

Mother's Day Walk for Peace
Episcopal Church Eucharist
May 12, 2013
The Rev. Timothy E. Crellin and Mirna Luz Ramos

Good morning. I'm Tim Crellin, from St. Stephen's Church in Boston. It's my honor to introduce you to Mirna Luz Ramos, the mother of Jorge Fuentes, in whose memory we marched today. Mirna is going to speak to you about her son.

Mirna:

My name is Mirna Ramos. I am a member of St. Stephen's Church in Boston. And I am a leader in the B-PEACE for Jorge campaign that is being organized by Bishop Shaw and the Episcopal Diocese. Thank you all for being here today.

I am a single parent of four boys and one girl. I work for the Orchard Gardens School in Roxbury, supporting autistic elementary students. I live here in Dorchester, not far from where we are now, on Wheatland Avenue.

I care about my kids – my own sons and daughter, and the kids I take care of every day at school. I also care about justice – especially about creating safe neighborhoods for all of our children – mine and yours.

I am here this morning because I have a deep wish for peace. I wish that people could learn to use their words rather than weapons to solve conflict – between nations, in homes, on our streets. This is a big wish, but if it was true, we would have a different world – a better world.

I am also here to tell the story of my son, Jorge Luis Fuentes. On September 10th last year, my 19 year old son was shot and killed in front of our house, in broad daylight.

Let me tell you who my son was. Jorge was a bright, beautiful and loving son. He, too, cared about children and about making the world a better place. He had just graduated from Madison Park High School. His passion was for the ROTC program at school. He won many awards for his involvement with ROTC and he planned to join the Marines.

When he wasn't at school or at the house, he was at St. Stephen's, his second home. He grew up there, from being a participant in the youth programs to being a teen staff and then an adult staff member in the B-SAFE program at St. Mary's in Uphams Corner. He painted peace doves and led workshops on conflict resolution. He worked with the hardest headed kids in the program, because he could relate to them. He used to tell me, "I understand this kid. I know where he's coming from. He reminds me of me."

On that day, last September, Jorge took the dog for a walk. I was cooking dinner for the family, and when the food was done, I put the plates out. And then I heard five shots – BOOM, BOOM, BOOM – one right after another. It was so loud it sounded like it was right in my kitchen. My nephew, Jonathan, went outside and I heard him shout, "NO, NO, NO!" When I heard that, I already knew it was for me. I knew it was my son who was shot.

I ran out the door and up the stairs of the house across the street. I touched Jorge's face and said, "I love you." His eyes flickered open for a moment. The ambulance took him to the hospital. The doctors did all they could, but it was a massive head injury, and he died that night.

I miss my son every minute of every hour of every day. Part of my pain is that the police have not been able to find the person who committed this crime. And part of my pain is that the person who killed Jorge had easy access to a gun.

My son was not in a gang or involved in ANYTHING that would have led to this tragedy. He was NOT in the wrong place at the wrong time or doing anything you would think of as dangerous. He was across the street from our home, walking his dog, at dinnertime.

I don't want another mother to feel the pain that I am feeling right now, having lost Jorge. I do not want another child or another teenager getting killed. I want my children and your children to grow up without being afraid.

There is no reason for my son to be dead except that it was too easy for another teenager to get his hands on a gun and make a terrible split-second decision to kill someone he didn't know on Wheatland Avenue. To create peace in Boston and everywhere, we need to work together. My faith in God keeps me going every day. And seeing all of you here today gives me hope that God can work through us to make the change we need. Jorge's death has brought us all together, and I know he has brought us all together for a reason. Thank you.

Tim Crellin: I want to thank Mirna for her courage in standing up here, on Mother's Day, and telling her story. She is an incredible woman of great strength and faith, and I'm so grateful to know her and her family. As she tells her story, the story of a mother's pain and grief, of the tragic loss of a life that was filled with so much love and beauty and promise, I can't help but think of the cross. This is a story of the crucifixion. Jorge's death was tragic and heartbreaking, and it left Mirna and it left our community at the foot of the cross – confused, hurting, angry, without hope.

And this goes on day after day – there have been more than 6,000 gun related deaths in our nation since Jorge's death. On average, 27 every day. The tragedy of Golgotha, over and over and over again. The agony of the cross is known by too many people – here in our city and across the country. The problem of violence and the circumstances that give rise to violence is big and complex and overwhelming. We may find it difficult, especially in the middle of our grief, even to imagine addressing this issue.

But...we are Easter people. We are not given to despair. God does not allow us to remain stuck in hopelessness, or to be paralyzed by fear or sorrow. And today, as I look out on this gathering of Episcopalians from across our diocese – I see the resurrection. I see a sign of the in-breaking of God's kingdom. This gathering is a reason for hope – it is a powerful witness to the future God promises. Out of the tragedy of Jorge's death, out of that particular experience of the cross, God is leading us towards the full glory of the risen Christ.

We are all used to worshipping inside on Sunday mornings – inside the four walls of our church buildings. But today, motivated by our care and concern, compelled by our desire for

justice and peace, we have left those walls to be here – to form a church without walls. Today, nothing is separating us from each other – nothing is separating us from this world that needs what we have: the liberating, generous love of the risen Lord. We have stepped outside of our walls to become something new. “Like living stones,” says the writer of the first letter of Peter (2:5), “let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a royal priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.” We are the Church – alive! The living presence of Christ. We are living stones, the foundation of a new Church, and a new future. We are today a beloved community, ready to lead. Ready to grow this in-breaking of the kingdom into the vanguard of a movement for peace and justice. Even now, the Holy Spirit is binding us into one, and showing us a new way of being the Body of Christ.

You see, we need each other, sisters and brothers. We can’t enter the kingdom of God without each other. The kingdom can’t come in its fullness in Winchester until it comes in Dorchester. It can’t come in Mattapoiset until it comes in Mattapan. It can’t come in Sudbury until it comes in Roxbury. Today in this walk for peace we have preached the Gospel with our feet, we have witnessed to God’s future, we have given expression to the promises of the kingdom. Now, we must go to work, together, and on this foundation build a new society – free of racism and sexism and homophobia. Free of violence. Free of poverty and inequality and fear. It’s a long journey, but this morning we took the first steps down that sacred road to glory.

As Jesus prepared to depart from his friends for the final time, to go to the place that had been prepared for him since before time, he gave them these last instructions (Lk. 24:49): “Stay here in the city! Stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high!” Today, in the city, we have been built into a spiritual house. We are a royal priesthood of disciples, and Jesus says to us: Stay here in the city. Stay here, together, and you will be clothed with power.

So, join hands with the person next to you and feel that God is clothing us with power. Can you feel the power? Raise those hands in the air! Can you feel the power of the Holy Spirit? If you can, say: Alleluia! If you can feel the Spirit’s power, shout: Alleluia!

Praise be to God for Jorge – for his life and his love and his example. And praise be to God for this day, and for the gift of God’s love and the Holy Spirit’s power. May we look back on Jorge’s death years from now and know that we honored him by coming together to work for peace.