



DIOCESE OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY

Anglican Church in America
Traditional Anglican Communion



3728 Payson Rd.
Quincy, IL 62305
(217) 223-1766

The Rt. Rev. Stephen D. Strawn, Bishop Ordinary

The Rev. Canon Forrest W. Burgett Jr., Canon to the Ordinary
Mrs. Jennifer Lovell, Diocesan Secretary

Mr. Robert T. Fluent, Diocesan Treasurer
Mrs. Tara Keehr, Chancellor

July 16, 2016

To all the faithful in Christ:

It has been only a few short weeks since I wrote to you concerning the mass murder in Orlando. It would seem inconceivable that I would be doing so about yet another mass murder so quickly. Of course, all acts of violence, even those committed against just one person, are uncalled-for and indefensible. However, it just seems magnified when it involves a greater number of casualties such as a mass murder. And they just seem to keep happening. Columbine, Charleston, Blacksburg, Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, Orlando, and now we can add Dallas to that list.

It is unfortunate that so many mass shootings can leave us sort of desensitized. Almost like we think these things happen to others. We offer prayer over the tragedy and then try to move on. But when a mass shooting hits close to home it tends to be more real to us. I know that Bp. Vaughn and the people of the Diocese of the Eastern United States experienced the reality of the shootings in Orlando a few weeks ago with intense emotion. Thursday July 7th I would come to understand how they must have felt.

The coordinated ambush and deliberate, brutal executions of the officers of the Dallas Police Department and Dallas Area Rapid Transit were cowardly and gravely sinful as are all mass murders. But for me, this one hits closer to home and has elicited more emotion personally. Annette and I haven't lived in the City of Dallas for over 30 years. In 1982 we moved to East Texas about 70 miles southeast of Dallas. But we made frequent trips to see family, attend Texas Ranger games, and occasionally Dallas Cowboy games. So we weren't so far away as to not get back to the Dallas/Ft. Worth area frequently. We left Texas in 2003 when we moved to Quincy to begin our new ministry at St. John's. But as they say, you can take the man/woman out of Texas, but you can't take Texas out of the man/woman.

Annette and I grew up in Dallas and we have been in the exact area in which this act of anarchy took place many times. The Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex remains home to much of our family. While we are happy in Quincy, our roots extend deeply into the soil of Texas. Perhaps that's the reason I experienced more personal emotion with this mass shooting. The fact that they were police officers didn't help. I didn't know any of the five officers that were gunned down. But I know they are there to protect us. Not just in Texas, but all over our country. As in all walks of life, there may be a small percentage of cops who could be called bad. But it certainly doesn't call for anarchy.

This happened right in the very place where our roots are. So the emotions have continued to be volatile. But after watching news conferences, reading about and watching the memorials and funerals (which have been taking place this week), after seeing the processions of police cars and motorcycles from all over the country (including Quincy) and Canada that were 20 miles long, and listening to Chief David Brown, its like they were my brothers. But wait a minute they are my brothers. Not just because they are from Dallas or from Texas. They are my brothers in Christ Jesus.

So I want to say that we need to ask God's mercy upon our brothers who died in the ambush in Dallas. That they may rest in peace with light perpetual shining upon them. And we need to pray for their families, that God will grant them comfort. We also need to pray for all first responders, emergency personnel, doctors, nurses, and hospital personnel at Parkland Hospital and Baylor Hospital as, like those in Orlando, they deal with potential post-traumatic stress as a result of this senseless assault on human life.

But we must do more than pray. We must be proactive. Each and every one of us must call upon those in which we come into contact with to reject the world, the flesh, and the devil. Indeed, we must call on the world to repent and redirect their lives toward God. If we want this to stop, we must instill respect toward human life and love for one another.

There have been 58,586,256 (and counting) abortions in the United States since 1973. We are going to have to continue to publicly denounce murder of unborn babies and work to stop that trend if we are going to have any hope of instilling respect for human life. Likewise, we are going to have to continue to denounce euthanasia, and we are going to have to continue to publicly denounce murder and violent acts against all people. We must publicly proclaim, each and every one of us, that the unjustifiable or inexcusable taking of life is always sinful." Indeed we must proclaim the sanctity of human life.

We must demonstrate the Summary of the Law in our daily lives by loving God with all their heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbors as ourselves. As I write this, over the past 24 hours many have lost their lives in France to an act of terrorism. And many are still fighting for their lives. There is a coup attempt going on in Turkey where people are being killed. People, Christians, in the Middle East continue to die every day at the hands of ISIS. The same goes for Boko Haram in Africa. There is no question that our world needs Jesus. Without Him there can be no love of ourselves or our neighbors. Therein lies the problem. If real change is going to take place, the spirit of the Summary of the Law will need to permeate our hearts and souls as we move forward. Further to that, each and every one of us are going to have to call on others to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind – and to love their neighbors. That will take a huge miracle. So we better start praying and get to work - one person at a time – and continue that work until Christ comes again.

In the Service of God (and yours)

+Stephen D. Strawn

II Bishop of the Missouri Valley