



Interfaith Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence

Saturday, December 14, 2019

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

THOU SHALT NOT KILL ... In the ancient Hebrew sacred text, literally, and in those of all other spiritual and religious traditions in one form or other, these words are proclaimed as a foundational tenet to those professing themselves people of faith. THOU SHALT NOT KILL ... is not a suggestion, but rather a commandment.

Today, the San Francisco Interfaith Council, which for three decades has brought people of different faiths together to celebrate our rich and diverse spiritual and religious traditions, to build understanding and serve our community, stands shoulder to shoulder with those gathered here today to remember the victims of gun violence. We bring with us, to this memorial, the fervent prayers of the 800 religious institutions and communities of faith in our City and reaffirm our partnership commitment to all the organizations gathered here, whose mission is to end gun violence.

People of faith have much to contribute to the efforts of all of those whose common mission seeks the realization of God's commandment, THOU SHALL NOT KILL. We bring to this sacred table a moral imperative, if not obligation, not only to pray, not only to organize, but to vocally exercise our moral and prophetic voice, to preach from our pulpits and in our streets. To do anything less would be to abdicate our greatest and most precious calling.

It is no coincidence that we should come together today in this season when so many people of faith anticipate the celebration of new light and new life. As we gather to remember those whose lives were senselessly cut short by gun violence and to bring comfort to their families and loved ones who live daily with the acute pain of their very personal loss, let us also be strengthened as community by this season's hopeful promise of new light which illuminates and new life which is eternal; gifts not transient nor given by mere mortals, but everlasting and bestowed by our very Creator.