



The Ecumenical Catholic Servants of The Good Shepherd, ECSGS
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

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PASTORAL LETTER

On the Occasion of Independence Day – Fourth of July 2026 The 250th Anniversary of the Nation's Dedication to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

"Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thy Kingdom Come."

To the Clergy, Religious, Lay Faithful, and all People of Good Will within the Diocese of the Ecumenical Catholic Servants of the Good Shepherd:

Grace and peace to you in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As our nation commemorates Independence Day this Fourth of July 2026, we gather in gratitude for the blessings of liberty, faith, sacrifice, and hope entrusted to the people of the United States of America. This year bears particular significance as we also recognize and reflect upon the approximately two hundred and fifty years of the spiritual heritage connected to the nation's dedication to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, a devotion that has inspired generations of Christians to place their trust not merely in institutions of government, but in the loving and merciful Heart of Christ Himself.

The Sacred Heart reminds us that authentic freedom is not merely freedom from restraint, but freedom for love, truth, justice, and service. Nations become strong not only through economies and military power, but through the moral character of their people. Families, churches, schools, and communities form the foundation upon which a nation stands.

As Christians and as citizens, we give thanks for the many blessings our country has received: freedom of worship, opportunities for service, charitable works, democratic participation, and the dignity afforded to every person created in the image and likeness of God. We also recognize with humility that every nation, like every human being, continually requires conversion and renewal.

As your Bishop, I write in response to the request of our Clergy Council during its June 2026 meeting regarding pastoral outreach and the need for clear guidance concerning the distinction between the mission of the Church and political activity.

The Church has never been called to withdraw from the world. Christ Himself entered human history and walked among people in every condition of life. The Church therefore cannot remain silent regarding matters that affect human dignity and the moral well-being of society. Yet the Church must also preserve her sacred mission and avoid becoming merely another political institution.

Therefore, I offer the following pastoral principles:

I. What Properly Belongs to the Mission of the Church

The Church must speak clearly regarding:

- The sanctity and dignity of every human life from conception to natural death.
- Care for the poor, the elderly, the vulnerable, immigrants, refugees, and those who suffer injustice.
- Marriage and family life.
- Peace, reconciliation, and nonviolence.
- Religious liberty and freedom of conscience.
- Stewardship of creation and care for the gifts God has entrusted to humanity.
- Moral and ethical principles rooted in Sacred Scripture and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These matters are not political positions; they are expressions of Christian discipleship and the social teaching of the Church.

The Church does not enter these discussions because of ideology but because Christ calls us to love our neighbor.

II. What Does Not Belong to the Proper Mission of the Church

The Church, clergy, councils, ministries, and official church gatherings should not:

- Endorse or oppose political parties as institutions.
- Campaign for or against specific candidates while acting in an official church capacity.
- Use church ministries or liturgical celebrations as platforms for partisan agendas.
- Divide the faithful according to political identity.
- Present personal political opinions as if they were binding teachings of the Church.

Clergy and faithful may, as citizens, participate responsibly in civic life according to their conscience; however, they must distinguish personal political preference from the official pastoral ministry of the Church.

III. Guidelines for Parish Outreach and Ministry

As our Diocese continues its mission and outreach efforts:

1. Parish outreach shall remain centered on evangelization, sacramental life, education, service, and charitable works.
2. Ministries shall serve all people without discrimination based on political affiliation.
3. Community concerns affecting human dignity may be addressed pastorally and respectfully.
4. Formation programs should teach Catholic moral principles rather than partisan ideologies.

5. Clergy and ministry leaders should strive to preserve unity among the faithful, especially when addressing sensitive social concerns.

Our mission is not to create political factions within the Church but to form disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel challenges every ideology whenever it departs from truth, compassion, and justice.

Dear brothers and sisters, our nation faces many challenges: social division, economic uncertainty, violence, loneliness, and increasing polarization. We cannot heal these wounds merely through debate or legislation. Lasting healing begins with conversion of the heart.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus remains open to humanity. That Heart was pierced on the Cross for every person—regardless of race, language, social status, nationality, or political affiliation.

As Christians, we are called to be bridge-builders rather than division-builders; instruments of reconciliation rather than conflict; witnesses of truth spoken with charity.

On this Fourth of July, I invite every parish, mission, family, and individual within our Diocese to pray:

"Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, bless our nation, strengthen our families, guide our leaders, protect our communities, and unite us in truth and charity."

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her loving maternal protection, intercede for our nation and for all who seek peace and justice.

Given this Fourth Day of July in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six.

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✠ **The Most Rev. Arturo Querijero Ferreras, D.D., ECSGS**

First Presiding Bishop,

The Diocese of the Ecumenical Catholic Servants of the Good Shepherd.

Pacific Southwestern Region of California, USA