

(continued)

Rather than impose further expansions of abortion and contraception, as he has promised, I am hopeful that the new President and his administration will work with the Church and others of good will. My hope is that we can begin a dialogue to address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion and discouraging families. My hope, too, is that we can work together to finally put in place a coherent family policy in this country, one that acknowledges the crucial importance of strong marriages and parenting to the well-being of children and the stability of communities. If the President, with full respect for the Church's religious freedom, were to engage in this conversation, it would go a long way toward restoring the civil balance and healing our country's needs.

President Biden's call for national healing and unity is welcome on all levels. It is urgently needed as we confront the trauma in our country caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the social isolation that has only worsened the intense and long-simmering divisions among our fellow citizens.

As believers, we understand that healing is a gift that we can only receive from the hand of God. We know, too, that real reconciliation requires patient listening to those who disagree with us and a willingness to forgive and move beyond desires for reprisal. Christian love calls us to love our enemies and bless those who oppose us, and to treat others with the same compassion that we want for ourselves.

We are all under the watchful eye of God, who alone knows and can judge the intentions of our hearts. I pray that God will give our new President, and all of us, the grace to seek the common good with all sincerity.

I entrust all our hopes and anxieties in this new moment to the tender heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ and the patroness of this exceptional nation. May she guide us in the ways of peace and obtain for us wisdom and the grace of a true patriotism and love of country.

Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

