



A Step Toward Nonviolence: Banning Assault Weapons April 27, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

In 2021, our bi-monthly resources will typically appear in your inbox on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page -- [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our [regular programs.](#)

Today's resource speaks to gun violence, a very polarizing topic in the United States. **If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to an article discussed in this resource and invite members of your group to read the article before you come together.**

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around the article(s) you read, before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign two readers to read aloud the following prayer:

Sad, Tired and Angry: A Prayer in the Face of Gun Violence

Reader One: Almighty God,
I come before you,
once again,
after another shooting.

Reader Two: I am sad, God.
So I ask you
to receive into your loving care the souls of those who were killed,
to care for those who were wounded or hurt in any way,
to console the family members and friends of those who died or were
wounded,
to strengthen the hands of the rescue workers, medical professionals and
caregivers

Reader One: I pray too for the shooters, as I must as a Christian.
All this makes me inexpressibly sad, God.
But I know that the sadness I feel is your sadness.
It is the same sadness your son expressed
when he wept over the death of
his friend Lazarus.
I know that the sadness I feel is your sadness.

Reader Two: I am tired, God.



I'm tired of the unwillingness to see this as an important issue.
I'm tired of those in power who work to prevent any real change.
I'm tired of those who say that gun violence can't be reduced.

All this makes me tired.
But I know that the tiredness I feel is your tiredness.
It's the same tiredness that Jesus felt after his own struggles against
injustice that led him to fall asleep on the boat with his disciples.

Reader One: I am angry, God.
I'm angry at the seeming powerlessness of our community to prevent this.
I'm angry at the selfish financial interests who block change.
I'm angry that these shootings happen at all.

But I know that this anger is your anger
It's the same anger Jesus felt when he overturned the tables in the Temple,
angry that anyone would be taken advantage of in any way.

Reader Two: Help me see in these feelings as the way that you move me to act.
Help me see in these emotions your own desire for change.
Help me see in these feelings your moving me to act.
Help me see in these reactions your pushing me to do something.

Because I know this is the way you move people to action.
And I know that you desire action.
For Jesus did not stand by while people were being hurt.
He plunged into their lives.

Reader One: So help me to answer these questions:
How can I help?
How can I fight against gun violence?
How can I urge my political leaders to enact change?
How can I help people understand that this is
an issue about life?

Reader Two: I am sad over the loss of life,
tired of excuses for the loss of life,
and angry that we are paralyzed by the loss of life.

Reader One: So turn my sadness into compassion.
Turn my tiredness into advocacy.
Turn my paralysis into the freedom to act.



Reader Two: Help me
to be compassionate,
to advocate
and to act,
as your son did,
Almighty God. Amen.

James Martin S.J.

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week’s reflection, let’s take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you’re struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you’ve learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a “thin place” in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you’d like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Members of your group should have read this article:

“Maybe it’s time to rethink the Second Amendment” by Shane Claiborne
<https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/3/24/22347346/maybe-its-time-to-rethink-the-second-amendment-christians>



Share your screen and watch together the 15-minute video found [here](#). Scroll down the page to the TEDx video.

After viewing, invite responses to these questions. (There's probably not time to respond to all of them, so feel free to choose from the following.)

1. Invite everyone to share their response to the video. Did you learn anything new?
2. The TEDx speaker, Kyleanne Hunter, is trying to make the case that the AR-15 assault weapon simply has no place in a noncombat situation. Did you find her argument convincing? Why or why not?
3. What experiences have you had with guns? Have you experienced gun violence in your community?
4. Share how you think about this issue from a position of Christian discipleship.
5. In his article, "Maybe it's time to rethink the Second Amendment" well-known Christian author, Shane Claiborne, makes several arguments in favor of legislation limiting gun ownership. Which of his arguments do you find most compelling?
6. Claiborne writes, "There is something deeply problematic about offering thoughts and prayers after every mass shooting while refusing to take the necessary actions that will save lives." Share with each other, action steps that can be taken in your community.
7. As a people of faith committed to peace, is there a way to address the U.S. preoccupation with gun ownership?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into the topic of nonviolence, they should consider ["Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace."](#)
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice," in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer insights tips for taking



action. Join us on Thursday, May 20, at 7:00 p.m. EDT as Susie Tierney, Executive Director of JFM, gives a Zoom presentation on "**Grounding the Work of Social Mission.**" Description: What are the key components of effective advocacy for people of faith? How do you "do what is yours to do" (St. Francis)? Susie will share her list of "top ten components of effective action," drawing on her many years of experience leading parish/congregation-based church social ministry, as well as her Franciscan worldview.

- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: **Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.**

Pause for 30 seconds. Then share this prayer:

*"Thus says Yahweh: a voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and bitter weeping. Rachel, weeping for her children, refuses to be comforted, for her children are no more."
Jeremiah 31:15*

*God, comforter of the broken and disheartened,
We come to you plagued with an agonized grief
after yet one more outbreak of senseless gun violence.
We come to you, from the East to the West,
from the North to the South,
people of all ages, ethnicities, and walks of life.
We represent one voice,
the voice of bitter weeping echoing throughout our cities
and resounding in communities throughout the world.
As violence abounds,
we sit in the darkness,
sitting alongside the suffering on the mourner's bench.
We are Rachel,
mourning with wordless sobs,
the lives of those sacrificed on the altar of violence.
We are Rachel, weeping for the wounded,
for those whose minds and bodies are etched
with painful memories of men's unjustifiable rage.
We are Rachel,*



*lamenting with the families who have lost loved ones
whose cries of despair join with those from tragedies of gun violence.
We are Rachel, perplexed with troubled souls,
and searching for answers, seeking to understand
what would cause humans to inflict pain on their sisters and brothers.*

*We are Rachel, exasperated, grasping—
crying out, “How long, O God?”
How long will this wave of violence consume your people?*

Education for Justice

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.