

Happy Monday to all.

On this date, June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln gave his famous, "A House Divided" speech, warning that the United States, at the time divided by slavery, could not endure permanently.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all warn of a house divided. For example Matthew 22:25 states: "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand." The core idea is that any entity that is internally divided and at odds with itself will inevitably be weakened and fall apart.

The concept of avoiding "a house divided" is a core principle in Catholic Social Teaching. Respect for the dignity of each human person, solidarity, unity and reconciliation are essential for a thriving society and a strong community. As a human family, we must work towards reconciliation and unity, promoting respectful dialogue, and offering forgiveness and understanding.

The extreme division in society today is nothing new. Widely recognized as the foundational document of Catholic Social Teaching, *Rerum Novarum*, the 1891 letter of Pope Leo XIII, was in part a response to similar divisions at the time. The whole tradition of Catholic Social Teaching affirms the need to seek consensus in the midst of opposing extremes... the goal being that we may be one.

Of course, at times it seems that "being one" is an impossible dream. Targeted hate crimes against select groups seem to occur with ever-increasing frequency... ever-increasing violence...even here in "one nation, under God...indivisible..."

Catholic Charities- the Catholic Church in general-is one of those targets. Criticisms, and even threats, often focus on the Church's stance on social issues. Untoward actions include verbal attacks, social media campaigns, and even federal actions such as a 2023 FBI memo detailed in a report by the US House of Representatives titled: "The FBI's Breach of Religious Freedom: The Weaponization of Law Enforcement Against Catholic Americans."

Targeting Catholic Charities in particular, a right-wing influencer is on record stating, "These people [Catholic Charities] are enemy combatants who are facilitating the invasion and overthrow of our country. They should be treated accordingly." Kevin Brennan, a spokesperson for Catholic Charities USA, responded, "These comments are deeply disturbing and could endanger Catholic Charities staff members and volunteers, who on a daily basis selflessly serve people in need in every corner of this country."

On Pentecost Sunday, in his homily at the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Stockton, the Very Reverend John J. M. Foster, J.C.D. referred to the Holy Spirit as a source of unity, acting as the source and instrument of oneness within the Church and among believers. Through the Holy Spirit, believers share a common allegiance to Christ, a common hope in salvation, and a common call to love and serve one another.

In accordance with Catholic Social Teaching, and as an extension of our call to love and serve others, Catholic Charities will continue to serve all who come to us for help. We acknowledge that sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, but must also afford protection to refugees and asylum seekers -respecting the human dignity and rights of undocumented migrants. We will continue to offer “a house united” built upon a foundation of faith, hope and love.

Blessings to all,

Deacon Mike