

**BISHOP DAVID J. MALLOY’S HOMILY FOR “THE HOUR OF PEACE”  
GIVEN AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER, ROCKFORD  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026**

“Peace I leave you. My peace I give you”. “La paz les dejo, mi paz les doy.” These are the words of Jesus Himself. We heard them in the Gospel that was just proclaimed. These words from our Savior are so important that, as Catholics, we hear them at every Mass we attend. And this evening, we gather to pray for that peace – in our hearts, in the hearts of our country men and women – in the hearts of all who come to our shores.

On Wednesday of this week Archbishop Paul Coakley, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement worth reading. He cites the growing sense among many people of “powerlessness in the face of violence, social injustice and social unrest.”

His comments were linked to the killing of 2 people in Minneapolis by immigration enforcement officers as well as a detained man in Texas. But his comments reflect an even wider questioning and sense of doubt and uncertainty in our society. Archbishop Coakley cites these as being “just a few of the tragic examples of the violence that represent failure in our society to respect the dignity of every human life.”

In response to those incidents, Archbishop Coakley has reminded us that, in the face of lawlessness, actions and rhetoric on all sides that degrade and dehumanize others – our own faithfulness matters. Our prayers matter. Our acts of love matter. And so he has asked Bishops, priests and faithful to come together to offer a Holy Hour for Peace.

Last year, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, the predecessor of Archbishop Coakley as President of the Conference of Bishops issued his own reflection on, as he said, “What Happens to a Nation When Violence no Longer Shocks us?” His question places the current violence in a wider context in our country.

Consider the chain of violence our country has seen in the last 2 years. In July of 2024 President Trump was wounded by gun fire and a bystander was killed. In December of that year, an unarmed CEO of United Health Care was shot dead on the streets of New York. Last May members of the Israeli Embassy staff were shot dead in Washington D.C. In June, 2 Democratic Lawmakers were killed in their home in Minnesota. Last August 2 children were killed and 20 wounded while attending a grade school Mass in Minneapolis. And in September Charlie Kirk was assassinated while speaking to college students.

These moments of violence cross all boundaries of politics, of age of religion, of opinion. But joined to the social unrest between demonstrators and immigration officials resulting in violence and death, they all reflect a common failure. That is to respect the God-given dignity of every human being as made in the image and likeness of God Himself. And that failure is further manifested in a failure to use the democratic process in dialogue and good will. Instead we are witnessing a turn to a daily rhetoric of both sides that poisons hearts and degrades the dignity of others, immigrants, protesters or law enforcement officials.

This year, we celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our country. For all of our human failures and sins as a country, we will celebrate our founding ideals and we will respect our national search for human good and for a unity in the project of building this country which represents the hopes and aspiration of many who wish to come here.

As Archbishop Coakley states, “The current climate of fear and polarization which thrives when human dignity is disregarded, does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel”. Nor does it meet our ideals as Americans.

The late Pope Francis gave us an outline of how to meet the current challenge of our immigration debate. He gave 3 principles:

- 1) **Generosity.** The goods of the earth are to be shared by all. Those most in need, especially those fleeing from violence and poverty have the greatest claim to the generosity of others.
- 2) **Prudence.** The Holy Father saw this as the task of civil leaders in determining how much can be given, how many of those who wish to come can a society accommodate? For this reason, countries have a right to control their borders, to order justly the immigration process. Prudence blends with generosity.
- 3) **Integration.** The Holy Father stated that those who arrive are to be accepted and integrated into the community and society. But they likewise bear the obligation of integrating into the society to which they come.

At all times, the implementation of these principles is understood to be carried out in a context of respect for the human dignity of every person.

Our current immigration system is broken and has been for some time. Our prayers must be for our political leaders to come together to fix this system.

It is also true that many have come to our country and have lived quietly and well for years, contributing to family and to society, even at times without documentation. A solution to address their situation must be found that respects their dignity among us as well.

A Holy Hour for Peace. Here in the presence of Jesus we pray for His peace. We pray for peace as well throughout the world, in Ukraine, in the Holy Land, and in Iran.

But above all we pray this evening for peace in our hearts – as Americans, as brother and sisters, all of us children of a loving God and Father.

*Peace I leave you. My peace I give you.* The words of Jesus that give us hope. Archbishop Coakley was right. Our own faithfulness matters. Our prayers matter. Our acts of love matter. We ask God that He grant us peace in this troubled time.