

His Eminence Wilton Cardinal Gregory
Archbishop of Washington
PO Box 29260
Washington, DC 20017-0260

February 4, 2021

Cardinal Gregory,

As the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Parish, we thank you for following Pope Francis' lead in speaking out about the fundamental values that we are called to live out as Christians.

We are deeply troubled about recent statements issued by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) that focus almost singularly on the issue of abortion when speaking of President Joseph R. Biden. The USCCB has historically sought to engage with, dialogue with, and, when appropriate, critique civic leaders to address the root causes of suffering and improve institutional structures that contribute to suffering and injustice. Recent USCCB statements, however, do not embody this spirit of dialogue and engagement. We support your raising your voice to oppose the narrow and myopic focus of the USCCB on the single issue of abortion rather than the many other preeminent social justice and moral abuses in our country and world, including discrimination, racism, income inequality, environmental degradation, lack of access to quality health care, the continued use of the death penalty, and institutional injustice. Our Bishops should be following Pope Francis' lead in calling on all of us to work with equal priority against a much broader range of abuses and challenges (see, e.g., Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, paras. 101-102).

Please continue your leadership in speaking out for justice and the other values by which Jesus calls us to live. Our Church and our country need to hear your voice.

Respectfully,

Christopher Hannigan
President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Tania Chomiak-Salvi
Vice-President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

CC: Rev. C. Kevin Gillespie, S.J., Pastor, Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Ms. Kathleen Coogan, Member, Archdiocesan Pastoral Council

His Excellency Archbishop José Gómez
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017

February 11, 2021

Archbishop Gómez,

As the Parish Pastoral Council of Holy Trinity Parish in Washington, DC, we are deeply troubled about the statement issued on behalf of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) on the occasion of the inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden. The USCCB has historically sought to engage with, dialogue with, and, when appropriate, critique civic leaders to address the root causes of suffering and improve institutional structures that contribute to suffering and injustice. Recent USCCB statements, however, do not embody this spirit of dialogue and engagement.

Pope Francis could not have been clearer about the preeminent priorities of Christians. We need to live the Great Commandment, the Beatitudes, and the mission Matthew presents in Chapter 25 of his Gospel. These are criteria by which we will be judged (see, e.g., Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, paras. 63 and 95).

As Pope Francis explains in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, para 101, our defense of the unborn has to be "clear, firm and passionate." He goes on to say, "Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty."

At Holy Trinity, we live out this mission through *cura personalis*, care for the whole person, from womb to tomb. Understanding that our national leaders represent the American people, who come from many faith traditions, we judge their actions and policies by the totality of their adherence to God's teaching. Previous U.S. Presidents could equally have been judged for pledges to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, such as through their willingness to apply the death penalty. The USCCB statement, singularly focused on legalized abortion, confuses the breadth of Catholic social teaching and Pope Francis' teachings to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by ignoring the tangible ways our second Catholic U.S. President has worked and, we hope, will continue to work to address a range of social ills.

We urge you, please, instead to reinforce Pope Francis' message so as to avoid further dividing Americans, confusing Catholics of goodwill, and misleading non-Catholics about the breadth of the Church's social teaching.

Respectfully,

Christopher Hannigan
President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Tania Chomiak-Salvi
Vice-President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

CC: Rev. C. Kevin Gillespie, S.J., Pastor, Holy Trinity Catholic Church

His Excellency Archbishop Christophe Pierre
Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America
Apostolic Nunciature in the United States of America
3339 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008-3610

February 11, 2021

Archbishop Pierre,

As the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Parish in Washington, DC, we are deeply troubled about recent statements of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops that repeatedly misrepresent the actions and policies of President Joseph R. Biden.

Pope Francis could not have been clearer about the preeminent priorities of Christians. We need to live the Great Commandment, the Beatitudes, and the mission Matthew presents in Chapter 25 of his Gospel. These are criteria by which we will be judged (see, e.g., Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, paras. 63 and 95).

As Pope Francis explains in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, para 101, our defense of the unborn has to be "clear, firm and passionate." He goes on to say, "Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty."

At Holy Trinity, we live out this mission through *cura personalis*, care for the whole person, from womb to tomb. The USCCB's myopic statements, singularly focused on legalized abortion, confuse the breadth of Catholic social teaching and Pope Francis' teachings to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by ignoring the tangible ways our second Catholic U.S. President has worked and, we hope, will continue to work to address a range of social ills. These statements represent an abdication of the USCCB's traditional role to dialogue and engage with civic leaders to address the root causes of suffering and improve institutional structures that contribute to suffering and injustice.

We urge you, please, to reinforce Pope Francis' message and speak out against the narrow focus of the USCCB, which serves only to divide Americans, confuse Catholics of goodwill, and mislead non-Catholics about the breadth of the Church's social teaching.

Respectfully,

Christopher Hannigan
President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Tania Chomiak-Salvi
Vice-President, Parish Pastoral Council
Holy Trinity Catholic Church

CC: Rev. C. Kevin Gillespie, S.J., Pastor, Holy Trinity Catholic Church