



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. 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.

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.

All life is precious, including the whole of God's Creation. As Pope Francis reminds us so powerfully in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the material world, our common home, "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us... This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." All life is sacred. That means that all God's handiwork—here on earth and throughout the vastness of the universe—is worthy of reverence and respect.

All 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 all God's Creation, 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

A selection from “Worship of God in the Holy Mass Unites Us” a Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson published December 14, 2021

As we journey in our pilgrimage here on earth and carry out our mission to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that mission is rooted in our fruitful participation in Mass, celebrated fully and well. While we are unified in the Catholic Church in our celebration of the Eucharist, we also celebrate the richness of our diversity in the manner in which we celebrate. Did you know that there are several legitimate forms of the



Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Catholic Church? The Mass which most people are familiar with nowadays follows the Roman missal promulgated by Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II after Vatican II, which can be celebrated in the vernacular languages of the world as well as in the official language of the Catholic Church, Ecclesiastical Latin, which is commonly and often advisedly celebrated with the priest facing the people. The Liturgical books promulgated by Saint Paul VI and John Paul II in conformity with the decrees of the Vatican council to, constitute the unique expression of the Roman rite.....

Most recently on July 16, 2021, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, issued a new *motu proprio* called *Traditiones custodes* for the universal Church, including our local Church, “in order to promote the concord and unity of the Church.” As part of this unity, the Holy father has asked that the Universal Church embrace and celebrate the fullness of the Mass as contained in the Missal of Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II.

Building upon the wisdom of the Council Fathers of Vatican II (the bishops in unity with the Holy Father), the Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII was revised with “the desires to impart

an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church“ (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1).

Having heard the Fathers of Vatican II, Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II revised the liturgy and celebration of Mass to what we now call the Roman Missal of Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II. Having this unique expression in mind, as well as concern for the unity of the Church and the unity of celebration of Mass, Pope Francis promulgated *Traditiones custodes*, regulating the use of the Roman Missal of Saint John XXIII.

Pope Francis issued *Traditiones custodes* in order to heal the division that the use of the Roman missal of Saint John XXIII has sometimes caused in some parts of the Universal Church. Thankfully, that is not the case here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. In my general experience liturgy in the archdiocese is celebrated joyfully and with reverence....

Notably the Holy Father reminds all of the faithful that all Masses are to be celebrated in a respectful manner with reverence. Celebrating the Sacred Liturgy fully and well is so critical in strengthening the bonds of unity that we share with God and one another. Again, from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, we are told that “every liturgical celebration is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.”

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

*A selection from the Apostolic Letter
Desiderio Desideravi (On the Liturgical
Formation of the People of God)*

The Liturgy: place of encounter with Christ

10. Here lies all the powerful beauty of the liturgy. If the resurrection were for us a concept, an idea, a thought; if the Risen One were for us the recollection of the recollection of others, however authoritative, as, for example, of the Apostles; if there were not given also to us the possibility of a true encounter with Him, that would be to declare the newness of the Word



made flesh to have been all used up. Instead, the Incarnation, in addition to being the only always new event that history knows, is also the very method that the Holy Trinity has chosen to open to us the way of communion. Christian faith is either an encounter with Him alive, or it does not exist.

11. The Liturgy guarantees for us the possibility of such an encounter. For us a vague memory of the Last Supper would do no good. We need to be present at that Supper, to be able to hear his voice, to eat his Body and to drink his Blood. We need Him. In the Eucharist and in all the sacraments we are guaranteed the possibility of encountering the Lord Jesus and of having the power of his Paschal Mystery reach us. The salvific power of the sacrifice of Jesus, his every word, his every gesture, glance, and feeling reaches us through the celebration of the sacraments. I am Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man possessed by demons at Capernaum, the paralytic in the house of Peter, the sinful woman pardoned, the woman afflicted by hemorrhages, the daughter of Jairus, the blind man of Jericho, Zacchaeus, Lazarus, the thief and Peter both pardoned. The Lord Jesus who dies no more, who lives forever with the signs of his Passion [2] continues to pardon us, to heal us, to save us with the power of the sacraments. It is the concrete way, by means of his incarnation, that he loves us. It is the way in which he satisfies his own thirst for us that he had declared from the cross. (Jn 19:28)

12. Our first encounter with his paschal deed is the event that marks the life of all believers: our Baptism. This is not a mental adhesion to his thought or the agreeing to a code of conduct imposed by Him. Rather, it is a being plunged into his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, a being plunged into his paschal deed. It is not magic. Magic is the opposite of the logic of the sacraments because magic pretends to have a power over God, and for this reason it comes from the Tempter. In perfect continuity with the Incarnation, there is given to us, in virtue of the presence and action of the Spirit, the possibility of dying and rising in Christ.

13. How moving, the way in which this comes about. The prayer for the blessing of baptismal water [3] reveals to us that God created water precisely with Baptism in mind. This means that when God created water, he was thinking of the Baptism of each one of us, and this same thought accompanied him all throughout his acting in the history of salvation every time that, with precise intention, he used water for his saving work. It is as if after having created water in the first place, he had wanted to perfect it by making it eventually to be the water of Baptism. It was thus that he wanted to fill it with the movement of his Spirit hovering over the face of the waters (Ge 1:2) so that it could contain hidden within the power to sanctify. He used water to regenerate humanity through the flood (Ge 6:1-9,29). He controlled it, separating it to open the way of freedom through the Red Sea (cf. Ex 14). He consecrated it in the Jordan, plunging into it the flesh of the Word soaked in the Spirit. (cf. Ma 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22) At the end he blended it with the blood of his Son, the gift of the Spirit inseparably united with the gift of the life and death of the Lamb slain for us, and from his pierced side he poured it out over us. (Jn 19:34) And it is into this water that we have been immersed so that through its power we can be inserted into the Body of Christ and with him rise to immortal life. (cf. Ro 6:1-11)

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying these words of Saint Francis of Assisi quoted by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*:

Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest!

*O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
O sublime humility! O humble sublimity!*

*The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God,
so humbles Himself that for our salvation
He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread!
Brothers, look at the humility of God,
and pour out your hearts before Him!*

*Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him!
Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves,
that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!*

+ Charles C. Thompson