

Reckless shooting on a street in our city has caused the unjust death of a woman who will forever be remembered for two simple yet indispensable roles. Mariana was a wife. She was a mother. She embraced these responsibilities with a loving heart. Her family enjoyed being together, whether at home, at play, at church, or in the car. People in this country all have basic rights. Those include the right to life. With those rights come responsibilities. We have to take care of one another. The decisions we make, the words we say, and the actions we take all have a direct affect on the rights of others. No one has a right to shoot guns on our streets. No one has a right to kill innocent people. Everyone has disagreements. We all have a responsibility to resolve them in peace.

Mariana's death appears to result from the sad juncture of three illnesses that afflict our city: the careless use of guns, the illicit exchange of drugs, and the false promises of gangs. People want to feel safe, but increasing weapons will not help. We will only feel fear. People want to have fun, but we will not enjoy life if we punish our bodies with illegal drugs. We will only grow sick. People want to feel connected, but we will never know the richness of friendship by participating in gangs that promote hatred instead of love. We will only know isolation.

Saint John says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him." You don't need a gun to be a murderer. All you need is hate. John also says, "we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers." You don't need to die to pass from death to life. All you need is love.

Mariana's death is not the only tragedy around here. Her young children have all lost a mother; many of them are struggling to regain their good health. Her husband has lost the support of his life, taken away from him by utter foolishness. Our neighborhood has lost a sense of security as we see streets designed for peaceful transport turned into avenues of anger.

We have a choice to make. We can feed the forces that created this mess. We can buy more guns and use them more frequently. We can drown our sorrows in an ocean of drugs and alcohol. We can form new gangs to create new tragedies for our neighbors. Or we can say, "Enough." We will turn in our guns. We will talk out our problems. We will stop using drugs. We will take care of our precious bodies. We will abandon false friendship. We will seek out people who help us build a better tomorrow. We will respect laws. We will love our neighbor. We will turn to God in prayer.

When Lazarus died, Jesus was late. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus had to call her gently back to faith. The problem was not that Jesus wasn't with Lazarus. The problem was that Martha wasn't with Jesus. He guided her heart back, and she beheld her beloved brother coming to life again.

My brothers and sisters, people are going to want you to believe that this neighborhood has died. It has not. They're going to say, "There's an increase of crime here. Surrender hope." Well, there's an increase of education here. There's an increase of friendship here. There's an increase of love here. There's an

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increase of the arts, social gatherings, games, exercise, and civic pride. If you look at the Northeast and see a tomb, you are no better than those who stared at place where they laid Lazarus and wept. They all forgot one thing. They knew that Lazarus was gone. But they forgot that Jesus was there. He always brings life.

To the family and friends of Mariana, we express our heartfelt condolences, but we also express our hope. As the Book of Lamentations says, “The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness. My portion is the Lord, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”

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