

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC

ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA



There have been more than 200 mass shootings and more than 9,000 suicides by gun in the United States in 2023 alone. We have had to collectively mourn the deaths of nearly 700 children. The grim reality of gun violence has become part of the very fabric of our daily lives.

In the face of so much needless and seemingly endless bloodshed, it is tempting to fall into hopelessness and despair for our future. Our faith, however, does not allow us to do so. It demands not only that we cling to hope, but that we also take the necessary action to bring about a just and peaceful world. It demands that we take action to protect human life and put an end to the violence.

The Gospel calls us in a particular way to protect the most vulnerable among us. The ready accessibility of firearms presents an immediate threat to the wellbeing of children, families impacted by domestic violence and individuals experiencing mental illness. Our first priority must therefore be to prevent firearms from falling into the hands of those who would carry out violent acts against children in schools, against their families or against themselves.

We, the bishops of the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical Province of Atlanta, call on the federal and state elected officials of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina to take decisive action to implement meaningful legislation addressing the plague of gun violence we face nationwide and at home in our local communities. As legislators, you are in a unique position to support and promote public policy that will save lives.


In line with the measures consistently called for by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, public officials must put into place these commonsense reforms:

- A total ban on assault weapons.
- Universal background checks for all gun purchases.
- Limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines.
- Improved access to and increased resources for mental health care and earlier interventions.
- Regulations and limitations on the purchasing of handguns.
- Require gun owners to provide safe storage and report lost and stolen guns.

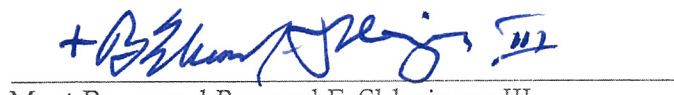
We cannot and will not stand by and silently accept that tens of thousands of people dying by gun violence each year is simply part of life in the United States. Nor can we accept excuses from political leaders that there is nothing that can be done. To do nothing is to be complicit in the violence.

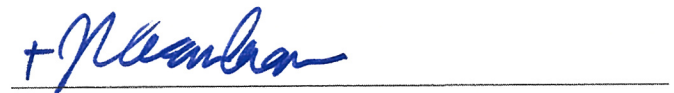
We once again urge the elected officials of our three states to enact commonsense gun safety legislation, while we as faith leaders commit to the promotion of mercy and peacebuilding through our Church's social teachings and restorative justice practices. Together, we can foster resilient communities that would resort not to violence but to dialogue to resolve differences, and promote peaceful conflict resolution.


We look forward to being partners in building that future.

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Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.
Archbishop of Atlanta


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Most Reverend Joel M. Konzen S.M.
Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

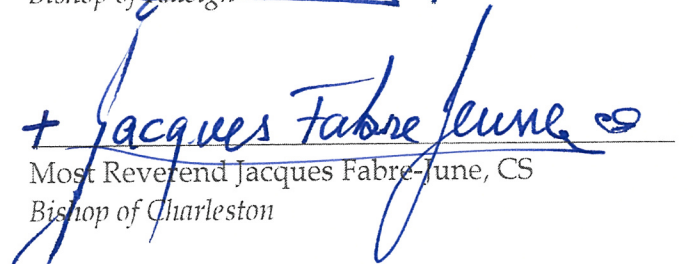
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Most Reverend Bernard E. Shlesinger III
Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

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Most Reverend John N. Tran
Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

+ 
Most Reverend Stephen D. Parkes, D.D.
Bishop of Savannah

+ 
Most Reverend J. Kevin Boland
Bishop Emeritus of Savannah

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Most Reverend Luis R. Zarama, J.C.L.
Bishop of Raleigh

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Most Reverend Jacques Fabre June, CS
Bishop of Charleston