



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

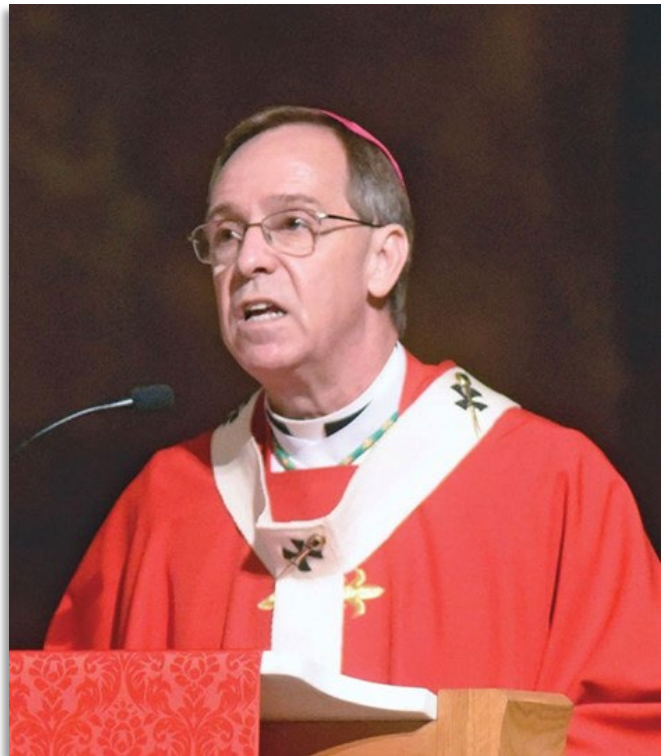
The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In my 2018 pastoral letter: *We are One in Christ: A Pastoral Letter on Fundamentals of Christian Anthropology*, I observed that the first key principle of Catholic social teaching is respect for the dignity of each and every human person—regardless of race, sex, nationality, economic or social status, educational background, political affiliation or sexual orientation. All are created in the image and likeness of God. All are equal in dignity. No one is “better” than anyone else. All deserve respect. All share basic human rights. No one is exempt from the responsibility to support and assist fellow human beings—whether they are from the same family/community, or they are strangers who are foreign to us in some way.



Every human person is a member of God’s family. For Christians, this also means that we are sisters and brothers of Christ and each other. All sins against the dignity of persons, including the taking of a human life, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, rape, racism, sexism, nativism and homophobia, are violations of this fundamental principle. We can (and sometimes must) disapprove of the behavior of others, but we may never belittle, disrespect or abuse others simply because of our differences, no matter how serious.

Every human life is sacred. Every person is a child of God who possesses incomparable dignity and worth—no matter what his or her state in life or personal gifts and talents.

Regardless of who we are; or what our background is; or the state of our physical, emotional or mental health; or our accomplishments; or our race, religion or cultural heritage; or our age; or our social status; every individual human being is precious in the sight of God and, therefore, should also be valuable in the eyes of his or her fellow human beings.

No one is unwanted by God. His love embraces all.

Every human being is wanted by God because every single person has been given the gift of life. This gift is a share in God's own being that is more precious than anything we can possibly imagine. Life itself is the treasure given to us by God to be nurtured and protected and shared generously with others. Nothing on earth is more valuable than human life. That's why deliberately taking a human life by murder, abortion, euthanasia, infanticide or any other means is such a grave sin. God alone gives life and only He can take it back again.

No one is unwanted by God. That's why we reverence all life, why we help the handicapped and care for the infirm and the elderly, why we encourage and assist women with unplanned pregnancies and why we speak out forcefully against all attempts to treat society's unwanted human beings as somehow less valuable than they truly are in the sight of God.

No one is unwanted in God's family. We don't always show it as clearly as we should, but all are welcome. All are valued. All are members of the Body of Christ, the Church.

All life is sacred—especially those who feel unwanted or who have been rejected by unjust, unloving and inhuman laws, policies and social practices in this and every other age. Every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can come to recognize the sacred value of human life from the moment of conception until its natural end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree.

No one should ever have to wonder, "Does God really want me?" God wants everyone. That means God wants you and me, and every human being who has ever lived, and everyone who is yet to be conceived.

Every human life is sacred. Let's pray that our man-made laws always reflect, and uphold, the Law of God that prohibits us from killing a human being at any stage of life—from the moment of conception to the experience of natural death. Let's reverence the Sanctity of Human Life, and let's do everything in our power to protect and defend our sisters and brothers, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Statement on Gun Violence

In recent weeks, incidents of brutal, senseless killing in the USA have increased beyond anyone's comprehension. Innocent lives, including the lives of young children, have been cruelly taken. These unspeakable tragedies have caused parents, families, and community members in many different regions of our country to ask "How could this happen?" and to demand that all of us unite in our common humanity to stop the massacres of innocent lives.

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis echo Pope Francis' words following the massacre in Uvalde, Texas. "My heart is broken," the pope said. "I pray for the children and adults killed, and for their families... It is time to say 'no' to the indiscriminate trafficking of weapons."

