

Bishop Tyson's Statement on School Shooting in Minneapolis

Dear Friends:

Any shooting is a terrible tragedy. A shooting at a Catholic school at the beginning of the school year is particularly horrific. Our prayers today are with the victims and their families, the other students and their families, and the faculty and clergy of Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, Minn. We also remember the first responders involved in this crisis as well as those who work with the challenge of gun violence daily.

Prayers are very important at this time. But the grace of prayer demands our own planning and action, too. We also need to better address the roots of gun violence in our society as well as the easy access to guns by those who should not have them.

Over the past two years, the Diocese of Yakima has been working on safety and security issues in our six Catholic schools. This work will also extend to our 39 parishes. Under the administration of Doug Rich, our Director of Schools and Parish Services and the excellent input from our Safety and Security Committee (consisting of Juan Valencia, Deacon Ken Ellis, Mike Patello, Chase Millard, and Jaime Garcia), we have developed policy language, best practices, and resources that can be implemented at the local level. Originally introduced this past March at the Diocesan Risk Management Day, this information will be shared with you all in greater detail after I have done a final consultation with our Presbyterate. Our Executive Committee meets September 2 and our Priests Convocation is September 30-October 3.

While details are still emerging from today's shooting, it appears that the doors were barricaded and safety procedures were being followed, so the shooter chose to randomly shoot at students through the windows.

Thus even with the best of planning, it is difficult to prevent every possible attack by someone with evil intentions. Let us remember the families of this tragedy at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, as well as all victims of gun violence. We need to think of these children as our own.

With every best wish and blessing.

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson

Bishop of Yakima