



From the Office of His Holiness, the Legate  
Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels  
Legate Brandon, Leg. Max.

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Public Written Address

## **The War in Iran and the United States' Involvement**

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As The Legate of the Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels, an independent Catholic denomination within the Catholic diaspora, I join my voice to those religious leaders, pastors, bishops, priests, and faithful throughout the world who condemn this war and the United States' participation in it.

The deaths of children should disturb the soul of the multitudes. Children who did nothing wrong, who raised no weapon, who authored no policy, who commanded no army, and who, by no fault of their own, were simply born into Iranian families. Their blood cries out from the ground. Their suffering ought be abhorrent and repugnant to every Christian. Their deaths are the direct result of failures in church witness and a lust for power. The blood of the innocents, human beings made in the image of God, cry out from the dirt. They are known by name to the Lord who formed them.

There is no excuse for rejoicing in destruction. There is no excuse for threatening whole peoples and civilizations with ruin. There is no excuse for treating civilian suffering as a bargaining tactic, a demonstration of strength, or the acceptable price of geopolitical ambition. A nation does not become righteous because it can kill more efficiently. Power does not become holy because it wraps itself in patriotic language. A bomb does not become moral because the one who orders it invokes freedom, security, destiny, or even God. Only God is holy, his judgements and verdicts; and not a single one includes missiles or guns.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not say, "Blessed are the conquerors." He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Our Lord did not command His disciples to baptize vengeance. He rebuked the sword, saying, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." When standing before imperial power, He declared, "My kingdom is not of

this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.” The Church must therefore be very careful whenever the kingdoms of this world demand that Christians sanctify the machinery of death in the name of order. Matthew 5:9. Matthew 26:52. John 18:36.

The Church must remember her own earliest witness. Origen, writing in the ancient Church, taught that Christians wage their warfare through prayer and holiness rather than by bloodshed. Lactantius wrote with fearful clarity that it is not lawful for a just man to engage in warfare, because his warfare is justice itself. Cyprian lamented that the whole world is wet with mutual blood, and that murder, when committed on a grand scale, is praised as virtue. These were not marginal voices. They were among the early witnesses of a Church that had not yet learned to confuse the Cross with the sword, nor the Gospel with the ambitions of empire. Hippolytus of Rome even wrote that Christians, on pain of rejection from the Church (excommunication), were not to kill, were not to obey orders to kill, and were not to seek the sword as a profession.

For this reason, I condemn attacks upon civilians, condemn the destruction of the innocent, condemn threats against civilian infrastructure, and condemn every attempt that makes the deaths of noncombatants appear necessary, strategic, or righteous. The bombing of families is evil. The starving of the innocent is evil. The terrorizing of children is evil. The destruction of the foundations of civilian life is evil. These things do not cease to be evil because a civilized nation performs them, because an allied nation excuses them, or because frightened men insist that there was no other way. The law of Christ is absolute, and fear is not excused by it.

I likewise reject with full force every blasphemous attempt to enlist God as the patron of this war. God is not the mascot of any president, country, or civilization. Likewise, neither is Christ. The Lord of Glory, God made flesh, is not glorified by shattered hospitals, burning neighborhoods, dead relief workers, terrified mothers, and children buried beneath the rubble of policies they never chose. The Name of God, or of his Christ, must never be used to justify injustice.

Thus, the Church and her leaders must speak clearly and loudly about moral proportion. Even where states speak of security, deterrence, or retaliation, there remains a line beyond which force becomes evil and cruel; more akin to torture than to diplomacy. When whole populations are made to tremble, when civilians are knowingly endangered, when threats are issued against the very infrastructure by which ordinary people live, receive care, travel, eat, and survive, then we are no longer speaking merely of warfare in the abstract. We are speaking of collective punishment, terror, and the degradation of human dignity. Only an evil conscience, merciless and unchristian in its moral duties, can sleep or justify this.

I therefore call upon the United States Congress to cease the US’ participation in this war. I call upon all parties to halt attacks upon civilians and civilian objects. I call for the protection of the wounded, the displaced, medical personnel, aid workers, and children. I call for Christians everywhere to refuse the drunken spirit of war propaganda, to pray for the innocent, to fast for peace, and to remember that every civilian life in Iran, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and throughout the region is precious before God. No mother’s grief is foreign to Christ. No child’s terror is outside His sight.

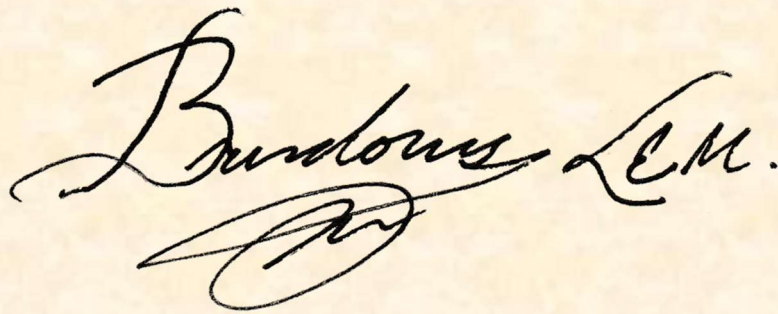
I remind the HCCoG faithful that not every order is a lawful order, not every law is a good law. There are times where we are put to the test. Times when we must choose between what is right and what is safe. Christianity, as it was practiced by countless martyrs, was never safe. They stood up to power with their words and nonviolence. They refused to pick up a sword, or to take up arms of any kind against those made in the image and likeness of their God. Only after Constantine did Christians abandon total nonviolence.

I say this now to all the Christian faithful: you are under no obligation to cheer because your nation strikes first, harder, or farther. You are under no obligation to call holy or good that which is evil just because it flies your flag. You are under no obligation to sanctify violence out of loyalty. Your first loyalty is to Jesus Christ, Son and Lord. Your first citizenship is in His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Glory and Righteousness. And, your first moral duty is to the truth.

We must be the people who mourn the dead, defend the innocent, rebuke the warmonger, aid the suffering, and refuse to excuse slaughter. We must be the people who still believe that the life of a foreign child is worth exactly as much as the life of our own. We must be the people who remember that Christ died for all nations, even those that reject him, and not merely for our nation. When slaughter, bloodshed, and torture become the weapons of any leader, that leader has put themselves at odds with Christian values. The Church that Christ instituted, paid for at the price of his blood, should never be silent or accepting of harm whatever its form; especially when the name of the precious and loving Lord is used to justify it.

May the Lord break the will of those who delight in war. May He shelter the innocent. May He bring the mighty to repentance. May He strengthen all who labor for peace. And may He bring all to the knowledge of the truth, that we are supposed to bring about peace and not war.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brandon Leg. Max." with a stylized flourish underneath.

Legate Brandon Leg. Max.

His Holiness, the Legate

Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels

Bishop Ecclesiae of the Basilica of Saint Longinus the Centurion

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