Opinion
Guest Voices



"Friends, let us remember Charlie Kirk — as a kind of apostle of civil discourse, but above all, as a man who loved Jesus Christ," Bishop Robert Barron wrote on social media Sept. 11. (Black Catholic Messenger/X)

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Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, has praised the late far-right influencer Charlie Kirk as an "apostle of civil discourse" and an exemplar of Christianity, the first major praise from a Catholic prelate following Kirk's shooting death on Wednesday, Sept. 10.

Barron, the progenitor of the popular media evangelization outlet Word on Fire, spoke glowingly of the controversial young activist despite his various political positions that conflict with Catholic teaching.

"Friends, let us remember Charlie Kirk — as a kind of apostle of civil discourse, but above all, as a man who loved Jesus Christ," Barron wrote on social media Thursday afternoon (Sept. 11).

> Friends, let us remember Charlie Kirk—as a kind of apostle of civil discourse, but above all, as a man who loved Jesus Christ. pic.twitter.com/wetPaswIxQ
>
> — Bishop Robert Barron (@BishopBarron) September 11, 2025

Barron also appeared on Fox News Sept. 11 to extol Kirk as a Christian evangelist and "man of faith," telling show hosts that the 31-year-old conservative celebrity should be remembered for his commitment to civil discourse.

Later that evening, some Catholics spoke out online against narratives that attempted to rebrand Kirk as a paragon of virtue in the wake of his death.

"When did civil discourse change to include dehumanizing smears?" wrote Gloria Purvis, who was featured in a 2022 Word on Fire video series on racism and Black Catholics.

"When did demagoguery become charitable speech? Come now all you lovers of truth. Let us not rebrand evil speech as good," she wrote.

Kirk's fatal shooting, which took place in Utah during an event for his youth conservative organization Turning Point USA, has been widely condemned across the political spectrum. Religious leaders, including at the Holy See, have spoken out against the use of violence to silence political opposition.

"We have to be very, very tolerant, very respectful of everybody, even though we don't share the same view," Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, told journalists on Thursday, Sept. 11.

"If we are not tolerant and respectful, and we are violent, this will produce a really big problem inside the international community and the national community," he said.

Some, like Barron, have also taken the opportunity to express support for Kirk on ideological or religious levels. In their own statements, Bishops Timothy Senior of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, described Kirk as a promoter of reasonable dialogue.

Kirk's views included opposition to gun control and even rejection of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Additionally, on his podcast in 2024, in a much-discussed exchange, Kirk cited a quote from Leviticus referring to stoning homosexuals. He was responding to content creator Ms. Rachel: "In a lesser referenced part of the same part of Scripture is in Leviticus 18, is that thou shall lay with another man shall be stoned to death. Just saying. So, Ms. Rachel, you quote Leviticus 19, love your neighbor as yourself. The chapter before affirms God's perfect law when it comes to sexual matters."

Some saw this as endorsing stoning while others saw it as cherry-picking quotes from the Bible. Either way it was the kind of provocative citation that raised concerns.

The young Republican also was seen by some scholars as being a leader of white Christian nationalism. He also supported the "great replacement" conspiracy theory, and COVID-19 misinformation, among other far-right positions.

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Despite this, Barron invited Kirk to share his views as a guest on his online talk show "Bishop Barron Presents," with the appearance scheduled to be recorded this month. Barron said he was inspired to offer the invitation after watching Kirk's appearance last fall on Jubilee's YouTube debate program "Surrounded" — in which he expressed various conservative claims, including that Kamala Harris was a "DEI candidate" for president and that Affirmative Action was unconstitutional.

"I saw him debate twenty-five young people who were, to put it mildly, hostile to his views," the Minnesota prelate wrote on Wednesday after Kirk's death.

"I texted him that I was so struck by how he kept his cool and his charitable attitude in the face of some pretty obnoxious opposition."

> I first met Charlie Kirk about four years ago when I was in Phoenix for a speaking engagement. He reached out and invited me to breakfast. I was deeply impressed by him that day. He was a man of great intelligence, considerable charm, and real goodness of heart.
>
> I reconnected… pic.twitter.com/S0G2NsiyGY
>
> — Bishop Robert Barron (@BishopBarron) September 11, 2025

Barron's support for Kirk is the latest in a series of moves, dating back years, that have aligned the former Los Angeles auxiliary bishop with various Republican and far-right figures, part of a perceived crusade against what he has referred to as "wokeism."

This culminated in Barron's attendance (and praise) of President Donald Trump's address to Congress in March, shortly before accepting an invitation to serve on the White House's new Religious Liberty Commission. In that group, Barron serves alongside various conservative religious, political, and legal figures — including several Catholic bishops.

Kirk, who attended the Pentecostal congregation Dream City Church in Phoenix as well as Catholic Masses with his wife Erika, leaves behind two young children. As of Friday morning, Sept 12, law enforcement officials said they had one suspect in custody, 22-year-old Tyler Robinson of Utah.

This article originally ran at Black Catholic Messenger.

This story appears in the **Charlie Kirk murder news and commentary** feature series. View the full series.