

Happy Monday to all,

Two years ago today, on July 13, 2024 President Donald Trump survived an assassination attempt at an outdoor campaign rally in Pennsylvania. This was the first of three known assassination attempts on President Trump. However, it was the assassination of Charlie Kirk in September 2025 that seemed to crystallize a growing fear. The United States is experiencing more and more political violence.

The Church condemns terrorism, political assassinations, and indiscriminate violence against civilians. Human beings are created with the capacity for reason, an understanding that they can work out disagreements through dialog. In June 2024, the U.S. Conference of Bishops (USCCB) released a statement, denouncing political violence, titled, "A Christian Response to Rising Threats of Political and Ideological Violence"

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/2024.06.18%20Political%20Violence%20Statement.pdf>

Political violence carries the potential that every disagreement could be lethal. When a society allows political opponents to be demonized, when conspiracy theories are weaponized and used against entire communities of people, the result is a society living in fear and preparing for combat, one member against another.

As a people of faith in God, we are called to make a profound shift toward connection and empathy. We must use listening as a form of love, transitioning from self-serving communication to mindful presence and allowing others to feel truly seen, valued, and respected without any hidden agendas. When political discourse begins from this posture, opponents are no longer enemies to be destroyed but fellow citizens with whom one shares a fragile common world.

Catholic Charities serves as a functioning example of reasoned discourse, respect for human dignity, and the use of listening as a form of love for others. However, even non-profit organizations -devoted to serving the Lord through service to those in need- require sufficient funds to remain operational. Our wonderful staff may be extremely altruistic; however, Luke 10:7 tells us that, "... the laborer deserves his payment."

Government funding is fluid and fragile and funding of services and programs offered by Catholic Charities is diminishing quickly. It is donations generously provided by each one of us that continue to sustain all that Catholic Charities is able to do for our poor, elderly, disabled and marginalized brothers and sisters. Isaiah 58:10 tells us that, "If you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom shall become like midday."

When the average U.S. Congressional candidate easily quickly raises over \$3 million in campaign donations (at a minimum), money that is often used to produce media that denigrates and

demonizes political opponents, the hope is that donations made to provide hope and healing to the least among us will far exceed that amount. Catholic Charities serves individuals and families across a six-county region (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Alpine, and Mono) through targeted impact programs:

- Vulnerable Seniors: The Multi-Purpose Senior Services Program and Homemaker Services maintain seniors in their homes. The Ombudsman program advocates for those in nursing homes. The Homecoming Project bridges the gap between hospital discharge and a strong recovery at home. Transportation services are available for adults 60+ and those with disabilities. Resources focused on elder abuse prevention.
- Veterans: The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program stabilizes low-income and homeless veterans with direct housing assistance.
- Immigration Legal Services: Provides low-cost, confidential guidance for naturalization and immigration matters.
- Family Wellness: Family counseling services
- Basic Needs & Rural Outreach: Distributes weekly family meal boxes at emergency food pantries, emergency services, and assists circumstantially challenged individuals with rent, mortgage, and clothing. Assistance in access to healthcare.

Ongoing news headlines seem to primarily focus on the evil and dark acts of violence that divide us. This consistency risks creating a sense of normalcy of these acts. The antidote is to share stories such as the experiences of Catholic Charities clients who continue to receive the services listed above. These are stories of gratitude, inspiration, and hope for better days ahead. As we approach Catholic Charities Annual Appeal weekend (September 12/13) we will share a few of those stories...so keep a lookout!

Blessings to all,

Deacon Mike