

I am full of grief over the shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand

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March 22, 2019



Mass shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand have caused the loss of at least 50 lives, including women and children. As the horrific news continues to come out, I am full of grief, just as I was over the murders of worshippers in Charleston, Pittsburgh and elsewhere. An attack on one religious community is an attack on all of us. Each and every person, whether Christian, Jew, Muslim or atheist, is a child of God and beloved by God.

News reports indicate that the shooter was influenced by extremist rhetoric on the internet that foists false and hate-filled stereotypes about Muslims. We must counter that rhetoric with the truth, which is that God is inspiring good Muslims, and people of all faiths, to join as one human family under God.

The mission of our seminary is to seek to educate leaders of all faiths to build God's world of peace by working to bridge religious, cultural and racial divides. This horrible crime calls us to increase our efforts to build bridges between faiths and counter hate with action through love and service to others.

As a seminary community, we offer prayers of comfort to the victims and their families. We offer support to Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and all the good people of New Zealand in this hour of trial, that they may embrace their Muslim communities in bonds of love and healing, and strengthen their commitment to peace and safety for all of their citizens.

Our prayers are also for America, that we can make the United States a beacon of peace and hope for all people. We need to educate ourselves and others in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim worlds about tolerance and mutual understanding. It is essential that we love and respect people of all faiths.

Let us take up the mission of Jesus who forgave his enemies, and with the spirit of love that begins within ourselves, our families and communities, build a new history of peace. It is time to turn the page on the violence of the past and make a new start. Let's all work to make America into one united nation with a spirit of forgiveness, healing, love and genuine respect for all people - and help to build one world under God.

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