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STATEMENT

Archbishop John C. Wester on the Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as the 46th President of the United States of America

ALBUQUERQUE – Friday, January 22, 2021–IMMEDIATE RELEASE-- Archbishop John C. Wester's statement on the Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as the 46th President of the United States of America:

As we mark the inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as the 46th President of the United States, I join Pope Francis in welcoming our new president and his administration. As a pastor, I find it significant that President Biden has shared that his Catholic faith is important to him and has enabled him to endure personal loss with grace and hope.

We understand President Biden enters office at a challenging time for us as a nation. This has been a time of civil unrest, personal suffering due to the pandemic, economic hardship, social isolation, political division and polarization. It is also a time of deeper recognition of the "original sin" of our country, that is, the persistent strands of slavery and racism that are woven into our history and that weaken the fabric of our civil society. Further weakening the fabric of our society is the scourge of poverty and the lack of dignity we accord human life from conception to natural death.

At the same time, there is hope for healing and unity. President Biden can lead the way in our civil structures by building bridges and being a reconciler. The Gospel offers us a vision of a just society, one in which truth, love, mercy and justice reign. Pope Francis calls this the "culture of care." We will get there through faith, prayer, truth-telling, personal conversion, and holding the tensions where we cannot agree without collapsing into anger, righteousness or violence. Healing and unity can happen when "heart speaks to heart."

Politics is not our end, only a means to build a more just society. Our Catholic faith does not fit neatly into the political categories we have in our country. I believe that as Catholics, we are called to speak boldly the Gospel truths as we model thoughtful, civil dialogue and deep listening. I recognize that our call to engage in the public square means that we will have differing beliefs and approaches to policies. Nonetheless, we must strike a tone of dialogue within our pluralistic society. Jesus offers us the Way: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Bishop Robert

McElroy of San Diego, California, summarizes well this attitude when he calls upon the bishops of the United States to foster "...a relationship of dialogue, not judgment; collaboration, not isolation; truth in charity, not harshness."

I join with Pope Francis in offering my cordial good wishes and assurance of prayer to President Biden. I hope and pray that our new president can lead us on our civil journey of truth telling, reconciliation, healing, softening of hearts and movement toward recognition of the human dignity of all, most especially the poorest and most vulnerable among us. He certainly spoke to these themes in his beautiful inaugural address, in which he wove the threads of light and hope, healing and unity. These threads need to be continually woven into the fabric of our society if we are to live up to our calling to be the United States. May God bless us and guide us as we learn to be better neighbors to one another and strengthen the ties that bind us to one another in mercy and love.

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