



**Priests' Association: We abhor the capitol violence,
we call for dialogue, and we acknowledge 'We have got to do a better job'**

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Demons of division, avoided by some and enabled by others, stirred up the assault on our nation's capitol January 6. What took years to build may take years to heal. We pray that our political and religious leaders are up to the task.

The assault was fueled by twisted idealism and lies. During the four years leading up to this tragic event, a growing storm was fanned by a president whose narcissism and lack of self-awareness terminated dialogue and discernment and fomented polarization and hatred instead.

We pastors of faith communities and lay leaders know how crucial dialogue and discernment are to the well-being of a parish and to the whole church. So also are they necessary for our nation. We know that the church's mission and role include participation in political dialogue about the issues facing our great nation.

It was with great distress that the treasure of Catholic Social Teaching which the church uses to address the complex issues of faith and politics was ignored in comments made by not a few priests and bishops in our church. Instead, "single-issue" thinking rather than Catholic Social Teaching caused some church leaders to target political candidates by name and even suggest that they should be denied Holy Communion.

The violence of the January 6 insurrection was enabled by members of our own Senate and House of Representatives. It was also enabled by some members of the United States Catholic hierarchy and some of the clergy. Church leaders must do a better job in discerning the "signs of the times" and assist the Catholic faithful in the important discernment that is our responsibility in serving the gospel and the needs of our country.

We, the members and associates of the Association of the United States Catholic Priests abhor the incidents that occurred last Wednesday in our nation's capital. The direct destruction of property, the killings, and the enormous stress and possible harm to our elected officials by our own citizens of the United States are unacceptable, immoral, and totally opposed to our structure of our democratic republic.

We recommit ourselves to Love of God and Love of neighbor, even as we acknowledge that these despicable actions cry out for justice. We must not be left with broken windows and a broken faith. Our God of Mercy is a God of Justice, and those who are guilty must be judged.

We mourn the injuries and loss of life among brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, even as we acknowledge what was so painfully obvious. The insurrectionists (mostly white) in the criminal act of disrupting the lawful work of Congress were treated kindly in comparison to the many lawful protestors who have spoken with their constitutional right for Black lives that matter and against white privilege.

We pray for continued movement to preserving peace, acknowledging evil and its consequences, and restoring faith and confidence in our constitution and in our God. We encourage everyone in their homes, neighborhoods, rural settings, cities, and states to reach out to their neighbor and affirm the good in each other — and stand with us in demanding that justice be done, and peace be nourished and preserved.

We challenge ourselves and all religious leaders to model a discernment whose foundation is Catholic Social Teaching and assists the faithful in making judgments based on facts and the interests of the common good. We need to alert the faithful to the temptations of demagoguery and personality cult. It is our judgment that religious leadership has fallen short in not sounding the alarm of what would visit our nation. We have got to do a better job in the role and responsibilities we have.

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