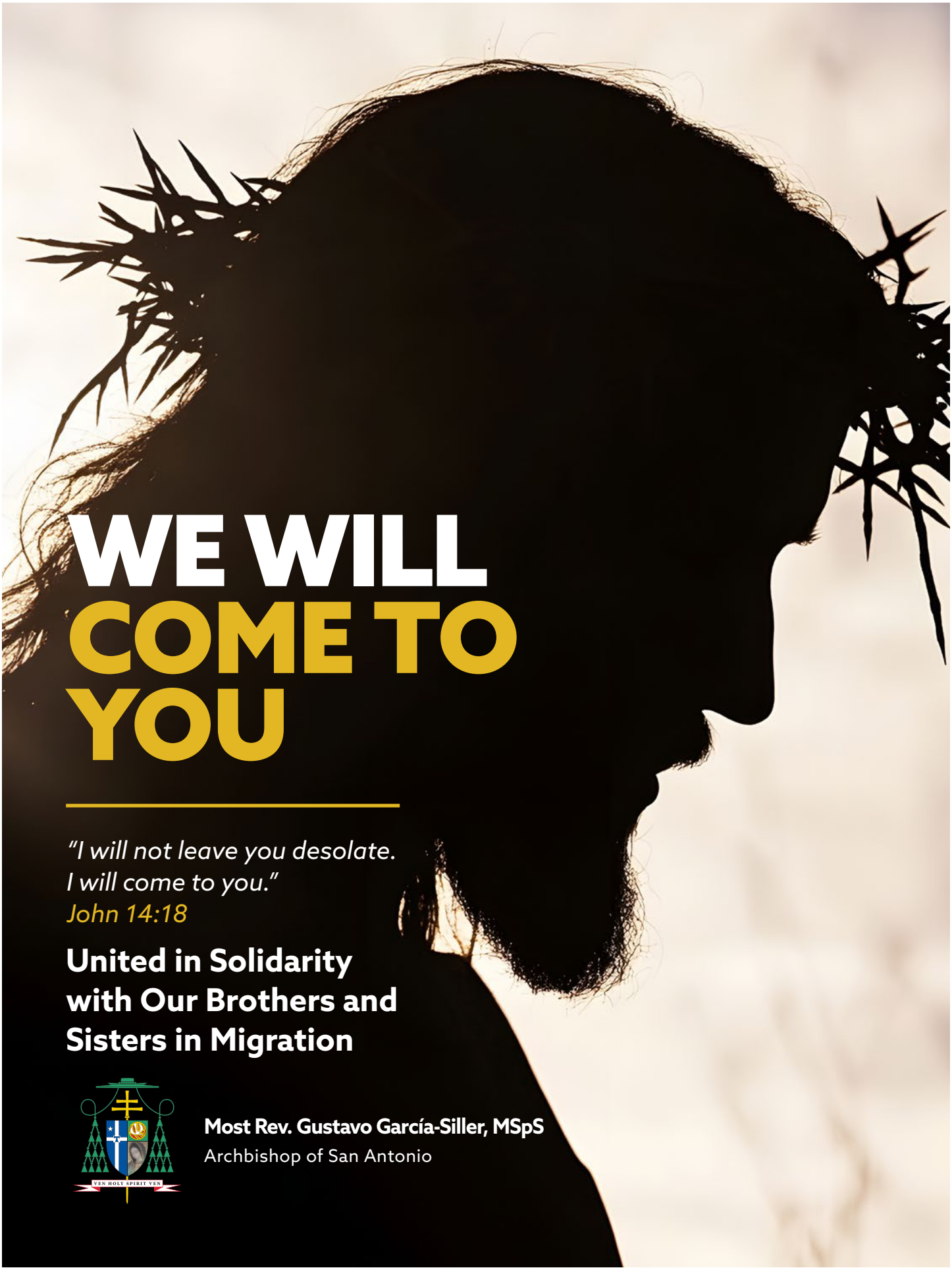


WE WILL COME TO YOU

"I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you."
John 14:18

United in Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters in Migration

Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS
Archbishop of San Antonio

We Will Come To You: United in Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters in Migration

Written by the Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, Archbishop of San Antonio. Given at San Fernando Cathedral on August 3, 2026 on the 100th Anniversary of the Elevation of the Diocese of San Antonio to a Metropolitan Archdiocese.

Published by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio.
2718 W. Woodlawn Ave., San Antonio, TX 78228.
www.archsa.org

PERMISSIONS FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION

The Archdiocese of San Antonio hereby grants permission to duplicate this work in its entirety without adaptation for non-commercial use. We encourage the use of this Pastoral Letter and the accompanying Reflection Guide for personal prayer, small group reflection, or parish study, subject to the following conditions. Integrity of Text: The text must be shared in its original, unabridged form. Non-Commercial: The document may not be sold or used for commercial purposes. Attribution: Proper attribution to the Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, Archbishop of San Antonio, and the Archdiocese of San Antonio must remain intact, including this copyright page, Archbishop Gustavo's Coat of Arms, and the Archdiocesan Crest.

SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Except as noted below, Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The Scripture text appearing on the cover and title page (John 14:18) is taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for use in the United States of America Copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. -- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica Copyright © 1997, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops -- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with Permission.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Except as noted, all photographs in this work are © Archdiocese of San Antonio, created by Archdiocesan staff, or are used under license through the Archdiocese's corporate Adobe Stock account. All rights reserved. The photograph of Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, SJ (22 Nov. 1927, author unknown), is in the public domain in the United States, having been published before 1 January 1931 with unknown authorship. Sourced via Wikimedia Commons.

Cover design by Kathryn Sauceda. Editorial design by Charles T. Ramírez.
Printed in the United States of America.

Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.
I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you.

JOHN 14: 23, 18

A PASTORAL LETTER

WE WILL COME TO YOU

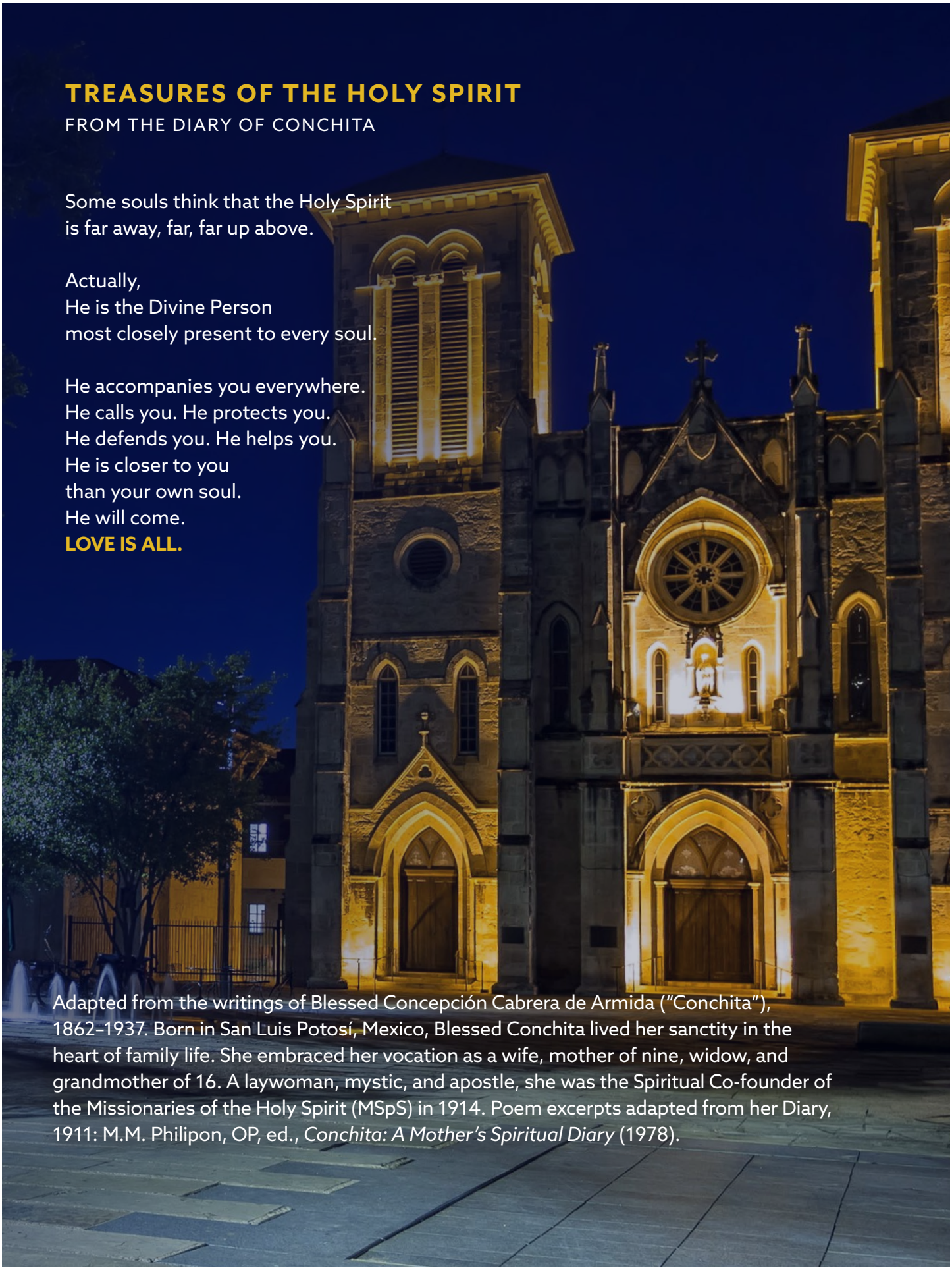
United in Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters in Migration



Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS
Archbishop of San Antonio



Promulgated at San Fernando Cathedral on August 3, 2026
The Centennial of the Elevation of San Antonio to a Metropolitan Archdiocese



TREASURES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

FROM THE DIARY OF CONCHITA

Some souls think that the Holy Spirit
is far away, far, far up above.

