

## **A Prayer for Shattered Lives**

It rained a lot this week, and somehow the rain provided the perfect background for the breaking news of dozens killed or wounded at Virginia Tech (my alma mater). The school has tripled in its size, since I graduated from there in 1975 (yes, I am that old). But, its center core, the drill field, and the buildings surrounding it, are the same as the ones I studied in, when working on my Bachelor's degree in psychology – so long ago. It was a good school to study at, and its ROTC program seemed strangely suitable, given that I had grown up in the military myself.

I offer this prayer for those of us watching this story unfold (at this point, the shooter's news packet has just arrived at NBC). I pray not only for those students and professors/staff who died, but also for their families. More, I cannot help but also pray for the shooter who lived what seems a tortured life. And, mostly, I am thinking about his family. I know that much sympathy will be (and should be) shared with the innocent victim's families. I also know that the shooter's family will proceed with shame and guilt branded on their hearts, perhaps always wondering "what went wrong?" The normal stages for grief and healing are not likely to surface for them. They are likely to get "stuck" in this moment for the rest of their lives. Healing will be elusive, and sympathy, rare.

### ***A Prayer***

To whom do we pray? Is it to the G\*d above, or the soul within? Is it for ourselves or for others? Often - most often it is a lament of silent anguish that is inexpressible while we are lost in emotion. We pray to ourselves, to our communities, for others, and to that Mystery that holds life together. We pray that the future will bring more peace to this world, not just for us, but for our children, and our children's children. Not just for the blessed but for the tormented who cannot see nor find a better way. We pray for peace for the spirits and families of those who died or were wounded at Virginia Tech on Monday, April 16, 2007. We pray for the over 200 people that died in Baghdad, the same week. We pray for soldiers and citizens who die every week.

We pray for forgiveness for all that we have not done - but could have done to build nurturing communities in this world. We pray not just for the global community, but for communities across the nation grieving shattered lives that defy explanation. And, yet, we still do pray for understanding, hoping that perhaps, next time we can do something different that will thwart tragedy's bitter outcome. We pray for sanity in the face of insanity. We pray for joy that comes at the expense of no one. We pray for the laughter of children and elders, joined with ours. We pray for healing. We pray for wholeness. We pray for grace that will fill our lives with love, compassion and respect for everyone.

Amen and Blessed Be.



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