



**DIOCESE OF RALEIGH**

**Office of the Bishop**

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My Brothers and Sisters,

While we have been given the gift of life by our Creator and the teachings of the Church that each life is sacred, we are every day reminded that we live in a world in which life is taken for granted or even disregarded.

When violence affects the “stranger” or the “invisible” it makes it easier for us to ignore it or think it does not exist. In many ways we are distanced from this culture of death. Sometimes, however, we see firsthand, most notably when young school children are senselessly murdered, that we are living in a culture that has become an offense to God and to one another in this way.

We have also learned that these challenges do not improve when we face them in isolation. While many of us have recently welcomed a return to being surrounded by a loving community, so many others may never have the experience to be cared for, welcomed, or loved by a family or neighbor.

Each one of us has a responsibility to address these evils and to support one another in overcoming them. We are called to be instruments of healing and ambassadors of reconciliation to one another. True healing comes from the one who created us; we cannot truly heal ourselves. In the midst of crisis, when we ask, “Why?” or “Where to?” we must look to Christ and where he leads us.

There are many steps that can be taken to address violence, mental health issues and divisions among us which prevent us from bettering our culture. The path forward is one of love. When we treat the “other” as our neighbor we will help them find hope and acceptance. Together we will find hope in this way, by loving one another as God has loved us.

Please join me in praying for the dead and for their grieving families, and for those who are lonely, angry, isolated and lost.

In Christ,

† Luis Rafael Zarama, J.C.L.  
Bishop of Raleigh