



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

As we walk together on our synodal journey, human life should always be respected

The synod process we began last month here in our Archdiocese—and in all dioceses throughout the Universal Church—invites us to recognize the sacredness of all human life. In order to encounter Jesus in everyone we meet on the road we are traveling together, we must recognize that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. We are all members of God's family, all sisters and brothers in Christ, and regardless of our differences and disagreements. We must listen to each other and treat one another with dignity and respect.



For missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, and pilgrims on life's journey, the commitment to the dignity of human life is absolute. All forms of homicide, including abortion and infanticide (the killing of unborn and newborn children), and genocide (the elimination of entire communities based on their religious or ethnic identities) must be strenuously opposed.

Respect for human life also includes care for our planet. Pope Francis has emphasized that we are faced not with two separate crises, one social and the other environmental, but rather one complex crisis that calls for an integrated approach for protecting all human life from conception to natural death, combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and protecting and caring for the environment. Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* is an urgent appeal to the world to recognize that we are one single human family and we must work together to resolve the effects of environmental deterioration and climate change. Our concern for our environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings.

We believe that from the first moment of conception each human being must be recognized as having the inviolable right to life. No human law or social policy can override this most fundamental, God-given civil right. The same is true of capital punishment, which Pope

Francis has declared to be “inadmissible no matter how serious the crime committed because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

This same principle applies to all forms of euthanasia (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2276). Catholic social teaching emphasizes that “those whose lives are diminished or weakened” due to illness, disability or extreme old age “deserve special respect.” As fellow travelers with us, they should be helped to lead lives that are as full and dignified as possible in their diminished circumstances. Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia (“mercy killing”) consists in putting an end to a human life. Our Church teaches that this is “always unacceptable.”

The same is true of suicide, which, tragically, is increasing in our society. According to the catechism, “Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human person to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self. It likewise offends love of neighbor because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations” (CCC, #2281). Especially in the United States today, when many states have adopted laws that permit—even encourage—suicide assisted by physicians and loved ones, the Church is required to speak out and to declare that “suicide is contrary to love for the living God.”

In all these cases, those of us who are traveling together have a moral responsibility to show compassion, understanding and loving support for our sisters and brothers who are under so much emotional pain and stress that they seriously consider taking a human life—their own, that of an unborn child or a loved one who is in terrible pain. Perhaps if we all did a better job of listening to each other, fewer people would feel so isolated and alone that they want to end their own lives or the lives of others.

We cannot imagine how much intense pressure is placed on those who contemplate abortion, euthanasia or suicide. What’s needed above all is the unconditional love and mercy that our Lord Jesus Christ offers to all who are burdened in any way. His love is needed, often desperately, to break through the barriers of guilt and shame that surround our brothers and sisters who have given up hope, and are seeking a way out of overwhelming crises in their lives.

Our Church’s absolute commitment to the dignity of life is not meant to “lord it over” women and men who are suffering. Instead, it serves as a call to the rest of us—spouses, family members and friends, neighbors and fellow parishioners, and all people of good will—to reach out to those who are suffering, and offer both words of encouragement and a helping hand wherever possible.

In order to be signs of the unconditional love and mercy of God, we uphold the conviction that “human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator who is its sole end.”

Because we know how much God loves each and every one of us, we can affirm that “God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances

claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2258).

In his recent book, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future* Pope Francis, writes:

“What the Lord asks of us today is a culture of service, not a throwaway culture. But we can’t serve others unless we let their reality speak to us. To go there, you have to open your eyes and let the suffering around you touch you, so that you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you from the margins. That’s why I need to warn you about three disastrous ways of escaping reality that block growth and the connection with reality, and especially the action of the Holy.”

The Synod of Bishops that will take place in Rome two years from now is intended to be a response to the Holy Spirit speaking through the voices of God’s people in every region of the world. Through a process that promotes encounter, prayerful listening and the discernment of God’s holy will, we can demonstrate our absolute commitment to the sanctity of human life. Let’s do everything in our power to nurture, protect and defend God’s gift of life—from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death!

(Catholics across the Archdiocese have the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for the Synod through an online survey. A link to the survey in English and Spanish can be found on the archdiocese’s website at <https://www.archindy.org/SynodSurvey>.)

