

Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga
Installation Mass of Dr. Patrick O'Shaughnessy as the
President and Chief Executive Officer of *Catholic Health*
Homily of Bishop John O. Barres
St. Agnes Cathedral
June 21, 2021

Today, in this **Ignatian Year**, we celebrate the **Memorial of St. Aloysius Gonzaga** (1568-1591), one of the great early Jesuits who sacrificed his life while serving the sick.

St. Aloysius, at the time of a devastating plague in Rome, carried the dying in the streets of Rome to a Jesuit Hospital. He washed and fed the plague victims, gave them spiritual counsel and arranged for them to receive the sacraments. Eventually, he lifted a man who was infected with the plague out of his sickbed and contracted the disease himself and died on June 21st, 1591.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga was one of those Catholic health care saints who loved the Lord with all his heart, soul and mind and expressed that love by giving his life for his sick and dying neighbor.

Today, with the intercession of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, we give thanks and pray for the exceptional Christ-centered pandemic leadership of our *Catholic Health* administrators, doctors, nurses and staff.

We pray for those souls of our Catholic Health workers who have died during the pandemic and for all of our patients who have died and for their families. We take a moment of silence to do so...

Today, we celebrate the Installation Mass of Dr. Patrick O'Shaughnessy as the President and Chief Executive Officer of *Catholic Health*. We are grateful for the presence of his wife Mia and his daughter Brooke.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy's exceptional gifts and charisms for the Catholic mission of mercy of *Catholic Health* have been forged, proven, ignited and expanded in the crucible of this tragic Pandemic. Along with the heroic efforts and sacrifices of our

doctors, nurses, administrators and staff under the leadership of Dr. Alan Guerci, Dr. O'Shaughnessy distinguished himself as a compassionate leader.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy, in addition to understanding the financial and economic realities of a very competitive healthcare landscape, you have the great respect and esteem of doctors and health care providers and administrators across Long Island and Metro New York.

You have the unique advantage of strong relationships built over many years and an understanding from the inside of the entire system of *Catholic Health* and the history of our strategies and our operations.

You also have the great charism to be a forward-looking and independent thinker and strategist ready to build on the great efforts of the *CHS* pioneers of the past with innovation, creativity, humility and boldness.

We have confidence too that you will consciously forge relationships with young people, young adults and young professionals on Long Island who will be our future leadership, our future board members, our future donors, our future doctors, nurses, staff and our future patients.

With our mutual mentor Mr. Larry Bossidy, you believe in "execution-oriented" strategic planning in a Catholic health care culture that integrates strategy with contemplation, and execution or action with the guidance of the Word of God, the Eucharist, the Mass and the Sacraments, and a *Catholic Health* house built on the the rock of fidelity to Catholic moral teaching.

We are grateful for *Catholic Health's* partnership with the *National Catholic Bioethics Center* whose representatives always give us outstanding counsel that is completely faithful to the Catholic Church's moral teaching and very sensitive pastorally as well.

We bring to this Installation Mass our commitment to support you Dr. O'Shaughnessy in *Catholic Health's* mission driven approach to our care of the sick and dying. This living of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy through the work of *Catholic Health*, serves the common good and answers our Lord's mandate to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth.

Please join me in expressing our support of Dr. O'Shaughnessy and his fidelity to Catholic teaching and mission. (Applause)

Dr. O’Shaughnessy’s leadership has a unique context and set of challenges. In addition to every dimension of the crisis of the Pandemic, we face together unique challenges to our Catholic identity and mission.

In New York State, we engage in the Catholic mission of health care, completely faithful to the truths of Catholic moral teaching expressed in the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, while facing the tragic realities of the so-called New York State *Reproductive Health Act* which permits abortion until the moment of birth and even permits infanticide.

On February 23, 2021, our Metropolitan Archbishop, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Religious Liberty, along with four other Bishops, sent a letter to the United States Senate and United States House of Representatives showing how the misnamed *Equality Act* “would discriminate against people of faith.”

Here is an excerpt from the letter from Cardinal Dolan and his brother bishops:

“Human dignity is central to what Catholics believe because every person is made in the image of God and should be treated accordingly, with respect and compassion. This commitment is reflected in the Church’s charitable service to all people, without regard to race, religion, or any other characteristic. It means we need to honor every person’s right to gainful employment free of unjust discrimination or harassment, and to the basic goods that they need to live and thrive. It also means that people of differing beliefs should be respected. In this, we whole-heartedly support nondiscrimination principles to ensure that everyone’s rights are protected.

