News



A family prays in front of a row of crosses Nov. 6 near the site of the shooting at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland, Texas. (CNS/Rick Wilking, Reuters)

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The nation's leaders "must engage in a real debate about needed measures to save lives and make our communities safer," said the chairman of the U.S. bishops'

domestic policy committee.

Such debate is essential because "violence in our society will not be solved by a single piece of legislation, and many factors contribute to what we see going on all around us," said Bishop Frank Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

His Nov. 7 statement was issued in response to "recent and horrific attacks" in the country, referring to the mass shooting Nov. 5 at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas, that left 26 people dead and 20 others wounded, and the Oct. 1 mass shooting in Las Vegas during an outdoor concert that left 58 people dead and hundreds of others injured.

"For many years, the Catholic bishops of the United States have been urging our leaders to explore and adopt reasonable policies to help curb gun violence," Dewane said.

The Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs gun massacres "remind us of how much damage can be caused when weapons — particularly weapons designed to inflict extreme levels of bloodshed — too easily find their way into the hands of those who would wish to use them to harm others," he said.

Dewane said the USCCB continues to urge a total ban on assault weapons, "which we supported when the ban passed in 1994 and when Congress failed to renew it in 2004."

Other efforts the bishops support include measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases; limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines; and a federal law to criminalize gun trafficking.

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