

A Lament for a Culture of Gun Violence  
*written by the Rt. Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld, Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire*

(Lent 2018)

Most holy God, source of all being, of all hope, of all life

We confess our worship of unholy things fashioned not by you, but by our own hands,  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess our fascination with guns and weapons that have for far too long claimed the lives of the undefended, the vulnerable, and especially children who have been wounded and killed in acts of random terror in a nation founded on the promise to protect life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess our attachment to the means of violence and bloodshed claiming that they alone can protect and save us from those who wish us harm.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess that we have not kept our eyes from watching what is worthless, allowing the imagination of our hearts to be misshapen by media, film, and games that glorify violence and trivialize the dignity of human life.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess our lack of courage and clarity in public policies that too often weigh individual rights over the common weal.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess how we have too often appealed to your name and that of the name of Jesus to justify our right to defend and protect, even when you gave up your defenses and even died on the cross to rise and again, destroying the powers of sin and death.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess how we have allowed the gods of merchandising and consumerism to drown out the cries of the injured and the grieving.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess how the epidemic of gun deaths among blacks in our society is mostly overlooked or ignored, even accepted, and do not result in the same outcry and outrage as the slaughter of white children.  
*Have mercy on us.*

We confess that we have ascribed to the facile lie that “the only thing that can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun” when what we need are more loving households, more caring neighbors, better funded and equipped schools, and hearts that hear your Gospel message of love and forgiveness.

*Have mercy on us.*

O Blessed God of our deliverance, unfetter us all from the grip of the unholy trinity of poverty, racism, and guns.

*Good Lord, deliver us.*

O Blessed God of the prophets, if we cannot shout in the streets in our agony and rage, guide us to have the honest difficult conversations about what truly drives our fears. Protect the voices of the youth whom you have called to speak the truth to the powerful and content.

*Good Shepherd, lead us.*

Dear God of Holy Community, teach us to find that the only weapons we truly need are the swords of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation.

*Holy One, defend us.*

Dear God of Resurrection, show us that by peacefully and boldly dwelling in your Holy Name of I AM, the militias of hatred and fear will step back and fall to the ground.

*O Christ, hear us and raise us.*

Give us courage for the facing of this hour. Guide us by the bright vision of your Heavenly Realm where no weapon is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love.

O Christ, show us your mercy

*As we put our trust in you.*