



DIOCESE OF DES MOINES
CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS IN CHRIST

BISHOP WILLIAM JOENSEN STATEMENT ON IRAN

March 3, 2026

We are struck and sobered by the initiative and scale of United States military operations in recent days in Iran. As Catholics, we look to our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, for moral and spiritual guidance. At his public audience this past Sunday, one day after the initial U.S. attacks in Iran, Pope Leo XIV offered this exhortation:

Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of immense proportions, I make a heartfelt appeal to all the parties involved to assume the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence before it becomes an unbridgeable chasm. May diplomacy regain its proper role, and may the well-being of people, who yearn for peaceful existence founded on justice, be upheld. And let us continue to pray for peace.

Further, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, spoke on behalf of all our nation's bishops and echoed the Holy Father's remarks: "All nations, international bodies, and partners committed to peace must exert every effort to prevent further escalation."

Archbishop Coakley continued:

At this critical moment, I invite Catholics and all people of goodwill to continue our ardent prayers for peace in the Middle East, for the safety of our troops and the innocent, that leaders may seek dialogue over destruction, and pursue the common good over the tragedy of war. We implore the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary, Queen of Peace, to pray for our troubled world and for a lasting peace.

Learn what the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) teaches about conditions necessary for legitimate defense using military force (CCC #2309 & 2310).

In this Lenten season of repentance and renewed humility of heart, and mindful of the scriptural admonition, "When they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7), part of our prayer imitates Azariah's prayer in the Book of Daniel, Chapter 3: 37-45:

We are reduced, O Lord, beyond any other nation, brought low everywhere in the world this day because of our sins. We have in our day no prince, prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, or incense, no place to offer first fruits, to find favor with you. But with contrite heart and humble spirit let us be received. . . . So let our sacrifice be in your presence today and find favor before you; for those who trust in you cannot be put to shame. And now we follow you with our whole heart, we fear you and we seek your face. Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy.

May the God who stands over all nations convict us, convert us, and draw us together as sisters and brothers united on the path leading to the peace only Jesus Christ can give. I commend you in this Lenten season of repentance to offer one additional day of fasting for peace.