



HOME PAGE / LOCAL NEWS

# ONE YEAR LATER: WE REMEMBER THEM ALL

The Catholic Telegraph / August 3, 2020 / 94

by Sister Jeanette Buehler, C.P.P.S.

**We remember their names:**

- Megan Betts**
- Monica Brickhouse**
- Nicholas Cumer**
- Derrick Fudge**
- Thomas McNichols**
- Lois Oglesby**
- Saheed Saleh**
- Logan Turner**
- Beatrice Warren-Curtis**

Nearly a year ago, on Aug. 4, 2019, these nine people, as well as the perpetrator, Connor Betts, were killed in the **mass shooting** in Dayton's Oregon District. Their personal stories and the pain suffered by their families, friends, co-workers, and even by we who did not know them, continue to linger like a shadow over our city. Their lives are precious. They mattered. Their families matter, and we continue to grieve with them.

In 2019, they were among a total of 45 people memorialized by the Community Homicide Prayer Vigil group in Dayton. Technically, most of those we have prayed for did not die in a mass shooting if defined as three or more victims killed at the same time or place. But when looked at as an accumulation, isn't that number "massive"? Doesn't it, too, qualify as a mass shooting, one victim at a time?

Before the pandemic, the Community Homicide Prayer Vigil group met on Saturdays at noon at sites where homicides had occurred — on the streets, on curbsides, in front yards, in parking lots, in abandoned lots or alleyways.

Today, our vigils continue virtually — but our work has not diminished. Indeed, so far this year we have remembered 12 people locally, ranging in age from 85 to 5 months. And nationally, we watched the news reports through May and June as the ongoing violence and persistent systemic racism against Black people in this country — particularly the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor — culminated in widespread protests across the U.S. and around the world.

Our vigils are a form of peaceful protest when we stand together, witnessing to the senseless taking of another human life. The Sisters of the Precious Blood began holding homicide vigils in 1993 and prayed at 131 sites until May 1997. In 2006, the Sisters and the Missionaries of the Precious Blood brought together an ecumenical group that resumed the work of this ministry.

Since March 2006, the Community Homicide Prayer Vigil group has organized 545 homicide vigils in Dayton, Trotwood, and Harrison and Jefferson townships. Through our prayer and advocacy, we seek justice for all victims and their families. We listen to their stories, and we use our collective voice to speak about the lives lost one by one.



Victims' final moments do not define who they were. We have found over the years that there are innumerable stories and circumstances surrounding violent death, but there are common denominators: The victims are remembered for their smiles, or the care they showed to family and friends, or their struggles to make changes in their lives. The deceased person portrayed in the news does not tell the whole story of the person, the child of God, who was cherished by family and friends.

Understanding the great value of our Church's intercessory work, we invite you to join us in prayer when you hear of yet another homicide, whether it has occurred nearby or thousands of miles away. In this way, we can be in solidarity with the victim and the victim's family as we realize our connected humanity in the body of Christ.

With sadness and hope in Jesus' redemption, we remember and continue to pray for the families who lost loved ones in the Oregon District last summer as we mark this painful, first anniversary. And we do the same for those who are killed each week in acts of violence or neglect.

In this time of pandemic, not everyone will be able to gather in the streets to protest or give witness to the senseless taking of life. But each of us can find a way to remember those who are killed and to work for justice. What would our support mean to the deceased's family and friends to know that the community cared enough to stand with them? And how might our hearts be changed by our caring actions and presence?

The Sisters of the Precious Blood are an apostolic Catholic women's religious congregation devoted to Eucharistic prayer and motivated by the redeeming love of Jesus. Founded in Switzerland in 1834 by Maria Anna Brunner, Precious Blood Sisters minister where the needs of the time call them. They serve in the United States, Chile and Guatemala, proclaiming God's love by being a life-giving, reconciling presence in our fractured world.