

Be In Constant Prayer

- **Ukraine:** The invasion continues. Pray that a way to peace can be found. A new Russian offensive is underway. Now more than 5 million Ukrainians have fled their country. Injury & death totals remain unclear but the U.N. High Commissioner says at least 2,665 civilians have died & 3,053 have been injured. These figures are likely very low. There are estimates that at least 10,100 civilians have been killed in the city of Mariupol alone. Remember all those who are at risk because of damage to nuclear facilities in Ukraine or disruption to safety measures at these facilities where Russian troops have seized them. Especially remember the Russian soldiers who spent weeks in the contaminated zone around Chernobyl – the site of the world’s worst nuclear disaster 36 years ago this April 26th (Chernobyl was under Soviet control then).
- **The COVID Pandemic.** New COVID case numbers are rising again in the U.S., including in Ohio. The new BA.2 variant is now dominant. Some other countries are also seeing an increase in cases, & some that lifted safety protocols, are now reimposing them. Some political leaders are ending mandated health safety measures even though medical experts continue to advise following them. The realities of ‘long COVID’ & the increased risk of several health issues in those who have recovered from COVID – even mild cases, is still being investigated. In the last 2 years the number one cause of death among U.S. police officers has been COVID. Many police unions fought against getting the vaccine & vaccine mandates. (In Newark, New Jersey, COVID deaths among police officers stopped as soon as a vaccine mandate was enforced & nearly all officers were vaccinated). Before COVID struck the leading causes of death for police officers were gun shots & traffic accidents.
- **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** Those facing the spring storm season underway in the U.S. The west & some of the south is in drought. The number of fires is growing. South Africa, where heavy rain has caused serious flooding.
- **Central & South America** – Record numbers of people are fleeing Cuba, Nicaragua, & Colombia due to the difficult conditions there. Violence, corruption, & deteriorating economic conditions in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, & El Salvador are causing many to flee those countries too. The U.S. & the rest of the international community has not been helpful, often making the situation worse with policies that exasperate or encourage the instability & corruption that contributes to the problem.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – there have been 163 mass shootings (up from 146 last week) in 2022. The 2022 gun death total is now 13,840. 513 deaths & 1,241 of the injured are children (17 or younger). 207 are injured, & 121 are dead in the last 72 hours due to gun violence. Many states, including Ohio, are weakening gun laws, even though the number of homicides & other gun crimes increases where gun laws are weakened. There are 393 million civilian owned guns in the U. S. – more guns than cars.



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When we pray for the people in need in our world, we are praying for peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, it is Shalom – living in harmony with each other & with God’s creation. Shalom means health, safety, tranquility, wholeness, & rest – the welfare & prosperity of all. Praying for the needs of others is an important first step in loving people as God calls us to. Next steps include using our time, talents, & resources to help others when disaster strikes, offering comfort in times of need, & working for change when the suffering of others comes from discrimination, persecution, exploitation, or abuse. When shalom does not exist for everyone, no one is fully at peace!

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