



We learned today of yet another terrorist attack on a place of worship, this time at two mosques in New Zealand. I stand with all people of good will in condemning these senseless acts of violence against Muslims, many of whom were immigrants and refugees. Joining Pope Francis, I assure our Muslim brothers and sisters, particularly those in New Zealand, of our prayers to the one, all-Merciful God for healing and comfort.

We know that the root of these acts is hatred, fear and ignorance of the “other,” which fuels attitudes that dehumanize whole communities and blame them for perceived ills in society. These fears are irrational, but they can produce horrific consequences. The murders in Christchurch, New Zealand, are only the most recent reminder of this global scourge.

At the same time, we in the United States must recognize that we carry a special burden. When we, as a nation, tolerate racism or Islamophobia, or employ it in political rhetoric or in our daily lives, a poison is released which is difficult to contain. The public nature of this horrific act, and similar crimes here and elsewhere in the world, was startling and speaks to the intent of the perpetrators. They wanted to sow hatred and do so publicly.

Let this horrific affront to decency be a call to action by all people who cherish our common humanity. Religious, civil and political leaders have a responsibility not only to condemn these criminal acts, but to hold each other accountable for combatting the attitudes which breed them. Let us recommit ourselves to this task today, welcoming one another as “brother” or “sister” whenever we encounter them.

With a heavy heart, I call upon all of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago to offer prayers for those who died in New Zealand and for their Muslim neighbors here in Cook and Lake counties. Also, in all hope and humility let us pray for the perpetrators of this violence and those who harbor hate toward others based on race or religion. May they come to see the humanity in their brothers and sisters and release the hatred.