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Nov. 6-7 is the annual United Catholic Appeal intention weekend in archdiocesan parishes

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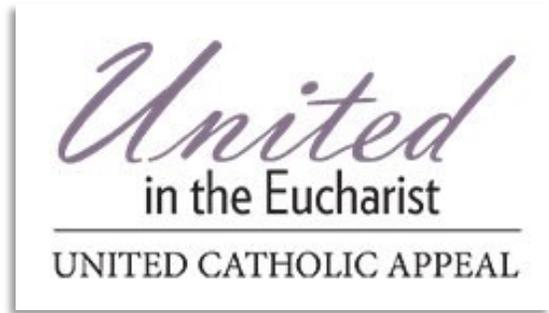
By Natalie Hoefler

The weekend of Nov. 6-7 is the archdiocesan annual [United Catholic Appeal \(UCA\)](#) intention weekend in parishes across the archdiocese.

The goal for this year’s appeal is \$6.3 million. The money will be distributed to various ministries and organizations throughout central and southern Indiana, providing help that no single parish or deanery could independently offer.

The theme of this year's appeal is "United in the Eucharist."

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson cites a prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila that captures what he says "we are called to do as Eucharist-centered people."



Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on Earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which he looks
compassion on this world
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world
Yours are the hands
Yours are the feet
Yours are the eyes
You are his body
Christ has no body now on Earth but yours

The archbishop notes how donations to the United Catholic Appeal have brought hope to people throughout central and southern Indiana in the last year, including:

- 867 veterans and 6,641 people with a disability received food, shelter and clothing from the Archdiocese's Catholic Charities agencies.
- More than 800 homeless families received a safe place to rest.
- More than 48,000 people who were hungry were served hot meals.
- Nearly 1,100 children in the archdiocesan Notre Dame ACE Academies in the Indianapolis center-city received a Catholic education.
- Provided catechetical programs for 30,000 youths and adults.
- Our seminarians at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad received much-needed financial support.
- 83 retired priests who have devoted their lives to serving others received care.
- Countless mothers after receiving support chose life for their babies instead of abortion.

"Thousands of lives have been touched through our many ministries, and I know that many, many more will continue to be served thanks to your generosity," the archbishop said.

In advance of intention weekend, he offers his thanks "to each of you for being the eyes, ears, hands, feet and heart of Jesus."

(For more information on the United Catholic Appeal, visit www.archindy.org/UCA or call the Office of Stewardship and Development at 317-236-1415 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1415.)

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Celebrating a Synod means walking together on the same road. Let us look at Jesus in his encounter with “the rich young man” (Mt 19:16–26). First, he encounters the rich man on the road; he then listens to his questions, and finally, he helps him discern what he must do to inherit eternal life. Encounter, listen and discern. I would like to reflect on these three verbs that characterize the Synod.



The first is encounter. The Gospel passage begins by speaking of an encounter. A man comes up to Jesus and kneels down before him, asking him a crucial question: “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v. 17). So important a question requires attention, time, willingness to encounter others and sensitivity to what troubles them.

The Lord does not stand aloof; he does not appear annoyed or disturbed. Instead, he is completely present to this person. He is open to encounter. Nothing leaves Jesus indifferent; everything is of concern to him. Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing each individual’s history. That is the closeness that Jesus embodies. He knows that someone’s life can be changed by a single encounter. The Gospel is full of such encounters with Christ, encounters that uplift and bring healing. Jesus did not hurry along or keep looking at his watch to get the meeting over. He was always at the service of the person he was with, listening to what he or she had to say.

As we initiate this process, we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter. Not so much by organizing events or theorizing about problems, as in taking time to encounter the Lord and one another. Time to devote to prayer and to adoration – that form of prayer that we so often neglect – devoting time to adoration and to hearing what the Spirit wants to say to the Church. Time to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say, to build rapport, to be sensitive to the questions of our sisters and brothers, to let ourselves be enriched by the variety of charisms, vocations and ministries. Every encounter – as we know – calls for openness, courage and a willingness to let ourselves be challenged by the presence and the stories of others.

(A selection from the homily of Pope Francis for the opening Mass of the Synod on Synods, October 10, 2021)

My Prayer for You

As we begin this synodal journey together, let's ask the Holy Spirit to bless us. May we truly be a Church that receives and lives the gifts of communion, participation and mission. May we be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit—taking to heart the call to proclaim the Gospel of joy, living Christ's mission.

+ Charles C. Thompson