Actually,
He is the Divine Person
most closely present to every soul.

He accompanies you everywhere.
He calls you. He protects you.
He defends you. He helps you.
He is closer to you
than your own soul.
He will come.
LOVE IS ALL.

Adapted from the writings of Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida ("Conchita"), 1862–1937. Born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, Blessed Conchita lived her sanctity in the heart of family life. She embraced her vocation as a wife, mother of nine, widow, and grandmother of 16. A laywoman, mystic, and apostle, she was the Spiritual Co-founder of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit (MSpS) in 1914. Poem excerpts adapted from her Diary, 1911: M.M. Philipon, OP, ed., *Conchita: A Mother's Spiritual Diary* (1978).



IN A WORLD OF WAR

We are living in a world of war. Across continents, people are dying every day. Across borders, survivors are forced to migrate. They do not leave by choice, but because of violence, hunger, fear, and oppression. This is the world in which I write this pastoral letter to you.

TO THOSE WHO BUILD BRIDGES

To the People of God in the Archdiocese and around the world who accompany our brothers and sisters in migration with your love, expertise, offerings, and your being: Thank you. Your prayers sustain this work. Your hands sustain this Church. ¡Gracias!

DEDICATION

To St. Augustine of Hippo, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, whom I chose as my patron when I was confirmed in the Cathedral of San Luis Potosí, Mexico, on August 3, 1963, the same date on which, in 1926, Pope Pius XI elevated the Diocese of San Antonio to a Metropolitan Archdiocese. St. Augustine taught the Church that we are all pilgrims in life, sojourners traveling toward our true homeland in heaven. To him, I entrust this pastoral letter and the ministry it asks of us.

Every human being is a child of God!

He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community.

The Church, like a mother, accompanies those who are walking. Where the world sees threats, She sees children; where walls are built, She builds bridges. She knows that Her proclamation of the Gospel is credible only when it is translated into gestures of closeness and welcome. And She knows that in every rejected migrant, it is Christ Himself who knocks at the door of the community.

Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te*, no. 75



CONTENTS

4 **Prologue** • Blessed Conchita

5 **Dedication**

6 **Prologue** • Pope Leo XIV

9 **Part I:** A Time of Fear

25 **Part II:** Discerning Our Reality in the Light of Faith

32 **Part III:** I Know This Road

41 **Part IV:** A Church That Goes Forth

53 **Part V:** She Knows This Road

55 **A Prayer** to Our Lady of Guadalupe

56 **Gratitude** A Note of Thanks

¡VEN, HOLY SPIRIT, VEN!

PART I

A TIME OF FEAR

Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

ISAIAH 41: 10

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

1. I prayed over this letter for a long time before writing it to you. The Holy Spirit's call was clear, yet I wished to write from the right place, one of accompaniment and solidarity. What follows is at times deeply personal: it arises from my own encounters with God in the lives of migrants, from years of walking alongside those who have endured migration's trials and from my own family history and migration story. As a reflection on the prevailing climate of immigration enforcement, it is offered in love, grounded not in ideology but in walking with you: listening to your pastors, sitting in silence with families who no longer feel safe to leave their homes, and accompanying our sisters and brothers who have migrated, missionaries of hope among us. You are the heart of this letter. The Church will not be silent.

2. Year after year, the Archdiocesan community has shown what it means to be the Body of Christ: faithful, resilient, and alive in the Holy Spirit. To the beloved people of the Archdiocese, my brother bishops, priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, and all the faithful in our parishes, Catholic schools, and hospitals, as well as those in detention centers, jails and prisons, those confined and isolated, families gathered in prayer across this vast and beautiful land, and especially to our brothers and sisters in migration



I write to comfort the afflicted, to ignite the comfortable, and to confront injustice with the full conviction of the Gospel…

who have come from other nations and made this Church their home: this letter is sent with deep gratitude and love.

3. This letter addresses an unprecedented moment in the United States that directly affects the life of the Archdiocesan community, our parishes, and families we know by name. Immigrant detention and deportation at scale are not new to U.S. history. What distinguishes the present hour is not enforcement at scale alone, but a convergence of structural and legal tactics whose relative novelty calls for the careful and well-formed moral discernment of every Catholic conscience. Some of these include the rescission of federal protections that kept churches, schools, and hospitals safe from immigration enforcement for the last 14 years,[1] the invocation of a 1798 wartime statute to deport people without due process,[2] and an allocation of $45 billion in federal resources to expand immigrant detention centers and build detention camps at a scale unmatched in U.S. history.[3] The Church evaluates policy and the enforcement of laws through the lens of the Gospel asking whether they uphold the dignity of the human person, the integrity of the family, the common good, and the protection of the most vulnerable. I write to comfort the afflicted, to ignite the comfortable, and to confront injustice with the full conviction of the Gospel, fulfilling the pastoral charge of the Good Shepherd, who left the ninety-nine to seek the one who was lost (Mt 18:12–14).

---

1 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas*, Memorandum (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2025), https://www.ice.gov/ero/protected-areas.
2 Executive Office of the President, "Invocation of the Alien Enemies Act Regarding the Invasion of the United States by Tren de Aragua," Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, March 20, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-03-20/pdf/2025-04865.pdf.
3 American Immigration Council, *Analysis of H.R. 1: Spending Provisions Related to Immigration Enforcement and the Border* (2025), 9, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/analysis_big_beautiful_bill.pdf.



This Land Has Always Been a Place of Encounter

4. The city, the region, and the People of God have never been strangers to the journeys that bring people to new places in search of life and faith. More than 300 years ago, the faith came here on the sandals of Franciscan missionaries from Spain, who established the missions along the San Antonio River under the patronage of St. Anthony of Padua, a Franciscan friar who knew what it meant to leave home for the sake of the Gospel.[4] The missions were built by Spanish settlers, Indigenous communities, and mestizo families: a diverse people shaped by those who crossed borders and by borders drawn across lands already inhabited. Migration is our story.

Migration is our story.

Photo: Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, founded in 1720 and known as the "Queen of the Missions," is the largest of San Antonio's five Spanish missions, built by Spanish, Indigenous, and mestizo hands that made this a place of encounter from the beginning.

4 Laurie E. Jasinski, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of San Antonio, Texas," in *Handbook of Texas* (Texas State Historical Association, October 22, 2025), https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/san-antonio-tx.



Photo: The Founders Monument by artist Armando Hinojosa stands before the Bexar County Courthouse. Its five bronze figures honor the diverse communities who founded San Fernando de Béxar, today's San Antonio, on March 9, 1731.

5. While our history was first shaped by Indigenous peoples, Spanish colonial settlement and the Franciscan missions, the political boundaries of what is now the Archdiocese of San Antonio shifted across the centuries from New Spain, to Mexico, to the Republic of Texas, and finally the United States. With the growth of the city and the expansion of ranching, agriculture, railroads, and the military, 19th and early 20th century immigrants from Germany, Ireland, Poland, France, England, Italy, Belgium, the Czech lands, and many other European nations made their way to this region by way of other American cities and ports. They were joined by African Americans, both freed and freeborn, and by refugees of the Mexican Revolution, each bringing their own story of hardship and hope, arriving in search of work, safety, and a new life.[5] Every wave contributed to the strength, resilience and beautiful diversity of our city and rural communities.

5 Jasinski, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of San Antonio, Texas."

6. We carry this heritage into a year of important anniversaries, each inviting us to view the present through the eyes of faith. We celebrate the 100th anniversary of our elevation to a Metropolitan Archdiocese by the Holy See, recognizing San Antonio as the spiritual center of a flourishing Catholic community.[6] We also give thanks for the 250th anniversary of the United States, founded on the conviction that all are created equal. Finally, we honor the 300th anniversary of the death of Venerable Padre Antonio Margil de Jesús, whose founding of Mission San José and dedication to evangelization left an enduring spiritual heritage in Texas.[7] Three distinct anniversaries bound by one inheritance: to welcome those seeking life and faith.

7. For our local Church, the year carries additional significance. Three days before San Antonio's elevation to an Archdiocese, the Cristero War erupted in Mexico, driving thousands of faithful families, clergy, and religious communities into Texas in search of the freedom to worship.[8] In that moment the Holy Spirit inscribed a founding charism into our identity: the Archdiocese of San Antonio became refuge for those with nowhere else to turn. Just west of San Antonio, at Castroville, the Archdiocese had already given a home to the first Mexican national seminary ever founded on foreign soil, a sign that here, the Church of Mexico and the Church of the United States together build refuge in the very hour of persecution.[9] One hundred years on, we continue to live that charism.

