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People react outside the SSGT Willie de Leon Civic Center, where students had been transpor

People react outside the SSGT Willie de Leon Civic Center, where students had been transported from Robb Elementary School after a shooting, in Uvalde, Texas, May 24, 2022. (CNS photo/Marco Bello, Reuters)



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WASHINGTON — Some U.S. bishops spoke out against the easy accessibility to guns in the country following a May 24 rampage that left at least 19 children and two of their elementary school teachers dead in Uvalde, Texas.

"Don't tell me that guns aren't the problem, people are. I'm sick of hearing it," Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, tweeted May 25. "The darkness first takes our children who then kill our children, using the guns that are easier to obtain than aspirin. We sacralize death's instruments and then are surprised that death

uses them."

The comments came hours after Texas authorities said an 18-year-old wearing body armor evaded police after crashing his truck near an elementary school close to the U.S-Mexico border and entered the school building at around noon armed with two assault weapons.

"There was several law enforcement that engaged the suspect but he was able to make entry into the school where he did go into several classrooms and, unfortunately, he did fire his firearm," Sgt. Erick Estrada, of the Texas Department of Public Safety, told CNN late May 24.

In addition to the dead, reports say 15 children were injured as well as two law enforcement officers. Authorities named Salvador Ramos as the shooter and said he was killed by police. He also is said to have shot his grandmother, who remains in the hospital.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller comforted families who waited outside a local civic center in Uvalde waiting for news of their loved ones.

"When will these insane acts of violence end?" the archbishop later said in a statement. "It is too great a burden to bear. The word tragedy doesn't begin to describe what occurred. These massacres cannot be considered 'the new normal.'"

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"The Catholic Church consistently calls for the protection of all life; and these mass shootings are a most pressing life issue on which all in society must act — elected leaders and citizens alike," he said. "We pray that God comfort and offer compassion to the families of these little ones whose pain is unbearable."

Chieko Noguchi, director of public affairs for the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, said the organization joined Archbishop García-Siller in prayers for the community.

"There have been too many school shootings, too much killing of the innocent. Our Catholic faith calls us to pray for those who have died and to bind the wounds of others," she said in a statement. "As we do so, each of us also needs to search our souls for ways that we can do more to understand this epidemic of evil and violence

and implore our elected officials to help us take action."

In a statement, the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, suggested that a course of action from the Catholic Church could come "in findings ways to more effectively identify people at risk of such behavior and to push for reasonable limits to the proliferation of firearms."

From Rome, Pope Francis also weighed in, saying: "It's time to say 'Enough' to the indiscriminate trade of weapons!" and encouraged all to be committed in the effort "so that tragedies like this cannot occur again."

Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich in a May 24 tweet said the right to life trumps the right to have weapons and that "the Second Amendment did not come down from Sinai."

"The right to bear arms will never be more important than human life," he said. "Our children have rights too. And our elected officials have a moral duty to protect them."

In an address to the nation, President Joe Biden recalled his time as vice president when he could not get enough members of Congress to agree on gun control legislation in 2013, a year after 26 people, including 20 elementary school children, were fatally shot by a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

"As a nation, we have to ask: When in God's name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby? When in God's name will we do what we all know in our gut needs to be done?" the president said.

Cardinal Cupich, in his tweets, implored people, not just to lament, but to act.

"We must weep and soak in the grief that comes with the knowledge that these children of God were cut down by a man who was just a few years their senior. But then we must steel ourselves to act in the face of what seems like insurmountable despair," he tweeted. "As I reflect on this latest American massacre, I keep returning to the questions: Who are we as a nation if we do not act to protect our children? What do we love more: our instruments of death or our future?"