

Rejoice in the Lord

By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark



Reflection

All Americans regardless of their race, religion, economic or social status should vigorously condemn racism, sexism, antisemitism and all other forms of hatred and bigotry. Nevertheless, Catholic social teaching makes it clear that we must not only condemn racism, hatred and violence, but also stand in solidarity with the victims. Actions speak louder than words, so what we do to express our solidarity with victims is as important (or more important) than what we say.

What can we do to end the kind of racism and violence that we have seen recently in many different regions of our country? How do we most effectively prevent these heinous crimes and stand in solidarity with victims of this evil?

Prayer, dialog, and mutual respect are essential to healing the wounds caused by bigotry and injustice. Unfortunately, the immediate reactions of far too many of us (often fueled by the news and entertainment media) do not unite opposing sides but instead further divide us by name-calling and casting blame on those who disagree with us. Instead of working together to eradicate hatred and violence, we circle our wagons and refuse to collaborate with anyone who sees things differently than we do.

The hatred and violence we have witnessed far too often are an outgrowth of the bitterly divisive talk and behavior we witness on the social media accounts of people who should know better in our government, our religious organizations and in society. We will never achieve peace or justice here at home or throughout the world until our leaders, and those who support them, stop their senseless, destructive feuding and come together to work for the common good of all.

Standing with victims of racial hatred and violence means letting go of all our prejudices, forgiving our enemies and living together in peace. Let us ask our Lord, the Prince of Peace, to show us the way to healing, forgiveness and respect for all.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R." with a cross at the beginning.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

FORWARD IN *Faith* TOGETHER

Our Road Ahead

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I visit with parishioners, I am often asked, “What’s your vision for the Archdiocese?” For at least a year after arriving in Newark, my answer was, “I don’t have one.”

Yes, I knew the essential elements of the Church’s mission: proclaim the Gospel, pass on the faith, celebrate the Sacraments, and care for the poor. However, I did not know how those goals could be realized here in the Archdiocese in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Today, I have something to share with you: a pastoral vision for our Archdiocese called ***Forward in Faith Together: Our Road Ahead***.

Forward in Faith Together seeks to establish a positive path forward for the faithful, the clergy, and the Archdiocese while simultaneously addressing crucial challenges of the past and present. It is a foundation for healing that addresses the hurt and mistrust within our community, reinforces the changes we have begun to implement, and provides a firm foundation for our lives as missionary disciples of Jesus. ***Forward in Faith Together*** will ensure that we flourish as a community of disciples, companions of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Through ***Forward in Faith Together***, I envision a future where lay people are fully engaged in the life of our Archdiocese at all levels and where parishioners of every age play direct and decisive roles in our worship, our faith formation, and our service to those in need.

I also see priests united with one another and with the people they serve. I see deacons, consecrated men and women, and lay people who feel prepared and empowered to build up the Body of Christ that is the Church of Newark.

My vision for our Archdiocese is one of genuine solidarity in Christ. Our differences should enrich our Church, not divide it. The challenges we face should bring us closer together and allow the Holy Spirit to give us the wisdom, courage, hope, and generosity we need to be successful missionary disciples.

We have a responsibility to the Lord to never tire tending His vineyard. After all, the Church is His.

However, the road ahead will not be easy. The revelations of clergy abuse and allegations of mistreatment of seminarians have certainly challenged us all to find the light of Christ in our present darkness while looking to the future with hope.

We know we cannot proceed with healing until we have acknowledged the suffering and cleansed the deep wounds from the past.

Yet, the path forward must involve far more than simply measures to address past transgressions. It must include an agenda *for* and commitment to the future.

Forward in Faith Together is my vision for the future of our Archdiocese. It is supported by six key pillars, each representing an area of action that calls for our renewed energy. Below is a depiction of these six pillars, all of equal importance to this vision.

FORWARD IN *Faith* TOGETHER

Our Road Ahead

 Protection of the Faithful	 Accountability, Transparency, and Communication	 Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning	 Lifelong Faith Formation and Education	 Ongoing Formation/ Support of Clergy	 Active Engagement of the Laity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce protections already in place and create new training and reporting programs. Support and comfort victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Continue to apply a just Independent Victims Compensation Program. Maintain a proactive policy of transparency and accountability. Continue full and proactive collaboration with law enforcement and state/local officials. Enhance the Archdiocesan Review Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply outcomes of a communications audit to enhance internal and external connections. Widen communications channels to and from parishes and the Chancery. Improve reporting structures and set more consistent annual performance reviews for all. Spread a culture that embraces spirituality of stewardship. Broaden transparency of operations and finance. Complete technology evaluations and make improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assessments to reorganize the Chancery in greater service to the Archdiocesan mission. Finalize clear priorities for implementation at all levels of the Archdiocese. Fortify structures that more effectively support and drive our mission. Empower and guide each parish to adopt and realize the Archdiocesan plan according to the needs of their own parish communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to evaluate and reorganize the stages of lifelong faith formation. Create and support initiatives for the faithful to flourish in the human spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects of their lives. Reinforce the role of the family. Enrich schools of the Archdiocese to sustain continuous religious education. Develop opportunities for stronger, continuous engagement of adults and young adults in the faith. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and reaffirm our continued commitment to the life-long ministry of our bishops, priests, and deacons. Continue to invite and address concerns of morale among our clergy. Fortify the image of the priestly vocation to re-emphasize a life of spiritual and service leadership to others. Bring together bishops, priests, and deacons to reflect, strengthen, and seek recommendations to improve our witness to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add more incisive leadership roles for laity in the Archdiocese. Engage laity to address challenges and reshape the future of the Archdiocese. Encourage greater input from and participation by laity. Ensure that financial and pastoral councils exist and function effectively in every parish. Invest in ongoing training and development.

I recognize that this is an ambitious vision and there is much work to be done. We will find our way together as disciples of Christ. Your God-given faith, talent, and skills will make a difference. I urge all of you to engage in this process. Please speak to your pastor or parish administrator about how to get involved.

Now, more than ever, we need to depend on God’s gracious care. Please join me in praying for all the faithful of the Archdiocese.

Please pray for me as well. I am deeply grateful for your patience, understanding, and support as we realize the vision of **Forward in Faith Together: Our Road Ahead**.

May the Spirit of our God make us strong and wise. May God Bless you and yours. ✨

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



Some time ago, I shared with the Italian bishops my worry that, in more than a few places, our priests feel themselves attacked and blamed for crimes they did not commit. Without in any way forgetting the cry, often silent and suppressed, of our brothers and sisters who were victims of the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse on the part of ordained ministers, I want to reassure priests that I am aware that the pain felt by the entire People of God has also affected priests.

Many priests have shared with me their outrage at what happened and their frustration that for all their hard work, they have to face the damage that was done, the suspicion and uncertainty to which it has given rise, and the doubts, fears and disheartenment felt by more than a few. I have received many letters from priests expressing those feelings. At the same time, I am comforted by my meetings with pastors who recognize and share the pain and suffering of the victims and of the People of God, and I have tried to find words and actions capable of inspiring hope. (Adapted from Pope Francis's letter to priests on the 160th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests)

*Speaking as a priest and bishop in the United States,
I thank the Holy Father for his wonderful letter to us!
(Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.)*

My Prayer for You

May the light of Christ shine through the darkness of all sinful attitudes. May His peace take root in our hearts and ensure liberty and justice for all our sisters and brothers in the one family of God. Amen. †

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

