

January 29, 2026

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A Pastoral Call to Peace from Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila

I write to you today with a heavy heart, aware of deep suffering in our nation, particularly around immigration and public life. The recent violence in Minnesota and rising tensions here in Colorado and across the country have left many fearful, angry and uncertain. It is tragic that human life has been lost, and families have lost loved ones.

We are living amid heightened anxiety, harmful rhetoric, and a growing disregard for the dignity of human life and the truth that every person, from the moment of conception, is created in the image and likeness of God, no matter what that person does. The two great commandments of the love of God and the love of neighbor form the foundation of a just and peaceful society.

As your shepherd, I call all people of goodwill to peace, justice and a return to the moral foundation on which our country was founded. This peace is not born of silence or indifference, but of rejecting violence, turning away from harmful rhetoric, and choosing dialogue rooted in truth and charity. Violence, threats and inflammatory language — whether directed at immigrants, law enforcement, public officials or one another — are morally unacceptable and must be rejected by all. Politicians of every political stripe for far too long have abandoned civil discourse. To hear the threats and language that come from them undermines human dignity.

At the heart of this moment, there is not only a political crisis, but a more important spiritual one. When God is no longer our first love, we make ourselves gods, and replace charity, trust and humility with fear or the pursuit of power, wealth or control of others. When the command to love our neighbor is neglected, division, hatred, violence, genocide and sophomoric name-calling inevitably follow. The current climate of fear and polarization does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel.

The Church affirms the responsibility of the state to secure its borders and uphold the rule of law, while always defending the inherent dignity of every human person, especially the vulnerable and immigrants. These truths must be held together in service of the common good. In recent teachings, Pope Leo XIV has underscored that this dignity must be respected — even for those without legal status. Furthermore, Pope Leo said, “We have to look for ways of treating people humanely, treating people with the dignity that they have,” even as nations exercise their rights to determine who may enter and how. “No one has said that the United States should have open borders. I think every country has a right to determine who and how and when people enter,” the Holy Father noted, emphasizing humane treatment of those who live among us, regardless of immigration status, is essential.

Both political parties have failed in addressing immigration and have treated immigrants as pawns and objects, failing to respect the dignity of human persons. The bipartisan Dignity Act, while not perfect, needs strong support from both political parties as it is a step in the direction of justice and human dignity.

Our churches remain places of prayer, welcome and pastoral care for all. In this spirit, and in unity with the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Paul Coakley, I invite our priests to offer — and our faithful to participate in — a [Holy Hour for Peace](#) in the days ahead. I ask every parish and school to offer a Holy Hour in the next two weeks. Let us bring our fears, our grief and our hopes before the Lord, praying for reconciliation where there is division, justice where human dignity is undermined, consolation for all who feel overwhelmed or afraid, and conversion of hearts and minds of the citizens of our country.

I ask the faithful to pray earnestly for peace, seeking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, that hearts may be converted, fear dispelled and respect for human life renewed, and that she may lead us ever closer to her Son. Rooted in prayer and guided by charity, may we choose respectful dialogue and lawful efforts that uphold the dignity of every person, placing God first in our lives and truly loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is written in black ink and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.
Archbishop of Denver