

Armor of light

by [David C. Killeen](#) in the [February 10, 2021](#) issue

After the phone call, the school chaplain and I hold hands and pray for God to cover us with armor of light: two siblings, Katie and Kevin,

shot by their father as they slept. In the funeral home, I commend their bodies to God as another priest signs a cross of oil

on their foreheads where they had once been marked in baptism with the wound of cruciform love. The livid heavens are torn

apart, and I can see the two children at summer camp in the astonishing fluorescence of the Youth Pavilion, paying more attention than required

during worship, tilting backwards in their Crazy Creek chairs like astronauts bracing for liftoff. *Shield the joyous, Lord, I pray*

that day and when the celebrated preacher visits our church. He sings of love as Kevlar-vested police officers hired for the occasion

stand guard in the temple precincts, thresholds shaking as we process in our useless cassocks and surplices, tippetts and academic hoods—

an armor of light protecting no one. The preacher is black and a prophet in this country that kills its black people, its prophets, its children.

If you talk about love that much, expect to die. Is that what the cross means, whether the place of the skull is a Memphis balcony or a child's bedroom?

There is nothing to do at the foot of the cross but double over, lament, and double down on this earth from which we rise with our wounds.