



“Upholding the Dignity of All”

A Message on Immigration from the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35)

Faith is not just about belief.

It is also about action.

As noted in the verse above from Matthew’s Gospel, how we treat others – particularly the most vulnerable in society – is directly linked to our relationship with Christ.

Put simply, when we serve those in need, we are serving Jesus Himself.

This basic principle is put into action every day across northeastern and north central Pennsylvania without a second thought: from young students collecting food for the less fortunate, to community organizations working together to provide nightly shelter to those experiencing homelessness, and parishioners in our parishes visiting the sick and lonely.

As Christians, this verse should also shape how we approach complex societal issues, reminding us to always act with mercy, dignity, and love.

The issue of immigration in the United States is one that often divides us. For some, the conversation revolves around safety, security, and order in our great nation, while for others, it is about compassion and human rights.

As followers of Christ, we must never forget one of the central and basic tenets of our faith: the dignity of every human person. Every person is made in the image and likeness of God – and that inherent dignity cannot be taken away by status or nationality.

From the very beginning of Scripture, God’s command to welcome the stranger is clear. The parents of Jesus had to flee their own land and take refuge in Egypt to save the life of their child.

Likewise, we must see Christ in those who seek refuge among us – whether because of war and widespread violence, religious and ethnic persecution, or human rights abuses. For many of these individuals, the decision to leave their homeland is often born out of desperation – and in the face of these concerns – we all have a responsibility to respond with compassion and understanding.

While the Catholic Church teaches us that individuals and families have the right to migrate, likewise, no country should be unduly burdened by those seeking refuge. To be clear, the United States has the

responsibility to secure its borders and keep its citizens safe. Yet, as Pope Francis recently noted in a letter to the Bishops of the United States, “the true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all ... welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable.”

Like many of my brother bishops, I am calling on our political leaders to set aside partisan politics and to fix our broken immigration system. But I pray that they do so in a way that respects Gospel values. Threats of mass deportations and allowing immigration officials to enter churches, schools, and healthcare facilities to conduct arrests, have only led to fear and anxiety for many of our brothers and sisters who live in our neighborhoods, attend our schools, provide useful services throughout our communities and worship with us on a regular basis.

Since its inception, our nation has been built upon the presence of immigrants who have contributed to the well-being and greatness of our land. As such, it is essential that we continue to support proper, legal pathways for immigration, ensuring that those who seek to contribute to society can do so in a manner that honors both their dignity and the lawful order of our communities.

As we pray for a system that honors the dignity of all people, one that is always guided by God’s love and justice, let us all remain hopeful that with faith, dialogue, and a commitment to justice, a solution to the complex challenges of immigration may be addressed in a way that honors the dignity of all.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas, intercede for us and for our nation, guiding us toward solutions that uphold the dignity of all people and reflect the mercy of Christ.

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