment and breathe and tell me what you feel.
 Numb?
 Pain.
 Sadness.
 Grief.
 Helplessness.
 Fear.
 Anger.
 Despair.
 Acquiesce.
 Shame...

We people of faith, pray and lament and commend the children who were murdered in Oxford, to God's Holy Hands. We pray that God and **we** will wrap their families in care, blanket them in protection. We pray that this will never happen again. And that God will bind-up their broken hearts and offer them a path forward.

We grieve now.

State Senator Rosemary Bayer, who represents Oxford, Michigan and chairs the Firearms Safety and Violence Prevention Caucus, someone who has sponsored several gun reform bills that stalled in our state legislature, said earlier this week,

"I lived down the street from that school. I know the people in [that town,] Oxford, that tiny little village, such a beautiful place...you never expect tragedy...If this were my daughter, would I want to hear legislators arguing about legislation now? No. I would say, you need to help me get through this, help me to take care of my kids."

She said we will care for this community now, we will get them the resources they need now, and the time for action, will come.

Today we grieve, but the days are coming, when we shall act. I speak of these days now, for now I have your attention. We all know how our focus slides away, we don't mean to let it go, but it slips away, as we turn to other cares. I think sometimes it's because the fear and pain are just too much for us to continue to hold.

We grieve now, but soon we will act for we exist in a time and place where we allow children to murder other children, because someone has convinced much of our population and many of our lawmakers that having automatic firearms readily accessible is an unalienable right.

Who of us as faithful followers of Jesus can say, "Yes Lord, it is meet and right for me and for my family to have automatic pistols and rifles."

For what do I need these machines designed to ensure that someone ceases to breathe? Are these hunting weapons, rifles for killing game to cull the herd or perhaps feed my family? No.

I need these weapons for what purpose? To keep me safe? From people or from my debilitating sense of insecurity, my endless fears that I am not good enough or strong enough. Holding the gun, sliding mechanisms of steel, that fire projectiles of lead into living, breathing human beings does that vision give me hope? Does the imagined, envisioned death of someone with whom I am mad, someone who made me feel small, does that fantasy of their blood on the floor does it calm my nerves in this fragile, fraught world?

We grieve now, but soon we must act. Am I being political? Do you think my anger is showing? Do you think I am going too far?

Friends, those young people are no longer breathing. Will you join with me, all of us, together, soon, acting? Please let us do this.

The day of judgement draws near...*There is a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord...*

I seek sensible gun laws. I seek smart technology that relies on biometrics to prevent someone from firing a gun they do not own. I support hunters, hunting and safe ownership of hunting rifles. I support universal background checks. And I seek the elimination of automatic handguns and rifles.

I seek a world; I seek a place where our young people are safe. You cannot use what you do not have. I seek a world where guns are not commonplace. Join me. For...

*Every valley shall be filled, every mountain laid low,
The crooked made straight,
The rough ways made smooth and ALL flesh,*

All Flesh, all of our children, shall see the salvation of God.

We grieve now, and soon we prepare the way for our Lord.