News



Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich places ashes on the forehead of an attendee at the Ash Wednesday Mass near Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Feb. 18, 2026, in Melrose Park, a Chicago suburb. (Courtesy of Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership/Gordon Mayer)



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Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago condemned what he called the "gamification" of war, imploring Americans to resist becoming desensitized to the "true costs of war" and to protect their humanity.

In a statement issued March 7, Cupich took particular aim at a social media video posted by the White House Friday featuring footage from the ongoing war in Iran spliced with scenes from action movies and captioned "Justice the American way."

Cupich took issue with the video's focus on entertainment.

"A real war with real death and real suffering being treated like it's a video game — it's sickening," he wrote.

Decrying the emerging trend of war gamification — used both as propaganda and as an incentive for combatants — Cupich wrote, "we now live in an era when the distance between the battlefield and the living room has been drastically reduced."

Criticizing the White House video, Cupich invoked the human cost of the week-long war, including U.S. casualties who he said were "dishonored" by the post, as well as the Iranian school children killed on the first day of U.S. strikes.

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The cardinal also cited prediction markets allowing users to bet on the war – such as the recent settlement by Kalshi for allegedly failing to pay $54 million to those who bet money that former Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would leave office by March 1. That people derive entertainment from real world crises, Cupich said, was evidence of a "moral crisis."

"The moral crisis we are facing is not just a matter of the war itself, but also how we, the observers, view violence, for war now has become a spectator sport or strategy game," the statement read.

Despite the administration's appeal to excitement, Cupich warned that "we lose our humanity when we are thrilled by the destructive power of our military. We become addicted to the 'spectacle' of explosions."

Cupich appealed to the consciences of all Americans, urging them to retain the sacred gift of their humanity.

"I know that the American people are better than this," Cupich said. "We have the good sense to know that what is happening is not entertainment but war, and that Iran is a nation of people, not a video game others play to entertain us."

This story appears in the **War in Iran** feature series. View the full series.