

## **A Pastoral Response to the Shootings at Virginia Tech**

Often when we hear of tragic events such as the one that occurred at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, our immediate reaction is one of shock and disbelief. We are unable to comprehend and process all that has occurred. We are on overload. We simply cannot take it all in that that many people were shot and killed or injured. We are stunned by the magnitude of the devastation.

Our hearts and minds are with all of those persons killed or injured, their family members, their friends and their colleagues. Perhaps, among other feelings, we have feelings of grief and sadness, anger, helplessness and wanting to blame someone. We fear that there are those who would lash out at the perpetrator of such tragedy. We struggle to want to keep the family of this young man in our hearts and mind as well.

When such events occur we frequently may feel all alone and want to connect with other people. We may find ourselves contacting our own children, spouses and other loved ones. We may decide to attend one of the many prayer services being held around our community. At times such as these, we realize we need community in our lives. We need to be connected. We need to feel the presence of others and the Other.

It is our hope that when the crisis has passed and when many lives start to return to their routines, that those who have been most directly affected by the deaths and injuries can find healing, peace, reconciliation. It is at that time when the truly hard work begins of putting the pieces of shattered and broken lives on a path to wholeness. May those persons, along with all of us, be sustained by the hope, that instead of being absent in that struggle, God is with us at the very center of that struggle offering the power and healing of God's very presence to each of us.

You may find useful resources for parents in relating to their children through the New York University Child Study Center website. We would especially call to your attention the new article on ["Helping Children Feel Safe in Unsafe Times."](#)

Grace and Peace,  
The Staff of Pastoral Counseling of Northern Virginia

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