A YEAR OF ANNIVERSARIES

100 Years *since the Diocese of San Antonio was elevated to a Metropolitan Archdiocese.*

100 Years *since the start of the Cristero War.*

250 Years *since the United States declared her independence.*

300 Years *since the death of Venerable Padre Antonio Margil de Jesús.*

The Archdiocese of San Antonio became refuge for those with nowhere else to turn.

---

6 Pius XI, "Pastoris Aeterni: Decree of the Elevation of San Antonio as Metropolitan Archdiocese," The Holy See, August 3, 1926, https://archsa.org/anniversary/papal-decree/.
7 Nick Barron, "Venerable Antonio Margil: The 'Patron Saint' of Texas," El Camino de San Antonio Missions, April 8, 2025, https://caminosanantonio.org/the-life-and-legacy-of-venerable-antonio-margil-the-patron-saint-of-texas/.
8 Peter J. Casarella and Julia G. Young, "Mexican Migrants and the 1920s Cristeros Era: An Interview with Historian Julia G. Young," sec. 15, *Diálogo* 16, no. 2 (2013): 75–82.
9 María-Gabriela Aguirre-Cristiani, "Los Seminarios Mexicanos de Castroville y Montezuma, Dos Proyectos Del Catolicismo Transnacional En Estados Unidos," *Anuario de Historia de La Iglesia* 33 (May 2024): 207–30, https://doi.org/10.15581/007.33.018.

Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient...

2 TIMOTHY 4:2

8. The Archdiocese not only honors a rich Catholic past but takes pride in its identity as a place of encounter, where peoples, faiths, languages, and cultures were shaped by each wave of newcomers who have made this place home,[10] including recent arrivals from around the world. We have learned that our sisters and brothers in migration are not problems to be solved but the living presence of the Lord, a gift the Holy Spirit continues to bestow upon the Church and country.[11] In our centennial year, to be Courageous in Christ means to welcome these missionaries of God's love.

The Shepherd Hears What the People Cannot Say

9. And yet, the truth must be spoken. The Apostle Paul charged Timothy to proclaim the Gospel with persistence, whether convenient or inconvenient (2 Tm 4:2), and that charge reaches us now. Across our parishes, neighborhoods, and homes, fear has taken root: deportation, detention, and family separation now threaten to paralyze our communities. Pastors sit in living rooms with families afraid to open their blinds. We pray with parents who embrace their children each morning unsure if they will be home at night. I have looked into their eyes and seen a fear I refuse to ignore. The community bears this cross, and the Church cannot be silent.

I have looked into their eyes and seen a fear I refuse to ignore.

10. This fear has become a constant, grinding anxiety that reshapes every ordinary hour. A dependable employee avoids the commute because each mile carries risk. A loving parent forgoes a child's medical exam because the intake form feels like exposure. A retired, patriotic veteran sits at the kitchen table weighing whether to risk going to the pharmacy, the

10 Timothy M. Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church* (Princeton University Press, 2012).
11 Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te [On Love for the Poor]*, Apostolic Letter (The Holy See, 2025), No. 73.



grocery, or the post office. Children absorb it all, bearing a burden they should never have to carry.

11. Pastors consistently report that attendance at Spanish-language Masses has declined. The rector of San Fernando Cathedral, only three blocks from the immigration court, reports families now too afraid to gather. Experts tell us that four in 10 immigrant adults report direct negative health impacts from immigration-related fear; among those likely without immigration status, the proportion rises to nearly eight in 10.[12] A community that once moved freely is forced to turn inward.

12. Fear has inflicted many wounds, but one cuts especially deep. Picture a family at home on Sunday

12 Drishti Pillai et al., *KFF/New York Times 2025 Survey of Immigrants: Health and Health Care Experiences During the Second Trump Administration,* Poll Finding (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2025), https://www.kff.org/immigrant-health/kff-new-york-times-2025-survey-of-immigrants-health-and-health-care-experiences-during-the-second-trump-administration/.

Photo: A parent and child pray together at home.

The people have not lost their faith. Many, however, have lost their sense of safety and belonging.

morning: children dressed, the mother holds her rosary, and the father holds his missal, knowing exactly when Mass begins and that the parish is nearby. They hunger for the Eucharist and for communion with the Risen Christ that gives meaning to their week. While the Body of Christ gathers just blocks away, their front door remains closed, and they sit together in silence and fear. This is a spiritual wound borne by all of us. As St. Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor 12:26). It is also an injury to religious liberty itself, a freedom enshrined in the First Amendment[13] and treasured by every well-formed conscience.[14] The people have not lost their faith. Many, however, have lost their sense of safety and belonging.

Naming What Must Be Named

13. Mass deportation is not a novel reality in this country. From the Palmer Raids of 1919–1920 to Operation Wetback in 1954 to the worksite raids of the early 2000s, to the record-breaking removals of the years that followed,[15] the Church has been called to defend the dignity of those caught in the machinery of removal. Detention is not an incidental feature of the present climate but central to it. Three immigration detention facilities operate within the Archdiocese: the Karnes County Residential Center in Karnes City, the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, and the South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall, along with multiple county jails that hold men and women without documentation. These facilities hold people from our

DETENTION FACILITIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

The Karnes County Residential Center in Karnes City

The South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley

The South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall

13 United States, "Constitution of the United States of America," U.S. House of Representatives, September 17, 1787, https://uscode.house.gov/static/constitution.pdf.
14 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Forming Consciences for *Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (USCCB, 2023), 10, https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf.
15 Adam Goodman, *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants,* Politics and Society in Modern America (Princeton University Press, 2020).

own parishes, people transferred here from other parts of the country, and people whose families remain behind, separated and waiting. Immigrant detention is not a distant story that we watch on the evening news, but a real crisis of conscience that we grapple with ourselves in the local Church.

14. I have visited these detention centers and witnessed, firsthand, violations of human dignity within their walls. My brother bishop, the Most Rev. Steven Biegler of the Diocese of Cheyenne, recently made clear that "the current campaign of mass detention and deportations is immoral."[16] Detention facilities operate as the mechanism by which large numbers of people are held, processed, and moved from one site to another,[17] sustained in large part by private corporations that profit from every occupied bed.[18] A Senate investigation from the U.S. Immigration Detention Oversight Committee published earlier this year documented more than 1,000 credible reports of human-rights abuses in immigration detention since January 2025, including medical neglect, denial of food and water, overcrowding, sleep deprivation, and the separation of breastfeeding mothers from their infants.[19] Inspection reports from the Department of Homeland Security have flagged similar patterns of abuse, neglect, and dehumanization in privately operated facilities.[20] Patterns this widespread

I have visited these detention centers and witnessed, firsthand, the violations of human dignity within their walls.

16 Steven Biegler, "Be a Merciful Neighbor: Pastoral Letter on Migration," Pastoral Letter, Diocese of Cheyenne, April 12, 2026, No. 60.
17 Jon Ossoff, *Over 1,000 Credible Reports of Human Rights Abuses in U.S. Immigration Detention,* U.S. Immigration Detention Oversight (United States Senate, 2026), https://www.ossoff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/260114_Report_Patterns_v5.pdf.
18 Sarah Lopez, "From Penal to 'Civil': A Legacy of Private Prison Policy in a Landscape of Migrant Detention," *American Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (2019): 105–34, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2019.0005.
19 Ossoff, *Over 1,000 Credible Reports of Human Rights Abuses in U.S. Immigration Detention.*
20 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility, *ERO El Paso Camp East Montana (Inspection 2026-001-098),* nos. 2026-001–098 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2026), 15, https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/odo-compliance-inspections/eroElPasoCampEastMontana_ElPasoTX_Feb10-12_2026.pdf.

The Church must confront the truth and name these injustices for what they are.

73%

of those in immigration detention have no criminal conviction, and only 5% have been convicted of a violent crime.[28]

Photo: A two-lane highway in South Texas. Roads like this one lead from San Antonio to the family detention center in Dilley, an hour south of the city.

are neither accidental nor marginal. As St. Paul urges, we must expose the works of darkness rather than conceal them (Eph 5:11). The Church must confront the truth and name these injustices for what they are.[21]

15. The Church sees people, not numbers. Walking alongside our sisters and brothers, we behold faces like Roberto, Carmelita, Liam, Francisco, Lucía, persons made in God's image, known to God even before they were formed in the womb (Jer 1:5). Yet numbers sometimes expose the scale of suffering. Nationwide, those in ICE custody exceeded 70,000 in January 2026, the highest on record, and the number remains above 60,000.[22] In 2025, 33 people died in ICE custody, the deadliest year in two decades, with 14 more deaths recorded in the first three months of 2026.[23] While the causes of death vary, some from preexisting illness, some from suicide, some from circumstances yet to be fully investigated, they are the numbers of a system where the U.S. Senate investigation has documented medical neglect, overcrowding, and denial of basic care. Each death is a human life entrusted to the State's custody.

