



*Crosses made by Greg Zanis for the 762 lives lost to gun violence in 2016 in Chicago*

## An Emotional Memorial

*by Sr. Donna Liette, C.P.P.S.*

It was December 31<sup>st</sup> and nearly 1000 persons marched down Michigan Avenue in the cold to remember the 762 lives lost in Chicago in 2016—mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, crying as they searched for their loved ones cross: “My brother, that’s my baby, that’s my mother.”

The 800 crosses were made by Greg Zanis, a man who said, “My heart is broken.” He wanted to do something, and so he began making a cross for each victim of gun violence. What love! He marked each three feet tall wooden cross with a name (mostly young black males!). Beside the victim’s name, he marked the date of their murder and their age at the time of death. He started with cross #1—killed January 1—all the way to #762.

As the march began, Fr. Denny Kinderman picked up Korry Roger’s cross (one of our very own Precious Blood youth killed on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, #485). As the group walked down Michigan Avenue in silence, the name of each victim was read starting with January 1<sup>st</sup>. Each name was precious: they were not called gangbangers, as the media often names the victims, rather they were people with

families, with talent, with a God-given future, their flame extinguished suddenly by violence.

It was the hope of the organizers that people out walking the “Magnificent Mile” of the City of Chicago would feel the pain and know that this

*Fr. Denny Kinderman holds Korry Rogers’ cross*



horror is everybody's problem, not just that of the South side or West side of Chicago.

762 homicides...3550 shooting incidents...4331 harmed shooting victims...



*Sr. Donna carrying Korry Rogers' cross*

The crosses were very heavy but you could see that the weight of the pain these loved ones carry is even greater. Therefore they were willing to come out on the last day of the year in the cold and ask our city to see their tears and see the effects of poverty, of racism, of easy access to guns and of the failure of systems to offer resources to our youth and their families.

It will long remain in my heart and soul the day we carried a cross that now rests in the home of Korry's mother, Tawanda, to help heal her broken heart. As the blood still cries out and pours out in our cities, as more lives are lost and some of the offenders are locked up, those left on the streets too often seek revenge. Reconciliation is still so much in need.

At PBMR we will continue to work with others to get at the root causes of these statistics. No longer do we want to read or hear that "our city is awash in blood as homicides soar."

On World Day of Peace, January 1, we at PBMR recommitted ourselves to bringing light into this

darkness. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." We are bringing together our neighbors one street at a time in our Restorative Justice Café to talk, to pray and to plan ways to meet the needs of our youth, how to connect people, and stop the bloodshed in our neighborhood and beyond. ✦