



Archdiocese of Santa Fe  
Office of Communications/Social Media  
4000 St. Joseph's Place NW | Albuquerque, NM 87120-1714  
Leslie M. Radigan, Director  
Voice: 505.831.8180  
lradigan@archdiosf.org | archdiosf.org

## STATEMENT

### **Most Reverend John C. Wester on the Recent UNM/NMSU and Club Q Nightclub Shootings**

ALBUQUERQUE – Tuesday, November 22, 2022 – IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, has issued the following statement:

Tragedy has struck again as we mourn the loss of lives from violent, hateful acts. As news unfolds about what transpired in Colorado Springs at Club Q, an LGBTQ nightclub, I am deeply saddened by the violent acts that resulted in injury and death for members of the LGBTQ community. This brings back difficult memories of the mass shooting in 2016 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando that also targeted members of the LGBTQ community. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families and friends of the victims as we stand in solidarity with them in this moment of grief. Manifestations of hatred and prejudice in violent acts against our LGBTQ brothers and sisters must end. It has been shown that those in the LGBTQ community are four times more likely to become victims of violence. Those who perpetrate such acts are motivated by hatred, prejudice, and fear. In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, we must do all we can to counter these sinful actions by loving and respecting all our brothers and sisters, all of whom are beloved children of God. Homophobia has no place in the Catholic Church or in any of our communities.

Closer to home, in an unrelated incident, we learned of an altercation that resulted in the shooting death of a University of New Mexico student. I pray for both the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University communities as they face shock and grief over this incident, and I pray for the safety of all students and staff. Many of the students at both schools come to New Mexico because of the beauty of its people, history, and land. That beauty is shattered by these acts of senseless violence, which are amplified by the gun and drug cultures that weigh heavily on us all.

In addition to our prayers for all involved in both tragic incidents, we must come together and act to end all forms of violence and prejudice. As Pope Francis reminded us in his World Day of Peace message in 2017, "Countering violence with violence leads at best to...enormous suffering...Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict." Jesus reminds us of this when he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers (Mt. 5:9)." I pray that we may be peacemakers in the conflicts we encounter, whether large or small. I pray that a day will come when we can, with God's help, transform our anger and prejudice into action to make peace in our hurting world.

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