



From the Office of the President

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.
REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

**Prayer for Victims of Violence at a Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA and a Kroger grocery store in Jeffersontown, KY
October 30th, 2018**

A letter to the entire Regis University Community:

At Regis, we seek the strength and freedom to ask any question, and to probe the most important self-reflection about life: How ought we to live? Sometimes, though, the world around us breaks in with searing intensity and painful political overtones. And we are forced to cry, why did they have to die?

As a nation, we have again witnessed a week of horrific violence. Virulent anti-Semitism killed 11 Jews gathered in prayer at their synagogue. Hatred targeted and killed two African-Americans peacefully shopping for food. A man consumed with self-righteous insanity mailed bombs to perceived political enemies. We witnessed ongoing racist attacks on African-Americans and other vulnerable peoples. We have seen hateful and false rhetoric targeting Latin American refugees escaping gang violence. We felt burdened by the continued failure of our nation's leaders to unite us.

At such moments, we must risk interrogating the depths of our collective wisdom, the borderlands of our shared worldview, without succumbing to feelings of hopelessness. Let me dwell briefly on these two moments of heart-piercing sorrow: the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, and the wanton killing of two African Americans at a Kroger grocery store in Jeffersontown, KY. Let us honor these brothers and sisters by naming them and lifting them up in prayer:

In Pennsylvania:

Joyce Fienberg
Richard Gottfried
Rose Mallinger
Jerry Rabinowitz
Cecil Rosenthal
David Rosenthal
Bernice Simon
Sylvan Simon
Daniel Stein
Melvin Wax
Irving Younger

In Kentucky:

Vickie Jones
Maurice Stallard



Here at Regis, we feel urgently the need for prayer *and* the need for action. Let me offer my deepest condolences to those of you affected by these acts of hate. I reach out especially to the Jewish and African American members of our community. We want to pray with you for all those who died this week and in recent years because of criminal hatred. We also want to pray for you, knowing the depths of suffering such public events unleash, and the fear and hatred that they spread. Let us pray as well for all the victims of mass shootings in recent years, and for our nation paralyzed by polarization and the inability to grapple effectively with the scourge of gun violence.

We also need to act by definitively naming and undoing the structures of racism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, and demagoguery that bedevil our current civic climate, and we need to begin here, on our own campus.

Let us mark who we are by embodying the values and principles that define our life together in community at Regis University. We believe in the goodness of creation and the sacred dignity of all individuals, each made in the image of God, called to grow with others into the freedom of love. We believe that we belong to each other, and that each person shares responsibility for the long, hard work of shaping an inclusive community where all can flourish. We believe that Regis University serves not only itself and its students but is called to be a force for justice and peace in society, above all, in defense of the poor and marginalized. We need to embody these values and principles not only for ourselves but to contribute to the common good of our nation.

Finally, let us join action, reflection, and prayer. As a first moment of solidarity, the Regis community is hosting an interfaith vigil at 5 p.m. today in front of the library. In addition, we will host Social Justice Week on Nov. 5 - 9 (a schedule of events will be posted to Insite later this week). I encourage you to attend at least one of the events, learn about one another, and talk with others in our community about how to collectively correct the serious social issues facing our society. In the words of the great Polish-American Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, let us "Remember that there is meaning beyond absurdity. Know that every deed counts, that every word is power."

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.
President, Regis University