16. Behind each statistic is a face we must not forget. Five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and his father were detained in Minneapolis in late January 2026 and then brought to the Migrant Detention Camp in Dilley, TX just an hour south of San Antonio.[24] Dilley is home to the largest family

21 John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae [The Gospel of Life]* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), No. 58.
22 TRAC Immigration, *Immigration Detention Quick Facts,* Academic Data Clearinghouse (Syracuse University, 2026), https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/.
23 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *Detainee Death Reporting* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2026), https://www.ice.gov/detain/detainee-death-reporting.
24 Gina Christian, "Judge Cites Gospel Verses Releasing Liam Conejo Ramos and His Father from ICE Detention," *OSV News*, February 1, 2026, https://www.osvnews.com/judge-cites-gospel-verses-in-releasing-liam-conejo-ramos-and-his-father-from-immigrant-detention/.

immigration detention center in the nation.[25] Children and parents who were our neighbors are being held there right now, separated from parishes, from their families and from the lives they built. In June 2025, Arianny Parra Sanchez, a 42-year-old Venezuelan preschool teacher, was seized by masked agents after an immigration court hearing in San Antonio, and her 3-year-old son was taken from her arms.[26] She was one of more than seven people arrested in less than an hour that morning as they left the courthouse after complying with the law.[27] For the Archdiocese, this is not abstract. The road from our city leads directly to their cells.

17. Our immigration system has failed the people it was meant to serve, and a misleading public narrative has done much to sustain that failure. We are told repeatedly that enforcement targets the criminally dangerous, yet 73% of those in immigration detention have no criminal conviction, and only 5% have been convicted of a violent crime.[28] The Immigration and Nationality Act defines a "criminal" as anyone who commits an infraction, even as minor as fishing without a license or driving with a broken taillight.[29] Our sisters and brothers are workers, parents, neighbors, and parishioners. Research shows mass deportation would subtract more than $1 trillion from the economy,[30] while a pathway to citizenship for



---

25 Robyn Barnard et al., *A New Era of ICE Family Prisons* (Human Rights First and RAICES, 2026), 33, https://humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/New_Era_ICE_Family_Prisons_4.21.pdf.
26 Stephanie Koithan, "San Antonio ICE Detained More Families Today at Immigration Court, Including Three-Year-Old Child," San Antonio Current, June 5, 2025, https://www.sacurrent.com/news/san-antonio-ice-detained-more-families-today-at-immigration-court-37669081/.
27 Koithan, "San Antonio ICE Detained More Families Today."
28 David J. Bier, "5% of People Detained By ICE Have Violent Convictions, 73% No Convictions," Policy Blog / Think Tank Analysis, Cato at Liberty Blog, Cato Institute, November 24, 2025, https://www.cato.org/blog/5-ice-detainees-have-violent-convictions-73-no-convictions.
29 Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S. Code § 1101(a)(48)(a) (1952).
30 American Immigration Council, *Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy,* Special Report (American Immigration Council, 2024), https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/mass-deportation/.



The truth must be told plainly and with love…

these families would generate $1.7 trillion in growth.[31] They do not weaken the nation but rather sustain it.

18. The narrative of fear deceives many to believe that the story of migration begins at the nation's border. It does not. It begins long before, in homes where parents cannot feed their children, in towns where violence has made ordinary life impossible, in countries where the conditions for a dignified human life have collapsed. The truth must be told plainly, and with love: those who migrate do so to survive, to keep their families alive when no other way remains in their countries of origin.[32] If legal pathways were open to them, the great majority would use them. But the pathways into the United States now take years to access, if they remain open at all. Our sisters and brothers cannot wait years for their children to eat. They cannot wait years for their family to be safe. They cannot wait

Photo: The faithful walk the San Antonio River during a 2024 Eucharistic pilgrimage, several miles from Mission San José to Mass at San Fernando Cathedral.

31 Giovanni Peri and Reem Zaiour, *Citizenship for Undocumented Immigrants Would Boost U.S. Economic Growth* (Center for American Progress, 2021), https://www.americanprogress.org/article/citizenship-undocumented-immigrants-boost-u-s-economic-growth/.
32 Secretariado Episcopal de América Central (SEDAC), "He Saw Them, He Drew Near to Them & He Cared For Them: Walking with Those Who Migrate, Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Survivors of Trafficking," Pastoral Letter, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development / Secretariado Episcopal de América Central (SEDAC), March 2025, 5–7, 29.

years for conditions that uphold the human dignity God has given them. Their contribution to the common good of our nation demands for such legal pathways to be provided to them.[33]

Every person of faith and good will in the community must pray, speak, and act.

19. Our community was formed as a place of encounter, and that identity is now under pressure. A 640,000-square-foot distribution warehouse less than nine miles from San Fernando Cathedral, surrounded by schools, parks, and neighborhoods, is slated to be converted into one of the largest immigrant detention facilities in Central Texas with a capacity of 1,500 beds.[34] Bexar County Commissioners have voted to oppose the facility, and the Archdiocese of San Antonio stands with them.[35] The question before us is whether we will allow our city to become a place where confinement and abuse displace welcome and encounter, or whether we will defend, in word and deed, the kind of community we have always been. Every person of faith and good will in the community must pray, speak, and act.

Holding families in detention dishonors the sanctity of the family.

20. In our community, detention facilities in Karnes City and Dilley also hold families who came here seeking safety and hope: mothers, children and babies among them. Holding families in detention dishonors the sanctity of the family. The letters of these detained children demand to be heard. A 9-year-old from Colombia, detained 113 days, wrote just seven words: "I am not happy. Get me out."[36] A 13-year-old closed

---

33 Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, "Transformed by Hope, Let Us Rebuild Our Tomorrow! A Pastoral Letter to the People of God in the Archdiocese of San Antonio on the Challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic," Pastoral Letter, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, September 14, 2020, No. 4.
34 Diego Medel, "Bexar County Formally Opposes ICE Detention Facility Ahead of Possible Legal Challenges," *San Antonio Report,* March 10, 2026, https://sanantonioreport.org/bexar-county-commissioners-eastside-ice-detention-facility-legal-challenges/.
35 Medel, "Bexar County Formally Opposes ICE Detention Facility."
36 Anna Donian et al., "'I Have Been Here Too Long': Read Letters from the Children Detained at ICE's Dilley Facility," ProPublica, February 9, 2026, https://www.propublica.org/article/ice-dilley-children-letters.

These children are not statistics but the Christ child, awaiting welcome.

his letter with uncommon wisdom: "May God touch the hearts of those from ICE. Let us out. We are not criminals. I want to go home."[37] Mothers reported children losing their appetites after finding worms and mold in their food and struggling to sleep on metal bunks in rooms shared with a dozen or more strangers.[38]

21. This 2026 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Leo XIV spoke directly to this suffering in choosing the theme, "Even just one of these children."[39] These children are not statistics but the Christ child, awaiting welcome. During a visit to the Karnes City detention center, I encountered a young mother gripped by profound grief. Cradling her infant, she described how everything she loved had been taken. With nothing left, her last hope was the child's baptism. God's love knows no bounds. Moved in my heart by her faith, I baptized the infant there in the detention facility.

Moved in my heart by her faith, I baptized the infant there in the detention facility.

22. One more painful truth must be named: this system's brokenness is not merely a matter of policy failure. The history of U.S. immigration law has long been entangled with racial categories about who is welcome and who is not.[40] The U.S. bishops named that wound in *Open Wide Our Hearts* (2018),[41] and recent independent studies

---

37 Donian et al., "Letters from the Children Detained at ICE's Dilley Facility."
38 Valerie Gonzalez, "New Insight into Texas Family Detention Reveals Adults Fighting Kids for Clean Water," *The Texas Tribune,* June 21, 2025, https://www.texastribune.org/2025/06/21/texas-family-detention-adults-kids-fighting/.
39 Vatican News, "'Even Just One of These Children' Announced as Title of World Migrants Day," Vatican News, Vatican News, April 9, 2026, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-04/world-day-migrants-refugees-title-children-2026-pope-leo-message.html.
40 Goodman, *The Deportation Machine*.
41 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism* (USCCB, 2018).



in Los Angeles[42] and New York,[43] including those of the Migration Policy Institute,[44] continue to document patterns of racial disparity in enforcement against Hispanics, Latinos, and other people of color. The U.S. Bishops are not saying every lawmaker or law officer intentionally acts out of racism, but the Church cannot ignore a historical pattern of discrimination backed by data. A system in which racial disparity is so deeply embedded cannot deliver justice without honest reform. While the Church acknowledges the legitimate authority of law enforcement to uphold the common good and

A system in which racial disparity is so deeply embedded cannot deliver justice without honest reform.

