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A child is embraced as people visit a makeshift memorial Aug. 29, 2025, at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis after the Aug. 27 shooting there during a Mass attended by students of the affiliated school. (AP photo/Bruce Kluckhohn)



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Children are suffering and dying all over the world from hunger, disease, wars, crime and domestic violence. It's a tragedy that cries out to heaven for a response that goes beyond verbal regrets, white papers and political posturing.

Last week, we saw the slaughter of two children and the wounding of more than a dozen others [at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis](#). Every child in that church has been traumatized for life.

Parents should be able to send their children to church or school without fearing that they will not come home. Children should be able to walk the streets of their neighborhoods, go to a theater or concert, and play sports in a park without fear that someone will gun them down.

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Yet, about 3,500 American children died of gun-related causes in 2023, according to [data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Guns have been the leading cause of death for children 18 years and under in the United States since 2020, even exceeding deaths from car crashes.

The U.S. not only has more guns than children, it has [more guns than people](#). It is not surprising that the U.S. homicide rate was seven times higher than other high-income countries', according to 2010 data from the [World Health Organization](#). And for 15- to 24-year-olds, the gun homicide rate in the U.S. was 49 times higher.

In Catholic churches around the world on Sept. 15, we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, to whom parents turn when suffering the loss of a child. She understands because her son was also cruelly killed. The pietà represents not only Mary with her dead son but every mother who has mourned the death of her child.



Michelangelo's "Pietà" is seen in St. Peter's Basilica May 30, 2023, at the Vatican.
(CNS/Lola Gomez)

Are guns more important than our children? Do we worship semiautomatic weapons so much that we are willing to sacrifice our youth so that we can own weapons whose only purpose is to slaughter people? It is time for religious leaders to call down the wrath of God on those who prioritize guns over children.

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The type of common-sense gun control we need is not about taking rifles away from hunters. Only a cowardly, incompetent and shameful hunter would use a semiautomatic weapon against an animal. Plus, there are no legitimate game animals in Minneapolis or other big cities. These cities should have the right to ban weapons of any kind. Hunters could store their guns outside the city for use in hunting.

Our politicians are totally gutless when it comes to gun control. After a 1996 mass shooting in Port Arthur, the Australian government quickly enacted comprehensive gun control. Unsurprisingly, mass shootings, [already rare](#) in Australia, dropped to nearly none. But in the U.S., we have had over [400 school shootings](#) since the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, and yet we have done nothing effective to stop it. Shame!

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It is not that American politicians have much to fear from the public. A majority of Americans (61%) say it is too easy to legally obtain a gun in this country, according to the [Pew Research Center](#). About 6 in 10 U.S. adults (58%) support stricter gun laws. Likewise, 64% approve banning assault-style weapons, and 66% favor banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds.

These are common-sense regulations that should be legislated.

Opponents of gun control will quickly cite the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, stating, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."



People gather at a vigil at Lynnhurst Park after a fatal shooting at the Annunciation Catholic School, Aug. 27 in Minneapolis. (RNS/AP/Bruce Kluckhohn)

But the proliferation of guns has nothing to do with "A well regulated Militia." And in the minds of the drafters of the Second Amendment, "arms" were single-shot muskets — not semiautomatics. Even the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) has ruled the Second Amendment's protections do not reach assault weapons because "they are military-style weapons designed for sustained combat operations that are ill-suited and disproportionate to the need for self-defense."

Nor do we have to ask, "What would Jesus do?" For him, the Fifth Commandment, "Thou shall not kill," is more important than the Second Amendment.

Instead, we can ask, what would the Founding Fathers, and their spouses, do? How do you think Washington, Jefferson and Hamilton would have responded to someone with a semiautomatic shooting up a school? They would have been horrified and dealt with it like responsible statesmen. They would have protected their children.

Pope Leo XIV rightly [called for an end to the "pandemic of arms"](#) in light of the Minneapolis church shooting last week (Aug. 31). Yet, children suffering from violence is a worldwide problem accentuated by the arms trade that places profits above lives — going beyond just the U.S., which the pope referred to in his remarks. "Let us plead [to] God to stop the pandemic of arms large and small which infects our world," Leo said.

The [United Nations](#) verified 32,990 grave violations against children in 2023. Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, notably the Gaza Strip, as well as Burkina Faso, Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine were among the conflict zones in which the highest numbers of children were killed and maimed, according to the U.N. Since October 2023, more than 18,000 children have been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian and U.N. sources.

If humanity does not care for its children, we are worse than animals who instinctively protect their offspring. It is time to act to put children before guns, war and politics.

Related: [Pope Leo XIV gives his own personal spin to Vatican foreign policy](#)

This story appears in the **Minneapolis church shooting** feature series. [View the full series.](#)