

This past Wednesday we witnessed an attack on the home of our nation's legislative branch of government, the Capitol. That building, whose dome was raised during a time of Civil War as a symbol of our democratic republic, will be repaired; however, it will be far more difficult to heal the rifts that occurred as a result of that day, and everything that led to it.

When I asked the Archdiocese of New York what the position of our Church was to the events this past week, I was told to refer to the statement of Archbishop Gomez the Chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Here it is:

"I join people of good will in condemning the violence today at the United States Capitol. This is not who we are as Americans. I am praying for members of Congress and Capitol staff and for the police and all those working to restore order and public safety."

"The peaceful transition of power is one of the hallmarks of this great nation. In this troubling moment, we must recommit ourselves to the values and principles of our democracy and come together as one nation under God. I entrust all of us to the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. 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."

We will get past this. Our nation has certainly endured worse. But that will only happen when we rediscover who we truly are.

In November of 2016, I suggested in my homily following the presidential election that as baptized Catholics we share in Christ's role as *pontifex* – an ancient Latin term for a priest. It means "bridge builder." Because of our baptism into Christ, we are tasked to build bridges between God and one another in our world. In that way the fear and hatred that is so prevalent in our society is confronted by the clear light of the Gospel Truth: that we follow the Prince of Peace – no one else – and that anything else is **contrary**

- to whom we are **created** to be - in God's image,
- to whom we are challenged to be - as people of faith,
- and to whom we are called to be - as Catholics.

This parish is a place where bridges are built. All are welcome to come, draw close, to learn, to pray and to serve, and thus be a sign of unity in a time of strife. On this feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we rededicate ourselves to that baptismal responsibility, as Americans and as Catholics. Thank you.

Father Baker