

Statement of Archbishop Lori on Orlando Tragedy

Through his blog, Charity in Truth, Archbishop William E. Lori issued the following statement on the tragedy in Orlando, Florida.

“Sunday, June 12 was in its first hours when tragedy struck our Nation. Most of us didn’t know it at the time but we awoke to the news that 20 people were shot dead, murdered at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida just hours earlier. Soon, our deep sadness and shock gave way to horror when the number of dead more than doubled. With the news that 50 innocent people had been killed and another 53 injured, our country was forced to acknowledge that it had endured the worst mass murder in its history and the largest loss of life on domestic soil since September 11, 2001.

“Whether the assailant hated gay people, hated Americans, or was driven by some other motivation, is unclear at the time of this writing. What is clear is his disregard for human life and the evident evil behind his decision to commit such an unthinkable crime.

“By mid-day, Pope Francis would join his voice to the many expressing outrage and sympathy in the wake of the shooting. The Holy Father’s spokesman shared with the world the Pope’s grief and dismay: ‘The terrible massacre that has taken place in Orlando, with its dreadfully high number of innocent victims, has caused in Pope Francis, and in all of us, the deepest feelings of horror and condemnation, of pain and turmoil before this new manifestation of homicidal folly and senseless hatred. Pope Francis joins the families of the victims and all of the injured in prayer and in compassion...We all hope that ways may be found, as soon as possible, to effectively identify and contrast the causes of such terrible and absurd violence which so deeply upsets the desire for peace of the American people and of the whole of humanity.’

“To effectively identify and contrast the causes of such terrible and absurd violence, as the Pope wisely counsels, must indeed be our task—the task of all Americans of good will. The first part appears to not be too difficult. In Charleston, South Carolina, the apparent cause was a hatred of black people. The tragedy that befell

the Boston Marathon was caused, at least in part, by religious intolerance. And in Orlando, it appears the shooter targeted homosexuals; his father spoke of his son's anger towards gay people and the assailant drove 90 miles from his home to where approximately 350 people spent the final hours of their lives before they were forever changed. The cause? One clear cause—and I suspect there are others—is hatred.

“Now comes the harder part—contrasting the hatred that fueled these acts with a commitment to love and understanding.

“The United States is a pluralistic society, comprised of people of many faiths, many cultures, many beliefs, and many lifestyles. Those of us whose beliefs and actions are informed by religious faith must follow the example of Jesus by exercising Christian charity and an open heart when presented an opportunity to share Christ's teachings with others. There can be no justification for resorting to violent means to further perceived righteous ends, no matter the issue. This is what separates civilized societies from terrorists, or at least it should.

“As we continue to pray for the victims of the nightclub shooting in Orlando and for their families and loved ones, let us also reflect on our response to such a tragedy. Let us look deep within our own hearts to contrast such hate-inspired atrocities with the understanding and love bestowed on us by our loving God. Let us reflect on our own words and actions when responding to the words and actions of others. And let us pray for an end to the violence that has once again shaken our Nation to its foundation.”