



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Office of the Bishop

November 1, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Recent events that are becoming all too common remind us of the tragic cost of human life associated with the saturation of violence in our culture. As a Church we are consistently searching and praying for humanity to turn away from violence and instead embrace a respect for life. As the USCCB stated in its 1994 Pastoral Message *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action*, “respect for human life is the starting point for confronting a culture of violence.”

Our Catholic Churches and schools serve as a bulwark of truth and a haven from the pressures and influence of modern relativism. While individuals certainly have the right to defend their own homes and businesses, carrying weapons in a sacred space where we join as a community to pray and worship God is – with few exceptions – not acceptable. A church's place as a focal point of peace and reconciliation and its often proximate location adjacent to schools make the insertion of weapons – concealed or otherwise – highly problematic.

Included with this letter is a newly adopted Pastoral Policy on Weapons for the Diocese of Kalamazoo which is effective immediately. This policy extends to all Diocesan parishes and schools and prohibits all weapons on Diocesan property, with a few noted exceptions. Should situations arise on Church property that pose a risk to individuals, local law enforcement will be contacted.

While opinions vary on this issue, we are reminded of Christ, the messianic Prince of Peace, whose Church calls its faithful to a vocation of peacemaking. As we seek to obtain an intimate union with Christ, we must seek and make peace as he did. May Our Lady Queen of Peace grant us peace in our hearts, harmony in our families and concord throughout the world.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo



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PASTORAL POLICY ON WEAPONS

This policy confirms that St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church prohibits all weapons, whether concealed or carried openly, licensed or unlicensed, lawful or unlawful, on any part of its premises, except as listed below. This policy applies to all individuals, including visitors and staff, and individuals who appear to be non-threatening and/or claim to be licensed or otherwise lawfully carrying a pistol or other firearm or weapon.

“Weapon” means any object which, in the manner in which it is used or is intended to be used is capable of inflicting serious bodily harm or property damage, as well as endangering the health and safety of persons. Weapons include, but are not limited to, firearms, guns of any type including air powered guns (whether loaded or unloaded), knives, razors, electric tasers, metallic knuckles, martial arts weapons, ammunition, and explosives.

Exceptions to this policy are limited to the following:

- a. Firearms and other weapons in the possession of an on or off duty law enforcement officer or authorized on duty security personnel.
- b. A concealed pistol carried by a student’s parent or legal guardian with a valid concealed pistol license (CPL), but only while in a vehicle on school property and only if dropping off or picking up the student from the school.
- c. Items and their usage approved by a [pastor/principal] as part of a class or presentation under adult supervision.
- d. Props or starter pistols used in appropriate theatrical settings or sporting events, subject to supervision.
- e. Kitchen utensils and silverware furnished by a parish or school, or which parishioners or others are permitted to bring to events (e.g. parish picnics).
- f. Tools used by custodians or contractors.
- g. Personal property of clergy or religious living on the premises.

If a staff member observes anyone on or entering the premises with a weapon, the staff member should advise the individual of this policy and ask him or her to immediately remove the weapon from the premises. If the individual complies, the staff member should notify his or her supervisor, who should document the event.

If the individual does not comply with the request, the staff member should inform the individual that law enforcement will be notified. Law enforcement will be contacted. When law enforcement arrives, the officers should be informed of this policy and given a copy. An individual who refuses to remove a weapon from the premises when requested is subject to arrest by law enforcement for criminal trespass. The staff member should also notify his or her supervisor, who should document the matter, including the actions taken by law enforcement.

The local law enforcement agency for St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church will be given a copy of this policy after it is adopted. All staff members will be trained to comply with this policy. No staff member is authorized to make an exception to this policy.