42 Jonathan Ong et al., *Unseen: Latino ICE Arrests Surge Under Trump* (UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, 2025), 10, https://knowledge.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Unseen_Latino-Ice-Arrests-Surge-Under-Trump_20251027.pdf.
43 Chloe N. East and Elizabeth Cox, *Unmasking ICE's Anti-Latino Practices – and What New York City Can Expect* (New York Immigration Coalition, 2025), 10, https://www.nyic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/NYC-Area-ICE-Arrests-v4-JV-12.8.25.pdf.
44 Muzaffar Chishti et al., "Unleashing Power in New Ways: Immigration in the First Year of Trump 2.0," Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute, January 13, 2026, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-2-immigration-1st-year.

Photo: A contemporary interpretation of Michelangelo's Pietà in San Fernando Cathedral, set among the cathedral's stained glass and hand-carved Stations of the Cross.

All laws must remain at the service of human dignity.

does not oppose appropriate, humane enforcement that is proportional to the offense, all laws must remain at the service of human dignity. When the enforcement of law violates human dignity, they betray the very justice they claim to defend.

23. Pope Leo XIV spoke to this moment with clarity and courage. While affirming a State's right and duty to manage its borders, he condemns "ever more inhumane measures…that treat these 'undesirables' as if they were garbage and not human beings."[45] He insists that disrespect toward those who have built good lives here is unacceptable.[46] In his first Encyclical Letter, *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Holy Father states with magisterial clarity the very measure by which our nation's response will be judged: "A litmus test for social justice today is the treatment of migrants, refugees and those forced to move due to poverty, violence, climate change and environmental disasters. The way a society treats them reveals whether its sense of justice is driven by fear or by the spirit of fraternity."[47] To my fellow immigrant sisters and brothers: we stand with you. You are not alone! You are not forgotten! The Church sees you, and, above all, God sees you.

A litmus test for social justice today is the treatment of migrants, refugees and those forced to move due to poverty, violence, climate change and environmental disasters.

POPE LEO XIV

24. *¡Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!* Come and free your people from the fear that holds our communities back. Give comfort to those who remain behind closed doors for fear of detention and deportation. Give courage to those who can move without that fear, so that they may go out to their brothers and sisters with love, protection, and help. Move us! Send us! Make us a Church truly *Courageous in Christ*!

45 Leo XIV, "Address of Pope Leo XIV to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements," Audience Hall, Vatican City, October 23, 2025.
46 "Pope Highlights Dignity of Migrants, Supports U.S. Bishops' Statement - Vatican News," November 18, 2025, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-11/pope-leo-xiv-ukraine-migration-us-nigeria-bishop-zornoza-travels.html.
47 Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas [On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence]* (The Holy See, 2026), No. 81.

Photo: Light enters through a pointed arch window of original brickwork and native Texas limestone in the courtyard of Mission San José.

PART II

DISCERNING OUR REALITY IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

MATTHEW 25: 35

25. We now reflect on these realities facing our sisters and brothers in migration in the light of faith. The Church does not speak of migration as an outside commentator but as a mother who has walked this road since the Holy Family fled into Egypt. Central to the Catholic faith is this truth: the movement of peoples is not an interruption of God's plan but part of the very fabric of salvation. This conviction rests on the Word of God, the teaching of Church councils, the teaching of the bishops, and the Magisterium of the popes through Pope Leo XIV, illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Every Person Bears the Image of God

26. Sisters and brothers, the foundational truth upon which all else rests is simple and profound: every human being is made in God's image (Gn 1:27). God creates every human person with sacred and infinite dignity,[48] a gift endowed by God that no state can grant or take away. By this measure, every law, policy, and



48 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Infinita [On Human Dignity],* Declaration (The Holy See, 2024), No. 11.

God created mankind in his image; in the image of God He created them.
GENESIS 1:27

circumstance must be judged. A person's dignity does not hinge on a passport, a visa, or a work permit. The Church takes seriously the principles that motivate many citizens to call for enforcement: the rule of law, the integrity of the immigration queue, the legitimate authority of nations to manage borders. But these principles cannot be secured by means that violate the human dignity they themselves presuppose. The Church rejects a throwaway culture that treats certain members of our human family as disposable, whatever the stated justification.[49]

27. For this reason, the Church has long taught that people have the right to remain in their homelands under conditions of human dignity, and the right to emigrate when those conditions have collapsed. Where survival or safety fail, the right to emigrate becomes operative.[50] Social order must serve the human person[51] because the individual, the family, and society precede the State,[52] which exists to protect their rights rather than to suppress them. Scripture commands us: "Love the stranger as yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lv 19:34). Jesus ratifies this duty throughout the Gospels. This is not optional. It is a moral imperative.

Love the stranger as yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.
LEVITICUS 19:34

God Walked This Road Before Us

28. If human dignity tells us who we are, the Incarnation tells us who God is and where He chooses to dwell. God did not enter history from privilege. The Word became

---

49 Hope Border Institute, *A Prophetic Response to the Urgent Challenge of Migration: Theological and Pastoral Reflections from Catholic Leaders in North America, Mexico, Central America & the Vatican* (Hope Border Institute, 2025), 16., https://www.hopeborder.org/our-research.
50 John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris [Peace on Earth]* (The Holy See, 1963), No. 25.
51 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]* (The Holy See, 1965), No. 26.
52 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus [On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum]* (The Holy See, 1991), No. 11.

flesh in the vulnerability of a stable, and before the child could walk, His family was already forced to flee: "Rise, take the child and his mother; flee to Egypt" (Mt 2:13). Jesus, saved from Herod's persecution, and His exiled family remain the model of every refugee family.[53] The trauma of flight, the urgency of departure, and the reliance on the mercy of strangers are woven into the earthly life of the Son of God, who moved among us and ministered on the road (Mt 9:35).

To welcome the person in migration is, therefore, to draw near to Christ Himself...

29. In his teaching on the final judgment, Jesus unmistakably identifies Himself with the displaced: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). He puts Himself in the place of those judged not by who they are but by whether they are permitted to belong. The Lord of heaven and earth chooses to be found precisely in the one who has no home. To welcome the person in migration is, therefore, to draw near to Christ Himself; to turn away from them is to turn away from Him.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
MATTHEW 25:35

30. Pope Francis invited us to listen to the parable of the Good Samaritan as the living word for our time. On the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a man lies beaten and stripped, ignored by those of privilege and authority who pass on the other side. It is the outsider, the Samaritan, who bends down to help.[54] Pope Francis insists this parable must be our moral criterion for every economic, political, social, and religious decision: each day we choose whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders.[55] He warns that there are only two kinds of people: those who attend to the other in need and those who hurry past."[56]

31. Let us hear this parable now not as distant history but as a scene unfolding now at our ports of entry, in

---

53 Pius XII, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana [The Exiled Nazarene Family]* (The Holy See, 1952).
54 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti [On Fraternity and Social Friendship]* (The Holy See, 2020), Nos. 63–67.
55 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti,* No. 69.
56 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti,* No. 70.



our airports, in the homes and worksites of those who entered lawfully and now find their status uncertain, in the neighborhoods of our city, and along our Texas border with Mexico. The wounded neighbor, Christ Crucified, is not only found in one place. Someone lies battered by injustice, wounded by fear, by separation, by the collapse of all that was familiar. The Gospel asks us plainly: will I become a neighbor to the one who suffers?[57] Micah gives the measure: "You have been told what the Lord requires: to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6:8). The Holy Spirit calls us, now, to that exact fidelity.

32. The charism of my congregation, the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, is the Spirituality of the Cross, a lens that sees and encounters God most powerfully in the suffering of the vulnerable. When we see a family torn at the border, a child isolated in detention, or a husband uncertain of his wife's fate, we stand at the foot of the Cross. As Msgr. Arturo Bañuelas of El Paso, a child of the borderlands, has said plainly: "Jesus is at the border; today He is crucified in the poor."[58] To minister to migrants, to walk with them in authentic accompaniment is to minister to Christ Himself.

The Earth Is the Lord's

33. The Psalmist declares, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it" (Ps 24:1). From this truth the Church draws the principle of the universal destination of goods.[59] God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of humanity so that all might flourish.[60] While the Church upholds the right to private property and the sovereignty of nations, these rights are always subordinate to the

---

57 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti,* Nos. 80–81.
58 Hope Border Institute, *A Prophetic Response to the Urgent Challenge of Migration*, 23.
59 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), No. 2403.
60 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes,* No. 69.

prior, universal claim every human being has to what is necessary for life.[61] When a family flees violence or starvation and crosses a border in search of safety, they are exercising a right that precedes human law, rooted in the law of God.

34. The Church holds this right in balance with the legitimate authority of nations. The Catechism affirms that political authorities ought to manage and steward migration for the common good, and they are morally bound to welcome the foreigner who seeks security and livelihood unavailable at home.[62] In our joint 2003 Pastoral Letter, *Strangers No Longer*, the bishops of the United States and Mexico distill this teaching with five enduring principles: the right not to migrate, the right to migrate when survival requires it, the legitimate authority of nation states limited by the common good, the protection of refugees, and the inviolable dignity of those without documents.[63] In November 2025, the bishops of the United States formally opposed indiscriminate mass deportation,[64] and, in April 2026, the bishops of Mexico likewise declared that silence in the face of the suffering is a betrayal of the Gospel.[65]

35. The Church's teaching reaches sacramental fullness in the Eucharist. In his letter to them, the Apostle Paul warns the Corinthians that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will answer for the Body and Blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27), a rebuke to

The Gospel asks us plainly: will I become a neighbor to the one who suffers?