As responsible citizens of diverse communities throughout central and southern Indiana, we share the enormous grief of our brothers and sisters. We pray for them, and we commit ourselves to advocating for concrete, practical actions that can prevent these nightmares from happening again.

With this in mind, we strongly urge all Indiana state lawmakers and members of Congress to reflect on these tragic events and be moved to action because of them. We believe that there is something deeply wrong with a culture where racially motivated hate crimes and acts of violence—in schools, in places of worship, on city streets, and in the public square—are increasingly common. We are convinced that there must be respectful dialogue, followed by concrete action, to create a broader social awareness of all aspects of this increasingly horrifying crisis, including mental health, family life, the dignity of human life, the influence of entertainment and gaming industries, bullying, and the availability of firearms. Among the many steps toward addressing this endemic of violence is the necessity of passing reasonable, effective gun control measures.

Pope Francis has warned many times that we live "in a world marked by a 'globalization of indifference' which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves." As the pope also said, in his address to a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress in 2015, "Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society?"

We are keenly aware that violence in our society will not be solved by legislation alone because many factors contribute to the violence we are witnessing all around us today. Even so, our leaders must engage in a real debate about urgently needed measures to save lives and make our communities safer. We call on members of Congress to work together in a bipartisan fashion. Towards this end, we endorse the following measures recommended by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2017:

- A total ban on assault weapons;
- Measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases;
- Limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines;
- A federal law to criminalize gun trafficking;
- Improved access to mental health care for those who may be prone to violence;
- Regulations and limitations on the purchasing of handguns; and
- Measures that make guns safer, such as locks that prevent children and anyone other than the owner from using the gun without permission and supervision.

We acknowledge the importance of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, but considering the daily advances in modern technology, and the fact that some weapons are increasingly capable of causing mass murder when used with an evil purpose, we believe that the common good requires reasonable steps to limit access to such weapons by those who intend to misuse them in any way.

The Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis
June 16, 2022

Statement on the *Dobbs* Decision from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

“The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* restores the ability of states to provide legal protection for unborn children, protection which the Catholic Church has advocated since abortion was legalized in 1973. We pray that Indiana’s General Assembly will move quickly to pass legislation to protect the God-given dignity and humanity of all unborn babies and their mothers in our state, and we support all efforts to legally protect human life from the moment of conception until natural death.

“For decades, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has worked diligently to provide material and emotional support to women and families facing unplanned or difficult pregnancies across central and southern Indiana through its ministries such as Birthline, St. Elizabeth/Coleman Pregnancy & Adoption Services, Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana, Lifeline for Families, Holy Family Shelter, Bethany House and Project Rachel, which offers Christ-like compassion and hope to women and men after an abortion. In addition to these archdiocesan ministries, many parishes throughout the Archdiocese also operate individual parish-based ministries to support pregnant women and women with young children.

“The Archdiocese of Indianapolis remains vigilant in its efforts to do all that it can to provide loving support to women before and after the birth of their babies regardless of creed, ethnicity or language, so that no woman ever feels alone. We urge all people who care about human life and the common good to prioritize the well-being of women, children, and families with both material resources and personal accompaniment so that no woman ever feels forced to choose between improving her circumstances and the life of her child.”

(The Criterion recently published a list of resources for mothers in need of support throughout central and southern Indiana. While non-exhaustive, it is meant as a tool for individuals and parishes to keep on hand for directing moms in need to helpful resources, as well as providing the faithful with an opportunity to support such organizations financially, by volunteering or by donating goods according to their needs. This list can be viewed and shared at the following link, which will be updated with more resources in the future: www.archindy.org/moms.)

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

A selection from the Holy Father’s 55th World Day of Peace Message, January, 1, 2022

In a world still gripped by the pandemic that has created untold problems, some people attempt to flee from reality, taking refuge in their own little world; others react to it with destructive violence. Yet between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations.



All honest dialogue, in addition to a correct and positive exchange of views, demands basic trust between the participants. We need to learn how to regain this mutual trust. The current health crisis has increased our sense of isolation and a tendency to self-absorption. The loneliness of the elderly is matched in the young by a sense of helplessness and a lack of a shared vision about the future. The crisis has indeed been painful, but it has also helped to bring out the best in people. Indeed, during the pandemic we encountered generous examples of compassion, sharing and solidarity in every part of the world.

Dialogue entails listening to one another, sharing different views, coming to agreement and walking together. Promoting such dialogue between generations involves breaking up the hard and barren soil of conflict and indifference in order to sow the seeds of a lasting and shared peace.

My Prayer for You

Sacred Heart of Jesus, rescue us, heal us, and draw us closer to you, we pray. Help us to be women and men who work for peace by building a just and equitable society. Teach us to defend the dignity of all persons regardless of race, sex, nationality, economic or social status, educational background, political affiliation or sexual orientation. May we learn to listen and dialogue, to accept our differences, and to be people who show respect for everyone, especially those who disagree with us.

+ Charles C. Thompson