ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL
ONE PARISH FAMILY WITH IMMACULATE CONCEPTION & CHRIST OUR HOPE

February 8, 2026

Dear Friends,

A couple of weeks ago, on Monday, January 26, Archbishop Etienne released a pastoral letter entitled *A Well-Ordered Society Rooted in Truth, Justice and Peace*. In my homily at our Mass for Peace on Friday, January 30, I quoted briefly from the archbishop's letter. I would like to explore his letter in a little more detail in this column. I also encourage you to read the letter in full when you have a chance. The archbishop's reflections offers a perspective on our challenging times that is rooted in our faith and calls us to stay close to Christ as we work for a more just and peaceful society.

The archbishop begins by acknowledging the turbulent times we find ourselves in and turns to the Gospel, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic Social Teaching and reflections by Pope Leo XIV to frame his reflections. The letter describes what the archbishop calls "two essential pillars of any Christian society: Charity (love of neighbor), and Respect for the rule of law."

He notes that the foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is "the unshakable truth that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. This fundamental dignity forms the bedrock of all moral life and a just society." This is where love of neighbor begins, by recognizing the innate dignity and sacredness of every human being. "When societies disregard the sanctity of the unborn, the vulnerable, or the marginalized, they undermine justice at its root. Authentic respect for life also extends to refugees, migrants, to those who suffer discrimination, to the elderly, the poor, and the weary."

As he moves to a discussion of the rule of law, the archbishop points out that "The rule of law…embodies the conviction that justice, not force, must govern human relationships. Laws grounded in moral truth safeguard the weak, hold the strong accountable, and restrain the impulses of domination…When the law becomes a tool of power rather than a guardian of justice, society begins to fracture." I reflected in my homily at the Mass for Peace that it seems that we are seeing some fracturing in our society because law is being used as a tool of power.

The archbishop then turns to the principle of solidarity and reflects on how this principle is "the social expression of charity." He quotes from the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which defines solidarity in the eloquent words of Saint John Paul II: "Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue, not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (Compendium, #193).

This is what charity looks like on a societal level. The conviction that we are responsible for the well being of each other is not only the bedrock of a well-ordered society, but the heart of biblical morality itself.

The archbishop concludes his reflections by noting that "while the rule of law ensures order, charity ensures humanity…Where charity is absent, the law becomes cold. Harsh enforcement of law in ruthless and intimidating fashion lacks the basic demand of human dignity, respect and compassion."

I encourage you to take some time to reflect on the full text of the archbishop's letter. You can find it here https://archseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/A-Well-Ordered-Society_Pastoral-Letter-min.pdf or on the Archdiocesan website.

May all of us continue to draw close to the Lord in prayer and open ourselves to how God wants to use us as instruments of peace, justice and healing in our fractured world.

Peace,

Fr. Gary F Lazzeroni

Father Gary Lazzeroni
Pastor