POPE FRANCIS

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

1. The right not to migrate

2. The right to migrate when survival requires it

3. The legimiate authority of nation states limited by the common good.

4. The protection of refugees

5. The inviolable dignity of those without documents

Strangers No Longer, 2003

Photo: Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, celebrates Mass at the Shrine of San Juan de los Lagos in San Antonio.

61 Francis, *Fratelli Tutti,* No. 120.
62 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* No. 2241.
63 USCCB and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM), *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope: A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States* (USCCB, 2003), Nos. 34–38.
64 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Special Pastoral Message on Immigration," Joint Statement, USCCB, November 12, 2025, https://www.usccb.org/resources/special-pastoral-message-immigration-november-12-2025.
65 Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM), "Mensaje al Pueblo de Dios: CXX Asamblea Plenaria," Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM), April 16, 2026.

To receive the Eucharist on Sunday and refuse refuge to the desperate on Monday is to miss the sacrament's moral claim.

a community that celebrated at the Lord's table while ignoring the poor. The Eucharist takes the earth's gifts and offers them as the Body of Christ; that Body is wounded when any member is excluded. To receive the Eucharist on Sunday and refuse refuge to the desperate on Monday is to miss the sacrament's moral claim. The Eucharist is not merely consolation for the soul, but a summons to justice and a call to communion.

One Body, Sent by One Spirit

36. The call to communion touches upon the very nature of the Church. Each Sunday, we profess that the Church is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic; to be Catholic is therefore to be truly universal. That universality is not merely geographic but sacramental: by Baptism we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, and that bond of communion transcends national borders, legal categories, and political identities. As St. Paul reminds the Ephesians, "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). In the household of faith, there are no foreigners.

THE FOUR VERBS

Welcome

Protect

Promote

Integrate

Pope Francis, 2017

37. This identity calls forth a concrete response. Pope Francis offers four verbs as our roadmap: welcome, protect, promote, integrate.[66] These are not slogans but demands of the Spirit for disciples faithful to their baptismal calling. To welcome is to open the door and declare, "You belong here." To protect is to shield the vulnerable from exploitation, fraud, and abuse. To promote is to build a community where all can flourish, with access to education, health care, and dignified work. To integrate is to welcome the gifts that people who migrate bring, including faith, resilience, cultures, and work, all of which enrich both Church and country. They are missionaries among us.

66 Francis, "Address at the International Forum on Migration and Peace," Address, The Holy See, February 21, 2017.

38. The bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean describe the Church as a community of missionary disciples, a pilgrim people who, by personal encounter with Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, journey through history to build a culture of life, love, and justice that anticipates the Reign of God.[67] The bishops of Central America likewise embrace Pope Francis' four verbs as the concrete method of accompanying those who migrate.[68] Pope Leo XIV, the son of an immigrant family and an Augustinian missionary who served many years in Peru, personalizes this conviction: "My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants… yet our dignity always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God."[69] In opening our hearts to those in need, we open them to the Lord Jesus

My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants…

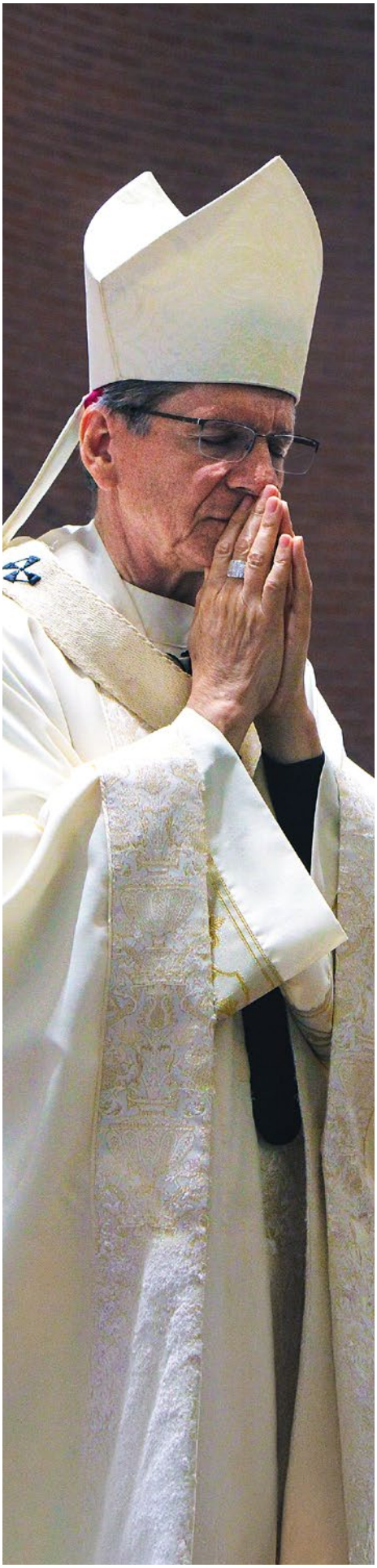
POPE LEO XIV

39. For the Archdiocese of San Antonio, these teachings are not historical words from distant councils. They describe the daily reality of a local Church that was born at the intersection of diverse peoples, faiths, and cultures. Brothers and sisters who arrive in the communities of the Archdiocese do not threaten its identity. They are fulfilling it. They stand as a living witness that the Church is truly a home for all, one Body moved by a single Spirit, and a family that transcends borders, all of us led by the Spirit and adopted as children of God (Rom 8:14–17).

40. Let us invoke the Holy Spirit as we discern our response: make us a Church that does not merely preach justice but lives, embodies, and brings it to every sister and brother wounded on the road. *¡Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

---

67 Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), "Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, so That Our Peoples May Have Life in Him," V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, May 31, 2007.
68 Secretariado Episcopal de América Central (SEDAC), "He Saw Them, He Drew Near to Them & He Cared For Them."
69 Leo XIV, "Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps," Audience, The Holy See, May 16, 2025.



PART III

I KNOW THIS ROAD

The Lord protects the stranger.

PSALM 146: 9

41. We have witnessed the depth of the present human rights crisis and measured it against the Word of God. Fear's cruelest lie is that you are alone, that no one has ever known what it is to stand at a border with your entire life in a single bag. In part, I do. As someone with my own immigration story, whose priestly ministry has consistently included the pastoral care of people who have migrated, I now share part of my own experience so that no one feels the need to bear that loneliness on their own.

The Faith That Formed Me

42. I am a priest, a bishop, and a shepherd of the Archdiocese. My vocation was rooted in a childhood spent in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, where faith shaped daily life. My aunts, uncles, and cousins lived around the corner and the life of the parish was our heartbeat. At five years old, I begged to receive First Communion. When my mother asked, "Who will be your godfather?" I answered without hesitation: my Uncle Clodomiro, then a seminarian and later Father Clodomiro Siller Acuña of Tehuantepec, whose ministry among Indigenous

peoples became known across the continent.[70] He agreed on one condition: "I will pick you up every morning to take you to six o'clock Mass, so that you get to know who you are receiving: Jesus." He picked me up every day for a year, and the Eucharist became the center of everything. At my first Holy Communion, my aunt asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said, "A priest!"

The Eucharist became the center of everything.

43. In kindergarten, I felt the guiding hand of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, shaping my vocation. Those devoted sisters taught us to love the Holy Spirit and to entrust ourselves to the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace. Over time, I understood that what they gave me was not mere childhood piety but the orienting conviction of my soul: that suffering, when met with love, becomes the place where God is encountered. They taught me that the Spirituality of the Cross is a habit of life and a way of seeing, the wood of the cross is not merely timber, but Jesus Crucified, loving to the end. I have seen life through that lens since the age of three, and it is the lens by which I read the suffering of our migrant families today.

...suffering, when met with love, becomes the place where God is encountered.

44. I was raised in the living memory of the Cristero War, not as remote history, but as family testimony. My parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles carried its stories. Decades before my birth, my Uncle Antonio aided the Cristeros by delivering arms; he was caught, condemned and executed, and the family long remembered him as Antonio the martyr. Recently, I read Jean Meyer's definitive

70 Rev. Clodomiro Siller Acuña, PhD (1938–2021), a priest of the Diocese of Tehuantepec, served as Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Indigenous People of the Mexican Episcopate Conference (1973–1991) and Director of the National Center for Indigenous Missions (CENAMI). As a continental specialist on indigenous theology and pastoral practice, he advised dioceses across Mexico and Latin America, lectured at several prestigious international institutions, including at the Mexican American Catholic College (MACC) in San Antonio, and devoted his life to recovering and dignifying the voice of the pueblos originarios within the Church. His funeral Mass was celebrated by his nephew, the Most Reverend Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, Archbishop of San Antonio.

Photo: Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, prays in silence during an ordination Mass for new priests of the Archdiocese.



¡Viva Cristo Rey! Long live Christ the King!

BLESSED MIGUEL AGUSTÍN PRO, S.J.