The Equality Act purports to protect people experiencing same-sex attraction or gender discordance from discrimination. But instead, the bill represents the imposition by Congress of novel and divisive viewpoints regarding ‘gender’ on individuals and organizations. This includes dismissing sexual difference and falsely presenting ‘gender’ as only a social construct. As Pope Francis has reflected, however, ‘biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.’...It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality.’ Tragically, this Act can also be construed to include an abortion mandate, a violation of precious rights to life and conscience.”

What might be some of the consequences of the passage of the *Equality Act*? Here are five of the seven articulated by Cardinal Dolan and the US Bishops. The *Equality Act* would:

- >punish faith-based charities such as shelters and foster care agencies, and in turn their thousands of beneficiaries, simply because of their beliefs on marriage and sexuality (&& 3, 6);
- >force both people and organizations in many everyday life and work settings to speak or act in support of ‘gender transitions’ including health care workers and licensed counselors, even when it’s against their professional judgment (&& 3, 6, 9);
- >risk mandating taxpayers to pay for abortions, and health care workers with conscience objections to perform them, ultimately ending more human lives (&& 3, 6, 9)
- >exclude people from the careers and livelihoods that they love, just for maintaining the truth of their beliefs on marriage and sexuality (& 3); and
- >discriminate against individuals and religious organizations based on their different beliefs by partially repealing the bipartisan Religious Freedom Restoration Act, an unprecedented departure from that law and one of American’s founding principles (& 9)

Cardinal Dolan and his brother bishops conclude the letter with these words: “Each year the Catholic Church, as the largest non-governmental provider of human services in the United States, helps millions of people in need through its parishes, schools, hospitals, shelters, legal clinics, food banks, and other charities. The same core beliefs about the human person – made with inherent dignity and in the image of God – motivate both our positions on life, marriage and sexuality, and also our call to serve the most vulnerable and the common good. We oppose this legislation.”

As we all know, the *Equality Act*, which was passed in the House of Representatives and will be voted on in the Senate sometime this week, is just one example of many in the current landscape that shows that there is great pressure on Catholic institutions – Catholic hospitals, Catholic Charities, Catholic universities and colleges, and their leadership and Boards – to compromise with the dictatorship of moral relativism and to let our Catholic identity and mission erode or fade away.

There are, of course, some hopeful signs in the public sphere. Last week in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, the Supreme Court unanimously held that Philadelphia could not bar Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia from following Catholic teaching in placing children for foster care.

The decision was narrow, but it placed additional limits on how far governments may go in attempting to drive religious views from the public square. And it showed the enormous positive results to be gained by standing firm behind Catholic teaching.

We are grateful to Archbishop Nelson Perez, former Auxiliary Bishop of our Diocese and a former Corporate Member of Catholic Health, and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for their strong and courageous stand.

Nevertheless, even with this limited victory in the Supreme Court, the pressures continue to grow. Economic, financial and social reasons are so often presented as rationalizations for compromising Catholic teaching. A good response to these rationalizations is found in the first reading from the first Letter of St. John: “For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.”

These rationalizations are all short-sighted and ultimately self-defeating. Our C suite leadership, our Board, our Doctors, Nurses and Staff will need to reflect the power of the love of God and be strong, bold, humble and courageous in defending, preserving, promoting and expanding our dedication to Catholic mission, Catholic evangelization and Catholic teaching.

This is more than simple adherence to Church teaching. This is fidelity to the truth, to Jesus Christ our Savior who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Our courageous fidelity is grounded in knowing that the truth of Christ is what ultimately sets people free.

Tomorrow we celebrate the Memorial of the great English martyr, St. Thomas More, patron of statesmen, politicians and lawyers. We ask his intercession for each one of us that we may be courageous, creative and steadfast in our Catholic witness to moral truth in health care for the common good.

Thank you to Dr. O’Shaughnessy and thank you all for your visionary and prophetic commitment which, of course, is the great and providential “competitive advantage” of the future mission of *Catholic Health* on Long Island.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!

St. Joseph, in this Year of St. Joseph, pray for us!

St. Ignatius of Loyola, in this Ignatian year, pray for us!

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us!

All Saints dedicated to the care of the sick, pray for us!