



October 14, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ,

For some of us, it seems not that long ago that most schools' big problems were gum chewing, running in the halls, and talking out of turn. Today the schools' big problems are assault, rape, and drug abuse, to name just a few. As the University of Michigan notes, in reference to a study by Alexander Volokh and Lisa Snell:

http://sitemaker.umich.edu/356.dolan/how_to_prevent_school_violence),

There is no one solution that may be applied to any school. There are issues of socio-economic status, location, and overall quality of living that must go into decisions on how to deal with a violence problem in any given school.

Certainly the pernicious effects of systemic and institutional racism are also at work. No wonder we often feel overwhelmed, worried about our children, sad and powerless to stop the violence.

We are not powerless, however. Our tradition teaches us that Christ loves all children. We know this to be the strongest foundation upon which to build self-esteem. We can also teach our children (and ourselves) about safety, anger management, conflict resolution and any other number of life skills that may help them (and us) cope and thrive in a complicated and dangerous world.

During this time when school violence is much on our minds, I encourage you to remember our core beliefs. God loves every one of us in Christ. The Holy Spirit gives each of us spiritual gifts for the good of ourselves and our communities. There are no lives that don't count and it is love, not violence, which ultimately wins.

Finally, we are bound by our baptismal covenant to embody this triumphant love by striving for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being. Here are some websites which you may find helpful, in this regard:

From the University of Minnesota

Office of the Bishop Episcopal Diocese of Chicago 65 E. Huron Street Chicago, IL 60611
312-751-4217 f312-787-5872 www.episcopalchicago.org

<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/index.html>

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA7414.html>

From the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/school.asp>

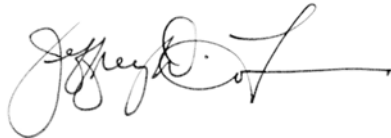
The Department of Health and Human Services website on bullying

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/aboutbullying.asp>

From SchoolFamily.com

<http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/10552-heres-how-parents-can-help-prevent-school-violence>

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey D. Lee,
Bishop of Chicago