Photo: Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, SJ, photographed on Nov. 22, 1927, the day before his execution. He wears civilian clothes because Mexican law at the time forbade priests from wearing clerical dress in public.

three-volume La Cristiada.[71] Meyer, a French historian who made his life among Mexicans, recovered the lived history I knew, and there in his book, my Uncle Antonio's name appears more than once.

45. The Cristero War taught me an enduring lesson: a government may seek to organize itself against the faith, to legislate God from public life, and punish those who refuse to comply, but the faith endures. In grade school we kept two sets of books: the government-approved texts on our desks and our Catholic textbooks, kept out of sight when inspectors came. Priests and religious were barred from voting, wearing habits in public, earning a salary, or even inheriting from their families. This was my childhood. And every Catholic household in those years knew the name of Blessed Padre Miguel Pro.

46. On Nov. 23, 1927, the government executed Padre Pro by firing squad and invited the press to record it, hoping to intimidate the faithful. They miscalculated. A Jesuit who saw God in all things, Padre Pro faced death with calm and surrender, with his arms outstretched like a cross. The photographs captured suffering met with love. Just before the shots rang out, he cried out those words that had become the Cristero rallying call: *¡Viva Cristo Rey!* Long live Christ the King![72]

47. If the government thought Padre Pro's execution would suppress a movement, it instead ignited one. The images circulated as holy cards;[73] the cry did not die with the man who spoke it but passed from mouth to mouth, parish to parish, and generation to generation. Sisters and brothers: governments and tyrants may come and go, but none endure. Although the Cristero War targeted the Catholic faith itself, today's climate does not and the situations differ. But what endures is a parallel response of the People

71 Jean A. Meyer, *La Cristiada*, vols. 1–3 (Siglo XXI Editores, 1973).
72 Ann Ball, *Blessed Miguel Pro: 20th-Century Mexican Martyr* (Tan Books, 2011), 90.
73 Ball, *Blessed Miguel Pro,* 91–92.

of God when fear is used to silence them: the witness of faith. Christ the King still reigns today, and he will reign forever. This was the faith which sustained Blessed Pro, which formed me and which sustains our Church now.

Christ the King still reigns today, and he will reign forever.

48. San Antonio became a providential refuge for those persecuted for the faith. It was in that climate of faithful resistance that my religious congregation took root. The Missionaries of the Holy Spirit were founded clandestinely on Christmas Day, 1914, at the Chapel of the Roses in Mexico City, the very place where Our Lady of Guadalupe instructed San Juan Diego to gather miraculous roses in 1531. The Missionaries are my second family: born in the shadow of persecution and nourished by devotion to the Holy Spirit, which remains our deepest charism.

San Antonio became a providential refuge for those persecuted for the faith.

49. In January 1979, while I was in formation at the seminary in Guadalajara, Pope Saint John Paul II made his first apostolic journey to Mexico, and I had the grace to be present. As a faithful son of Poland, he spoke a language my family knew well, the language of a people whose faith was driven underground yet refused to abandon Christ. His first words as pope, "Be not afraid,"[74] became the theme of his papal ministry: suffering, offered in love, draws us into union with the crucified Christ.[75] Later, in 2003, John Paul II would name me Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago.

Sent to a Country I Did Not Know

50. Just over a year later, in June 1980, at 23 years old and deep in my theological studies, my religious superior summoned me: "You are going to the United States with no set return date." Indefinitely. Permanently. To an unfamiliar country, a foreign language, and a different culture. I was afraid. The unknown loomed large. Yet Pope

74 John Paul II, "Homily of His Holiness John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate," Homily, The Holy See, October 22, 1978.
75 John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris [On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering]*, Apostolic Letter (The Holy See, 1984).



Be not afraid!

ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II

John Paul II's words steadied me: trust the Lord, take courage, and be not afraid (Mt 14:27).

51. To my brothers and sisters in migration: many of you did not choose the hour or the destination. You left because survival left you no choice. You had no time to prepare, few possessions, and no guarantees. I will not pretend my path matched yours. Yours has often been far harder. Yet, the small taste of fear I felt in that uncertainty marked me forever. It is why I recognize your suffering, walk with you on the road, and remain resolute in defending your God-given dignity.

52. From the moment I arrived in 1980, I have lived sustained by profound gratitude to God, to my family, to the two religious communities that formed me, the Daughters of the Holy Spirit and the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, and to all who walked this road with me. I am grateful also to the nations that shaped me: to Mexico, the homeland that formed my soul, and to the United States, which became my home. This is not exile. The Holy Spirit sent me here, and I remain joyful and thankful. To be all for God, and all for all people. This is my life. (1 Cor 9)

Photo: Migrant farmworkers harvest strawberries in California's San Joaquin Valley, where the Archbishop served among farmworkers early in his priesthood.

53. My first assignment as a priest was at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Selma, California, in the agricultural heart of the San Joaquin Valley. In those hot and dusty fields worked migrants like me from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking lands. I soon realized I held a work visa that most of them did not. I wanted to visit them at home, but they had no homes. In the 1980s, Fresno County faced the worst farmworker housing shortage in the state.[76] Licensed labor camps and employer housing meant visibility, and visibility could mean deportation. So, they hid. They slept in garages, cardboard shacks, the backs of cars, or under the open sky.[77] The people feeding this nation had no place to lay their heads.

The people feeding this nation had no place to lay their heads.

54. My ministry moved from the fields of the San Joaquin to the streets of Chicago, where the call to organized advocacy was clear. As Auxiliary Bishop, I joined priests, religious, and lay leaders in 2005 to form Priests for Justice for Immigrants. We marched in procession, prayed outside detention centers, and accompanied those facing deportation. I will never forget the mornings when deportation buses would leave for O'Hare Airport: ICE forbade us to speak to the passengers, so we spoke in silence by slipping each person a small card that read, "If you need help, call." We did this with conviction and love, convinced the Crucified Christ was present. Presence is a language no authority can confiscate. In that ministry, I learned the Church does not observe injustice from afar. We walk into it.

Presence is a language no authority can confiscate.

The Spirit Who Brought Me to You

55. I could have never known that, when my congregation sent me to the United States, the Holy Spirit had already prepared the way. In 1926, as the Cristero War broke out in Mexico, the Holy Spirit called

76 James Gordan, *An Assessment of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers' Need for Housing in California: How a Cooperative Model Has Helped Meet That Need,* Center for Cooperatives 1-88564-00-1 (University of California, Davis, 1995), 8., https://ucanr.edu/sites/default/files/2012-05/143800.pdf.
77 Gordan, *An Assessment of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers,* 8.

a small band of Missionaries of the Holy Spirit to San Antonio, where, in collaboration with the Archdiocese and the Mexican bishops in exile, they would soon take up the formation of Mexican seminarians at Castroville, on property Pope Pius XI himself had purchased for the Mexican Church.[78] Now, a century later, one of their sons serves as your Archbishop: a Missionary of the Holy Spirit, a Mexican immigrant once afraid to leave his country, a young priest who knelt in the dirt with farmworkers who had no homes, and a bishop who boarded deportation buses in Chicago. Every step of that road led me here. On Nov. 23, 2010, the feast of Blessed Miguel Pro's martyrdom, I was installed as Archbishop of San Antonio. Not by human design, but by the Spirit. My story, your immigration story, and the immigration stories of families in the local Church, whether Mexican, Spanish, Central American, African, Asian, German, Polish, Czech or from other parts of the world, we are all connected. And these are all the stories of the Archdiocese and of this shared nation.

The summer of 2022 brought our community to its knees twice in 36 days.

56. The summer of 2022 brought our community to its knees twice in 36 days. On May 24, the Robb Elementary School massacre in Uvalde took 19 children and two teachers, recorded as the deadliest school shooting in Texas history.[79] I sat with families who had no words, offering only my presence. Then, on June 27, 53 of our sisters and brothers in migration were found dead in and around an abandoned tractor-trailer on Quintana Road, minutes from Lackland Air Force Base, declared as the deadliest human-smuggling tragedy in U.S.

---

78 Aguirre-Cristiani, "Los Seminarios Mexicanos de Castroville y Montezuma, Dos Proyectos Del Catolicismo Transnacional En Estados Unidos."

79 Adrienne Kennedy, "Robb Elementary School Shooting (2022)," EBSCO, EBSCO Information Services, 2022, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/military-history-and-science/robb-elementary-school-shooting-2022.



history.[80] Among the dead were 40 men and 13 women, including six children and a pregnant mother.[81] With legal pathways closed, desperation drove them into the hands of predators who profited from their fear. First responders discovered Spanish prayer cards among the dead,[82] and survivors I met had rosaries and pocket Bibles as well. I prayed at their bedsides and over those we could not save. There were no words to offer, only accompaniment, the presence of the Crucified Jesus, and faith that the Holy Spirit was with us.

There were no words to offer, only accompaniment, the presence of the Crucified Jesus...

