

MIGRATION AND THE JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, **a stranger and you welcomed me**, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’”*

MATTHEW 25:31-46

In recent days and weeks, we have witnessed the troubling convergence of our broken immigration system and the political divisions of our time being inflicted upon men, women, and children seeking refuge in our country. Reports have indicated coordinated efforts to transport migrants—and in some cases intentionally deceive them—in furtherance of outcomes that are unbecoming of a moral society. At the same time, we are deeply concerned by the preservation and even expansion of policies such as Title 42, which unjustly deny access to humanitarian protections that were enshrined in law as a response to horrors witnessed during the twentieth century. Neither situation reflects a “safe, orderly, and humane” immigration system, but their shared irreverence for human lives is all too common in our present culture.

For decades, my brother bishops and I have joined with an ever-growing chorus of voices in calling for comprehensive immigration reform to address the many flaws in our current system. This was the unequivocal [sentiment](#) of our Administrative Committee in March. Such reform must provide for the full integration of long-time residents, promote family unity, honor due process, respect the rule of law, expand legal pathways, preserve and strengthen humanitarian protections, prioritize dignified alternatives to detention, recognize the contributions of foreign-born workers, protect the vulnerable, and address the root causes of migration. We simply cannot allow partisan division to continue to impede the needed interventions of government. And while there are no easy solutions to the challenges we face, there is a just path forward that is waiting to be paved by those who are committed to the future of our country.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has frequently reminded us of the opportunities posed by immigration, countering misconceptions of migrants and refugees as burdens on welcoming communities. In his message for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees, he reiterated this, [stating](#): “Indeed, history teaches us that the contribution of migrants and refugees has been fundamental to the social and economic growth of our societies.... Yet this contribution could be all the greater were it optimized and supported by carefully developed programs and initiatives. Enormous potential exists, ready to be harnessed, if only it is given a chance.” National, state, and local governments must work collaboratively with one another and civil society to devise a collective and humane response to the unavoidable reality of migration, seeking to embrace the potential it offers. In this context, strong federal leadership is especially important.

Compelled by Christ’s clear mandate in Matthew’s Gospel, the U.S. Catholic community remains steadfast in its commitment to welcome the stranger, especially the most vulnerable. Whether Afghan, Ukrainian, or Venezuelan, Dreamer or undocumented farmworker, asylum seeker, migrant, or refugee, all are imbued by God with an inviolable dignity. This is the foundation of our Church’s unwavering defense of human life in all its forms, contemplated in a special way during this Respect Life Month.

Our country is often described as a “nation of immigrants.” When Christ returns on the Last Day, his judgment will reveal the veracity of that notion. May each one of us—especially those bearing the burdens of leadership—be judged worthy to inherit God’s kingdom, having endeavored to build it on Earth.

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