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People visit a memorial outside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, May 25, the site of

People visit a memorial outside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, May 25, the site of a mass shooting. An 18-year-old man shot and killed 19 children and two teachers and injured several more people. (CNS/Reuters/Nuri Vallbona)

by NCR Editorial Staff

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It all just feels so hopeless. Another mass shooting in America. At least 19 elementary school children and two of their teachers murdered in Uvalde, Texas. A space designed for learning turned instead into a killing field. A community that will never, ever be the same. Survivors and family who will carry unimaginable grief, trauma, heartbreak for generations to come.

And yet, and yet, and yet. We know all too well how this song goes. "Thoughts and prayers" will be on offer aplenty. But the NRA and other gun lobbies will exert pressure on Congress. Passage of sensible gun control measures will be deemed out of reach. It's just too radical, of course, too inimical to our exceptional, untouchable American ideal of liberty.

The chorus repeats, awaiting a new verse. Uvalde will be followed by somewhere else, just as it was preceded by Buffalo, and Sacramento, and San Jose, and Colorado Springs, and Indianapolis, and Rock Hill, and Boulder, and on, and on.

If only, if only. If only someone could take the country by the shoulders and scream the scream of a mother, or a father, or a grandparent, or an aunt, or an uncle now

looking to years and years of pain and someone always missing from their kitchen table.



Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio comforts people in Uvalde, Texas, outside the SSGT Willie de Leon Civic Center, where students had been transported from Robb Elementary School after a mass shooting May 24. (CNS/Reuters/Marco Bello)

If only, if only. If only someone could speak with a voice of unquestioned moral authority and say, "No more, not again, we must do something this time!" We are better than having to send our children — our children! — off to school each day, knowing that any 18-year-old can walk in with an assault weapon and annihilate them. Some of the bodies in Texas were so damaged they couldn't be identified without genetic testing.

A voice of moral authority. You certainly wouldn't see it in the statement the U.S. bishops released May 24 after the mass murder. Three short sentences, not even given the simple weight of an episcopal signature, but instead attributed to the

bishops' spokesperson. Worse yet, it included only a very bland call to find ways "to understand this epidemic of evil and violence" behind mass shootings in America. No mention of the need for gun control measures, or of any specific call for Congress to, you know, actually do something.

Perhaps it is sadly illuminating that this horror occurred only four days after San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone announced his decision to ban House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, from receiving Communion in his archdiocese, over her support for legalized abortion. What canonical punishment awaits the politicians, mostly Republicans, who largely refuse to vote for any significant form of gun control?

It's hard not to conclude that one party's efforts toward a culture of life have episcopal backing, while the other's does not. What a lasting shame that the seamless garment movement was so tarred and feathered for decades by the church's pro-life wing. People would not consider the church political if it had criticized both parties more equally, and also supported them more equally, when they sought to defend and promote human life and dignity.

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At least a few bishops responded to the murders in Texas more seriously than their organization in Washington.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, for example, called the shooting a "massacre" and said such shootings "are a most pressing life issue on which all in society must act."

Chicago Cardinal Cupich pointedly asked: "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?"

And Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, responded with what sounds like holy anger.

"Don't tell me that guns aren't the problem, people are. I'm sick of hearing it," he said on Twitter. "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."

We're sick of hearing it, too. We're also sick of hearing the same song, always with a new verse — but always one where more of our children are butchered and no one in authority does anything. How long must this song go on?

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