

Start With Prayer

Our prayers can go places we cannot. They can carry comfort and hope that are desperately needed to people we will never meet. Prayers can also help change hearts and raise awareness of the need for action. They are but a starting point in the face of great need when prayer alone is not enough.

As part of the weekly Moment to Pray for Peace, I include some of the grim statistics about the victims of gun violence. **Do not forget to look beyond the numbers!** Much of the time our focus is on the lives cut short and the families who miss them. The pain of their loss will not go away just because the story is no longer news. There is however, another part of the tragedy just as heart-rending – the story of those who were shot and survive. Most of their stories go untold. Here is one.

On July 4th, 8-year-old Cooper Roberts was shot at the parade in Highland Park (Chicago area) by a sniper on a roof. He is now paralyzed. He spent nearly a month in pediatric intensive care; has had numerous surgeries to repair internal organ damage from which healing is slow. He is in constant pain and on both strong pain meds (they are starting to wean him off them) and a constant IV drip of antibiotics to ward off infection. His body has to relearn how to digest food. Swelling still obscures some of the damage. Now in his second week of intensive rehab, he is learning to deal with his new limitations, including the tubes coming out of his body. "He's an eight-year-old boy who feels hopeless, sad and angry as the reality of his life is setting in." He wants to go home; he misses his twin brother; he wants to go to school, but asks "what can I do at recess?" Cooper's family says: "It is very hard to convince Cooper that he will be happy again." The road ahead for Cooper and his family will be very long and hard. "There are layers upon layers of cruelty with being shot by a sniper," Cooper's family wrote. "Most people don't witness the grueling aftermath of surviving these devastating wounds, physical and emotional. We are constantly encouraging and motivating Cooper, seeking the positives and hanging on to hope, but we want people to know the unvarnished reality which is his/our new world." Still, his family said "every kindness makes him smile" as he recovers. . .

Remember In Prayer:

- **Victims of Gun Violence** – 28,721 people have died in gun violence this year, including 1,096 children. 25,567 people have been injured including 2,919 children.
- **Migrants & Refugees** – especially those who are exploited by smugglers. Remember those facing excessive heat and other weather challenges.
- **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** excessive heat in much of the world. As well as drought, fires, flooding, earthquakes, storms.
- **Countries Dealing with Major Political and/or Economic Upheaval** including Sri Lanka, Venezuela, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Columbia, Syria, Afghanistan. . .
- **Afghanistan where women and girls have lost their rights & children are starving.**
- **Ukraine where the war continues** as does hunger & the risk of epidemic disease.
- **The continuing COVID Pandemic.** Case numbers dropped last week but deaths were up. A new vaccine booster covering current strains, will be out around Labor Day. Long COVID is a continuing problem. Remember those who are studying the virus to understand its impact of people over the long term. Its impact on the brain is a particular concern.



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