

In need of mercy



Despite the headlines, I do not believe that we know what transpired during the recent meeting between Pope Francis and the president of the United States. We are told by the president that the pope is happy that Joe Biden is “a good Catholic.” I find it impossible to believe that that is the sum total or full context of their 90-minute meeting.

If Pope Francis’ pontificate was identified by one theme, it would be mercy. In his very first Sunday Angelus address, he pleaded with people to never, ever tire of asking God for forgiveness, because Jesus never tires of forgiving us! He said it all with an urgency and awe of the God who loves us so as to never want our souls to perish.

During one of his recent airplane press conferences, Pope Francis said, once again, that abortion is murder. Homicide. It’s like hiring a [hitman](#). These are the words and phrases he typically uses when talking about abortion. He also said during that plane ride that Catholic politicians should be dealt with pastorally. And so, given that the pope is the most high-ranking pastor, it seems impossible to believe that Joe Biden’s escalating support for abortion didn’t come up in some way.

As it happens, on Biden’s inauguration day in January, [Archbishop José H. Gomez](#) of Los Angeles, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement recognizing the new president for his love of his Catholic faith.

Gomez wrote: “Working with President Biden will be unique, however, as he is our first president in 60 years to profess the Catholic faith. In a time of growing and aggressive

secularism in American culture, when religious believers face many challenges, it will be refreshing to engage with a president who clearly understands, in a deep and personal way, the importance of religious faith and institutions. Mr. Biden's piety and personal story, his moving witness to how his faith has brought him solace in times of darkness and tragedy, his longstanding commitment to the Gospel's priority for the poor – all of this I find hopeful and inspiring."

But he also pointed out the obvious: "Our new president has pledged to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of abortion, contraception, marriage, and gender. Of deep concern is the liberty of the Church and the freedom of believers to live according to their consciences." As a pastor, and leader of the conference, it's important to tell the truth or the scandal increases.

He went on to say: "We have deep concerns about many threats to human life and dignity in our society. But as Pope Francis teaches, we cannot stay silent when nearly a million unborn lives are being cast aside in our country year after year through abortion."

This is not said often enough. Some Catholic schools barely teach it. It's this evil that is both hidden and triumphantly deceptive – those most ardent advocates say it is about choice and health and freedom. So many women and girls don't feel they have the freedom to choose life, though.

Saying you're personally opposed somewhere in your heart – a position that is not followed by actions – does nothing to protect the most vulnerable human life. It is trendy to cancel people in history who were not perfect. What will history say about people who walked past abortion clinics and pressured women to kill their unborn babies?

A religious sister recently said to me that she was praying

like crazy that Joe Biden repents before it is too late. It is his immortal soul that she's thinking of.

If *Roe v. Wade* is [overturned](#) by the Supreme Court, that's not going to be the end of abortion in America. As Pope Francis might put it, everyone who has anything to do with the throwaway culture needs to repent. That's all of us in some way or another. So, mercy, President Biden, is probably something the pope mentioned to you along the way. He certainly has to the rest of us.

Kathryn Jean Lopez is a senior fellow at the National Review Institute and editor-at-large of National Review.