

**Statement of Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez Regarding 4th of July Shootings in Philadelphia
and Highland Park, Illinois**

Yesterday was perhaps the darkest 4th of July in our collective memory. Just hours after we learned of lives being intentionally extinguished by a gunman at a parade in Illinois, violence struck at home in Philadelphia with multiple police officers being shot in the line of duty as the fireworks display began on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Civic celebrations like the commemoration of our country's birth are meant to unify our richly diverse populace. They prompt us to reflect on the lofty goal of preserving and protecting freedom, dignity, equality, and opportunity for all of our brothers and sisters.

Yesterday, death, disfigurement, fear, and panic draped a heavy pall over our already wounded and struggling nation. Our collective mettle is being tested over and over again. Evil acts and senseless loss of life have become all too common features of our landscape.

In my recent Independence Day message, I said that our American spirit shines brightest when we treat our neighbors with dignity and respect. In the wake of further pain, confusion, and sadness, we must act. Words alone are not enough. Acts of kindness and charity, no matter the size, are contagious. Let's work together and mend the tears in the fabric of our nation's soul.

I ask all people of goodwill to pray that God will strengthen our efforts, bring comfort to those in mourning, and place our law enforcement officers and first responders under the mantle of His protection.

*Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia*