

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

December 17, 2012 at 12:16pm

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## **An unspeakable tragedy and where we can go from here**

by Pat Perriello

NCR Today

I find myself speechless at the Friday shooting in Newtown, Conn., that ended the lives of 20 small children and six adults. This event, coming on the heels of the mall shooting in Oregon only a couple of days earlier, is beyond comprehension. A column by Dan Rodricks from *The Baltimore Sun* says much of what I would like to say.

Let me just add a couple of random thoughts.

The parish of St. Rose of Lima in Newtown seemed to be an integral part of ministering to the community after the shooting. This is good. It would seem so appropriate for the church in the United States to take a leading role in pushing for meaningful laws to reduce gun violence. Could there possibly be a more significant right-to-life issue?

We frequently hear that no laws could have prevented this particular act of violence, and it is true that there is no guarantee any particular heinous act of violence can be prevented. However, it is not true that gun violence cannot be significantly reduced. Compare our statistics with other industrialized countries such as Canada and it is clear much can be done. Consider the recent incident in China, where a man attacked children in an elementary school with a knife. There were 22 children injured, but none were killed.

Finally, there is no question that all of us are grieving and devastated by this terrible tragedy. Yet some seem to feel that any effort to address the problem is unacceptable. Are we condemned to continue to have these regular incidents of escalating gun violence? Can it really be that the right to bear arms outranks the right of our young children to be safe in their schools? We have put a man on the moon and devised the greatest government known to man, and we can work together to protect both gun rights and our children. First, however, we need to sit down with experts in the field, as well as parents, gun owners

and legislators, and begin to talk with one another. We need to reach beyond the rancorous and contentious debates that plague our society these days and actually arrive at sensible and effective solutions. It can be done. It must be done.

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