



A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by The Reverend Andrew Van Culin, *Rector*

The 7th Sunday of Easter (Year C)
29 May 2022

*Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
For by his great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope,
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

“I have made your name known to them and I will make it known so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.” Let us hold on for a moment to the words of St. John captured in the great revelation, the great vision that he has seen. We are reminded, or he has reminded us of God’s vision for the world, a vision that will so encompass all of humanity, all societies, that we will together be drawn into a new Jerusalem, where there shall be no death, where there shall be no thirsting or hunger, where there shall be no war, but peace, abundant.

This has always been God’s dream. Not just God’s dream for eternity, as if we wait for it someday upon our death to enter in, but rather God’s dream for humanity here and now. God’s dream for us in this life together and not just God’s dream for us together as a Christian community, but God’s dream for all peoples, that all peoples, Christians and non-Christians, Jews and Muslims, Buddhist, and people of no faith at all, that we will be drawn together into one society of peace and contentment, where we will find meaning and hope and joy in the days of our lives together.

John reminds us of God’s dream for us. Memorial Day reminds us of the costliness of that dream, the costliness of that dream for us as a human society. As we remember every Memorial Day, those women and men who have given their lives for the sake of freedom and peace, often not on these shores, but externally, we are reminded that there are ever external threats to that life of peace and freedom and opportunity that God has dreamt for all people everywhere. And that those threats demand our very best. Tragically, that threat has demanded the lives of countless women and men through the years. The threats of political fascism and religious extremism, to name but a recent few.



Memorial Day reminds us that the cost of God's dream is actually very high. Memorial Day 2022 reminds us that the threat is not just external. For in about a little while, we will hear again the names of 21 victims of gun violence in Uvalde, Texas. We will hear again, the names of women and men that died in a grocery store in Buffalo, Texas. In Buffalo, Texas. Really, Drew? In Buffalo, New York, just two weeks ago. And their names will remind us that the threats to God's vision, the threats to our greatest hope of living in freedom, living with peace, are not just external to us, but internal to us as well.

There are old threats that we have battled through the years, the threats of racism and colonialization, internal to our society, the threats of greed, hyper greed in today's society and impoverishment, extreme impoverishment. Again, in today's society, modern threats, internal threats, that continue to demand our attention and resistance. And of course, the growing threat, these past decades, principally two decades, of gun violence in our streets, in our homes, in our schools, in our grocery stores, in our night clubs, at our concerts, at our universities and the list of places where this plague is attacking us grows, it seems, day by day.

There are internal threats that these names will remind us of. That is threats that must be combated within us, not just external to us. For they remind us, this Memorial Day reminds us that the cost of God's vision is extremely high. For some, over the years, it has demanded their life. For others, it has demanded their passionate commitments of their lives. For all of us, it will demand an economic or political strength and commitment.

Consider for a moment, the two options available to us, the two options of change in our society that have been proffered in response to gun violence today. On the one hand, we have those that have advocated for the hardening of our society, for the increase of security, through providing greater security and officers at our schools and in our public places to ensure that such violence never has the opportunity to claim such lives again. That is one valid opportunity that we have, to resist gun violence in our society.

The other opportunity that presents itself is the opportunity to limit the access that we have to weapons, particularly weapons of war in our hands and in our communities. To increase background checks, to limit the types of guns that are available, the size of ammunition cartridges that are available, et cetera. That is to limit our access to weapons of war and weapons of death and destruction in our society.



These are the two principle options available to us today, and they both will demand a high cost. We must be willing to either pay the price of increased security, which will demand an increase in our taxes in order that we can provide the security that our children and our society demands, at grocery stores and in schools and universities across the nation, just to begin. But are we willing to pay the real cost of funding that security? Not just at village or farms, but at all schools and all grocery stores in the nation.

The other is just as demanding. It will demand of us a willingness to lay down our perceived right to a weapon of death, a willingness to forego access to something that we believe we have the right to. That too is a high cost for some to pay.

No matter what, however, if we wish to change the scourge of violence, we will have to pay a cost as a society. At the heart of it all is our willingness to suffer out of love for another. Are we willing to suffer the economic cost to provide security to our children and to our neighbors? Are we willing to suffer that political cost of laying down our right to a weapon that we believe we have the right to? Security, the vision of a society of freedom and liberty and peace comes at a high cost, principally the cost to so love our neighbor as to give our best for him and for her.

Friends, Jesus pointed the way to this heavenly dream. It was through his act of love that he modeled, his act of sacrificial love, suffering love, where he modeled for us, the willingness to suffer out of love for another. As his disciples, as a Christian community, we have promised to follow his way, his way of suffering out of love for another as well. We must. The names that we will hear again today remind us that we must change in our society. Are we willing to pay the cost, whatever that cost may be? Amen.