As Sisters of St. Joseph, we share in the communal heartbreak of our nation in the face of unthinkable violence. The recent mass shootings in our country impel us to once again demand that all citizens and elected leaders end the rage and division that all too often results in mass, indiscriminate violence. We seem unable to stop the epidemic of hate that has overwhelmed us.

What we are witnessing today is a terrorism that uses mass public communication against a particular individual or group. This incites acts of terrorism that happen seemingly at random. We are called to confront rhetoric that stokes racism and hatred of anyone perceived to be “different.” We are all responsible. Let us monitor our own language and actions and call attention when the language and actions of others cross the line.

While mass shootings capture our attention, we cannot forget that they are only part of the violence perpetrated by use of firearms. Homicides, suicides, domestic violence and accidents caused by guns are pervasive in all parts of the country, traumatizing families and communities every day.

In the short term, we implore all legislative bodies to pass legislation that ban assault weapons, require universal background checks for all gun sales, provide funding for gun violence prevention research, and make the trafficking in weapons a federal crime. At the same time, we must continue examining the root causes of violence and working to change our culture.

The Sisters of St. Joseph pledge our support to end the scourge of rage and hatred, and we will consistently call for legislation to end gun violence.