



DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE



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The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him. Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2241

February 5, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The issue of immigration policy and enforcement is both complicated and emotional. While we agree that there is room for disagreement and discussion with respect to immigration policy, we wish to remind our more than one million Catholic faithful in North Carolina of the stated positions of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, formed by Catholic social teaching, and encourage personal reflection and formation on these issues.

The issue of immigration is not merely about policy, it is a moral concern impacting the human dignity and human rights of every person. We recognize there are persons residing in the United States without legal documentation and we do not condone violating the law. We respect our borders and laws AND support immigration policy reforms and care for those who are already here, many already contributing members of our society for years. We do not see these ends as mutually exclusive. Every day we see firsthand the consequences of a system that creates fear and anxiety among individuals who make substantial contributions to the economic and social fabric of our communities. Immigrants are a vital part of our Catholic parishes who both receive and administer the sacraments of our faith.

As Catholics, we advocate for the recognition that immigrants, as members of God's human family, are deserving of and must be granted the appropriate dignity as our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus Himself was a refugee and taught us to welcome the stranger and to realize that in welcoming the stranger, we are welcoming Christ Himself.

Our Catholic Charities offices stand ready to help with food and other household necessities for all families that find themselves in distress at this time. Through those offices we will continue to provide Legal Immigration Services via staff who have been accredited to complete legal documentation by the Board of Immigration Appeals in the U.S. Department of Justice. These DOJ Accredited Representatives assist families and individuals in achieving an immigration status that enables them to work, reunite with family members, or take steps toward becoming citizens who could contribute to the well-being of their family and society. We will not counsel anyone to thwart or resist proper law enforcement but will continue to provide education about individuals' legal rights.

On a broader level, we, the ordinary Bishops of North Carolina, and the Bishops of the United States will continue working to find lasting solutions to our immigration system based on principles of Catholic social teaching, namely:

- **People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.** Before God all are equal; the earth was given by God to all. When a person cannot achieve a meaningful life in his or her own land, that person has the right to move.
- **A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration.** Catholics should not view the work of the federal government and its immigration control as negative or evil. Those who work to enforce our nation's immigration laws often do so out of a sense of loyalty to the common good and compassion for poor people seeking a better life. In an ideal world, there would be no need for immigration control. The Church recognizes that this ideal world has not yet been achieved.
- **A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.** Immigration policy that allows people to live here and contribute to society for years but refuses to offer them the opportunity to achieve legal status perpetuates a permanent underclass and does not serve the common good. It is the position of the Catholic Church that pastoral, educational, medical and social services provided by the Church are never conditioned on legal status. All persons are invited to participate in our parishes, attend our schools, and receive other services offered by our institutions and programs.
- **Humanitarian protections for vulnerable families should be a priority.** Catholic teaching maintains that families are the foundation of society, and the success of any civilization hinges on the well-being of its families. For generations, families living in the United States have included combinations of citizens and noncitizens. We urge the preservation and strengthening of access to asylum, refugee resettlement, protections for unaccompanied children, assistance for victims of human trafficking, temporary forms of relief, and other humanitarian protections already enshrined in our law.

As members of the human family, each individual deserves and must be granted the dignity that not only supports and fosters the common good of our society but also reflects the reality that we are all fundamentally brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Mary, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States of America, watch over and pray for us now and always.

+ Michael T. Martin, OFM Conv.

Most Reverend Michael T. Martin, OFM Conv.
Bishop of Charlotte

+ Luis R. Zarama

Most Reverend Luis Rafael Zarama
Bishop of Raleigh

FOR REFERENCE

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples>
<https://www.usccb.org/resources/immigrationreform.pdf>