



Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JONATHAN

July 1, 2018

This last week our parish hosted the funeral mass for Lesandro "Junior" Guzman. I was inspired to see so many of you present at the funeral. More than one of you told me you took the day off from work, at great personal expense, to show your love and support for the family and to pray for Junior's soul.

I believe this tragedy touched us deeply because we know it could have been any one of us, or of our children. We saw that not even the "good kids" are safe.

On a personal level, this experience has moved me to get more involved in making our neighborhood the safest and most positive place possible for our youth and for all of us. Perhaps in other places, parishes can, and should dedicate all of their efforts to the spiritual life of its members and leave social organizing to others. Sacramental and spiritual care will continue to be our first priority, but we cannot deny that if we do not have a safe neighborhood, we will not be able to do much more. People will be afraid to leave their homes or allow their children to participate even in parish activities.

The issues of neighborhood safety go well beyond the presence of gang activity. We need to look at housing, homelessness, and drug activity.

One of the positive consequences of the tragedies this year between the fires, the funeral for Private Mensah, and now this death of Junior, is that politicians and other community organizers are looking to Our Lady of Mt Carmel parish for leadership.

This Sunday night, July 1, at 6:00pm we will take up that leadership call by hosting a Memorial Vigil in honor of Junior, but with the clear objective of countering gang violence by showing our youth a better alternative. If our youth are empty inside, if they have no purpose, if they have never experienced God's love for them, they will be attracted to the identity and community that gang life offers.

I invite all of you, young and old, Italian, English, or Spanish speaking to attend this event. Come watch, listen and pray with us.

Finally, please continue to give me your suggestions of how we can keep our neighborhood safe and positive.

God bless, Fr. Jonathan