

Safety and Security of Ohio Catholic Diocesan Facilities
Ohio Dioceses enact matching policies on sale or raffle of firearms.

Recent acts of unthinkable violence toward houses of worship in the U.S. and across the world grieve us deeply. As believers in the Lord's promise that He hears our cries and pleas, we turn to Him first upon learning of these horrific acts of terror. May Christ lead the souls of those who have perished to paradise, heal the wounded, and comfort the brokenhearted. As Shepherds of God's people, we must continuously evaluate our security measures to ensure that Catholics throughout Ohio can worship God in peace.

We wish to assure the faithful and all visitors to Catholic churches, schools, and diocesan facilities across Ohio that security remains a high priority. Each diocese collaborates with parishes and schools to encourage safety protocols that are up to date. Additionally, we promote cooperation with local law enforcement agencies to audit procedures, provide safety training, or supply additional security support as needed. We all seek a welcoming environment where parishioners or visitors can enter a Church facility confident that they will encounter a peaceful space to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ.

In responding to the attack on Annunciation Parish in Minnesota, Pope Leo XIV exhorted the faithful, "Let us plead God to stop the pandemic of arms, large and small, which infects our world." We understand the need for law enforcement and qualified security personnel to carry weapons and acknowledge that most firearm owners in Ohio and across the country are responsible and law-abiding. We also know that members of the faithful own various firearms for hunting and self-defense, and want to assure them that neither we nor the Church condemn this practice. Still, we cannot ignore the fact that the United States is a clear outlier from other countries in the number of firearm deaths plaguing communities through mass shootings, random or targeted acts of gun violence, and instances of suicide and accidental firings. The Holy Father, along with decades of guidance from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, laments that the number of arms continues to grow without widespread policies or comprehensive solutions for the common good.¹ In Ohio, a good start would be enacting background checks for private firearm sales or transfers and adding red flag laws to help safeguard persons experiencing mental health crises who may pose a risk to themselves or others, while supporting families and communities in identifying those risks.

For these reasons, it is prudent for the Church in Ohio to ensure that her ministries do not become associated with any proliferation of firearms. **Therefore, in the exercise of our prudential judgment, each of us as bishop is implementing a new policy in our own respective dioceses prohibiting any Catholic parish or diocesan-affiliated organization or facility from (i) hosting a sale or raffle involving firearms or other weapons and (ii) accepting contributions directly or indirectly from a sale or raffle of firearms.** The latter prohibition applies to indirect situations that could occur when an organization hosts a gun sale or raffle and then seeks to donate funds from the sale or raffle to a parish or Church ministry.

Questions regarding each diocese's policy may be directed to the local diocesan chancery. As your bishops, we will continue to "work for private action and public policy which helps curb the violence in our land" and we call upon our parishes, affiliated organizations, and all the faithful to unite as "a community of faith reaching out to affirm and protect life, teaching right from wrong, educating the young, serving the hurting, healing the wounds, building community, praying and working for peace" ([*Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action, USCCB*](#)).

1. USCCB Website – [Gun Violence](#); USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development – [A Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence \(updated backgrounder, 2025\)](#).

Our response to violence must start with prayer and the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. We must then put into action sound principles and policies to protect our faith communities and to promote authentic human flourishing. There are no easy fixes, and Catholics of good faith can disagree about solutions, but we are called to lead our society toward comprehensive responses to the violence around us. We believe this policy is one way we can work toward that goal.

Mother Mary, Queen of Peace – *Pray for Us.*

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,



The Most Rev. Robert G. Casey
Archdiocese of Cincinnati



The Most Rev. David J. Bonnar
Diocese of Youngstown



The Most Rev. John Michael
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St. George Byzantine Catholic
Diocese



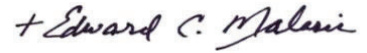
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