My name is Brock Safe. I am the father of two Annunciation Catholic School students; Estella in 8th grade & Astoria in 5th grade.

On the morning of the shooting, I was half-way across the country, traveling for work and just heading into a meeting, when I received a frantic call from my wife at 8:37 a.m. MN time….a call every parent in the US unfortunately knows is a possibility, but never thinks they'll get…."There's a shooter at school!" she yelled but I could barely understand through the utter terror in her voice. After she hung up to rush to the school, I sat for a few seconds literally shell-shocked staring at a blank wall….my mind raced…I was trying to make sense of this nightmarish scenario that made no sense…..

At the time, I didn't know where the shooting took place on school property, but in those few seconds, I realized it was Wednesday morning and every Wed is an all-school mass and that is when I went from shocked to utterly horrified.

One can only imagine the level of torture and agony it was to be so far away and truly not knowing whether your child is dead or alive from a school shooting. It was an impossible situation I would not wish upon my worst enemy.

What I found out later was both of daughters were in the church that day. Thankfully, my 8th grader Estella was unhurt physically, but friends on either side of her were shot directly, including one of her best friends, shot in the head. Thankfully, she survived, though she had to undergo surgery which required opening part of her skull to relieve swelling in her brain from the gunshot wounds.

As for my 5th grader Astoria, it's a miracle upon miracles she is still with us today. She was seated right next to the window in which the coward shot through first. In just the first 10 seconds of his massacre, this selfish bastard carelessly shot dozens of military grade AR-15 bullets through the window. Astoria was grazed by a bullet in the forehead, while a large bullet fragment embedded into the left side of her neck. In addition to this, multiple bullet fragments lodged into her head. If that man had used something other than a semi-automatic gun that day….a pistol or even a shot gun, the amount of carnage he could have inflicted would have been significantly limited…but he didn't. He used a killing machine, designed for one singular purpos….to inflict maximum carnage in the shortest amount of time.

Astoria was next to Harper in the church that day. She recalls their conversation before the mass began-making small talk with their younger buddies, asking them what their favorite color was. Moments later, Harper was gone…….This heartbreaking tragedy is something Astoria struggles to understand and will live until the day she dies. Astoria, along with so many other Annunciation students, have been diagnosed with severe PTSD, and they are left to cope with horrific images—unspeakable images that only the most seasoned combat veterans experience on a battlefield. And they were literally praying during mass in a school church when this happened. They were all so innocent…And their innocence was taken that day. What our children and teachers endured is truly unimaginable—a devastating consequence of a nation that continues to prioritize their love of guns over the safety and lives of our children.

8/27 MUST stand for something. This MUST serve as a catalyst for meaningful change. It is our responsibility to break the cycle and ensure it does not continue to repeat, as it has for far too damn long. We cannot continue to live in a society where a deeply troubled individual can walk into a gun store and buy assault style weapons—these machines have no rightful place outside of a warzone. Yet, this monster was able to legally acquire an AR-15, which he then used to unleash 116 rounds in just 66 seconds, tearing through a church filled with terrified children and staff.

I personally do not own guns but that does not mean I am anti-gun. I completely understand the want of it for protection and for hunting. What I don't understand is why high-capacity semi-automatic rifles and extended magazines continue to be legal and easily accessible to any yahoo. We urgently need stronger restrictions and sensible reform to our gun laws to ban these types of weapons. We need to make it as hard as possible for these types of monsters to hurt our kids. Nothing will bring back Harper and Fletcher, our sweet children who were taken from us. And we cannot undo the heartbreak and tragedy that unfolded at Annunciation on that devastating day. However, we have a solemn responsibility—and a moral obligation—to fight for children across America to ensure that no other child faces the same fate. We cannot—and must not—fail them.

Thank you,

Brock Safe

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