80 William Melhado, "First Defendant in San Antonio Tractor-Trailer Tragedy Pleads Guilty to Smuggling Charges," The Texas Tribune, September 27, 2023, https://www.texastribune.org/2023/09/27/texas-migrant-tractor-trailer-truck-deaths-suspect/.
81 Office of Public Affairs, United States Department of Justice, "Smuggling Leader and Top Coordinator Will Spend Remainder of Their Lives in Prison Following Their Sentencing on Third Anniversary of Deadly Tractor-Trailer Smuggling Conspiracy," United States Department of Justice News, June 27, 2025, https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/smuggling-leader-and-top-coordinator-will-spend-remainder-their-lives-prison-following-their.
82 Melissa Gaffney et al., "4 Charged after 53 Found Dead in Texas Tractor-Trailer," News, ABC News, ABC News, June 29, 2022, https://abcnews.com/US/46-people-found-dead-18-wheeler-san-antonio/story?id=85820560.

Photo: The memorial honoring the 53 sisters and brothers in migration found dead in and around an abandoned tractor-trailer on Quintana Road on June 27, 2022, recorded as the deadliest human-smuggling tragedy in U.S. history.

Words failed. Only the Eucharist gathered us, and there, at the foot of the cross, with the Blessed Mother, I stood with her.

57. In a hospital room, I sat beside a young survivor from Oaxaca, Mexico. He described the trailer's interior: utter darkness, no windows, no food or water, the hot press of air. Between soft, ceaseless sobbing, bodies collapsed from the heat. In the darkness, the group drew together and prayed, "Lord, hear the cry of your people!" He woke in a hospital bed, grateful to be alive. Fifty-three of his sisters and brothers were not. Three days later, at a memorial Mass in San Fernando Cathedral, four flags stood before the sanctuary: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador. Afterwards, I sat with a mother who had flown from California yet was not permitted to view her daughter's body before it was returned to Honduras.[83] Words failed. Only the Eucharist gathered us, and there, at the foot of the Cross with the Blessed Mother, I stood with her. Our Mother of Mercy holds in her embrace every soul who perished in that trailer.

I will not abandon you. The Church will not abandon you. We will come to you.

58. People ask how my hope survives amid such suffering. The answer came early, from the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, and it has sustained me for more than 65 years: suffering, when met with love, becomes the place where God is found. That conviction steadies my hope. It is why I know this road. To anyone now living in fear I make a promise: I will not abandon you. The Church will not abandon you. We will come to you. The Lord spoke first: "I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you" (Jn 14:18). That promise is made real today by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who accompanies every pilgrim people and who now moves in the hearts of the people of the Archdiocese. *¡Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

83 Aleja Hertzler-McCain, "García-Siller, Archbishop of San Antonio and Uvalde, Speaks about a Year of Tragedies," National Catholic Reporter, National Catholic Reporter, December 2, 2022, https://www.ncronline.org/news/garc-siller-archbishop-san-antonio-and-uvalde-speaks-about-year-tragedies.

PART IV

A CHURCH THAT GOES FORTH

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

PSALM 23: 1

59. Sisters and brothers, we have seen despair in our streets, and we have confronted this reality with the light of faith. You know where I come from and why I will not leave you. Now we must answer the question the Holy Spirit asks of every living Church community: What is God asking of us so that we might reflect His love? The Spirit does more than console; the Spirit sends.[84] As Christ said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:21–22). That same Spirit now sends us out of our comfort and into the streets, homes, and courtrooms where our sisters and brothers suffer. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that "social justice requires us to look at individuals and communities, starting with the most vulnerable: the poor, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, victims of violence and people living in urban or existential peripheries."[85] We cannot remain idle, for faith without works is dead (Jas 2:17). What follows is a roadmap for action, born of the Gospel, guided by the Holy Spirit, and offered to every person of faith and good will in the Archdiocese.



84 Leo XIV, "Homily for the Jubilee of the Missionary World and Jubilee of Migrants," The Holy See, October 5, 2025.
85 Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, No. 78.

335,000

men, women, and children welcomed by Catholic Charities at the Migrant Resource Center from 2022–2025.

60. From September 2022 to February 2025, the Migrant Resource Center, also known as *Centro de Bienvenida*, operated by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese in partnership with the City of San Antonio, welcomed around 335,000 men, women, and children[86] as they passed through our city to sponsors and family across the United States.[87] They were welcomed not as a problem to be managed but as sisters and brothers with human dignity: food prepared in the staples of their homelands, clean clothing, case management, legal information, counseling, pastoral care, a safe and sanitary place to sleep, and sustained attention to their spiritual needs. The Center was a place of accompaniment. Though the Center has closed, our ministry continues to defend the dignity of those who migrate.

***Primerear* means "to go first," to take initiative and go out before being called.**

POPE FRANCIS

61. Pope Francis gave us a single, powerful word: *primerear*, "to go first," to take initiative and go out before being called.[88] This is how the Holy Spirit sends us: when God's people cannot come to the Church, we go to them. This is a return to our earliest form of community, when Christians gathered in homes (Acts 2:46). In a climate of fear, the Spirit reminds us who we are: a Church that goes forth, a field hospital for the wounded, a people sent to the peripheries.[89] Guided by Pope Leo XIV's call to accompany our sisters and brothers in migration, the following pastoral directives set forth our pastoral de conjunto, our shared mission as a synodal Church.

---

86 City of San Antonio, "Migrant Dashboard," City of San Antonio Open Data (OpenGov), February 13, 2025, https://stories.opengov.com/sanantoniotx/published/fiHSF0BLe.
87 Josh Peck, "Catholic Charities Has Funds to Operate Migrant Resource Center through September 2025," Texas Public Radio, May 3, 2024, https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2024-05-03/catholic-charities-has-funds-to-operate-migrant-resource-center-through-september-2025.
88 Francis, "Address at the Vigil of Pentecost with the Ecclesial Movements," Address, The Holy See, May 18, 2013.
89 Francis, "Homily for the Opening of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family," The Holy See, October 4, 2015.

The Domestic Church: Your Home is a Sanctuary

Your home is already a church.

62. To those who are in fear of leaving home: You are not alone! Hear the Church's teaching with your whole heart: your home is already a church. Our faith knows the Christian family to be the "domestic church"[90] and a place of communion.[91] Even when the world seeks to isolate and divide us, the Holy Spirit can transform this space into a place of faith, renewal, and encounter.

63. We know the Eucharist is our sustenance, the real presence of Jesus who sustains us. If you cannot safely travel to Mass, do not despair.[92] Make your home a sanctuary of prayer: gather your children around the kitchen table on Sunday, read the Gospel, pray the Rosary together, and entrust your family to Our Lady of Guadalupe. These are not lesser acts of faith but faithful practices that keep the Spirit's flame alive. He is with you, even in the silence of an empty room. We love because He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). Receive that love. Give that love.

We love because he first loved us.

1 JOHN 4: 19

64. In this season of fear and isolation, families must turn to one another. Form small church communities, clusters of three to five neighboring households meeting in homes for Scripture reflection, mutual support, and shared prayer. This ancient practice of Christian life, lived by the first believers, a renewing force in Latin America for generations, and not unlike what the Cristeros did, now meets a new reality of need.[93]

---

90 Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church]* (The Holy See, 1964), No. 11.
91 John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio [On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World]* (The Holy See, 1981), No. 21.
92 Catholic Church, *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition,* 4th printing (Canon Law Society of America, 2023), c. 1248 §2.
93 Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), "Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, so That Our Peoples May Have Life in Him", Nos. 307–310.

Preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ present in those who migrate.

To Our Priests, Deacons, and Religious Women and Men

65. Like the Franciscans who gave birth to the Catholic Church in South Texas, our clergy and religious women and men lay down their lives daily for the sake of the Gospel and the people of the Archdiocese. Thank you for your work and sacrifices on behalf of our immigrant communities. Many of you, like me, are immigrants yourselves, and you may also be afraid. Remember the summons of Pope St. John Paul II to take up your cross without fear and imitate the love of Christ Crucified with courage and fidelity, whether the time is favorable or difficult.

66. I urge you to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ present in those who migrate, but especially during the annual celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on the last Sunday in September. Mark this celebration in a special way with your parish communities. I also encourage you to renew your study of the Catholic social doctrine,[94] so that together we can meet the contemporary challenges of migration, like the scribe who brings forth "both the new and the old" (Mt 13:52). Our Archdiocese will offer formation opportunities for our clergy and laity on Catholic social teaching, including migration, to support this work.

In a desert of fear, prejudice, and indifference, let us follow the call of Pope Leo XIV and make each of our parishes an oasis of peace.

To Our Parish Communities

67. In a desert of fear, prejudice, and indifference, let us follow the call of Pope Leo XIV and make each of our parishes an oasis of peace.[95] We can pool our spiritual energy, gifts, and resources so that our parishes become places of life, encounter, and wonder.[96] I instruct pastors, deacons, extraordinary ministers, and trained catechists to develop active ministries of accompaniment that

94 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004).
95 Leo XIV, "Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps."
96 Leo XIV, "Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps."



reach into the homes of those paralyzed by fear. Go to the peripheries. Bring the Word of God. Bring a meal. Bring the Body of Christ. Go first. The Eucharist fuels our mission; if people cannot come to you, go to them.

68. Parishes and deaneries should explore hosting Know Your Rights training. Citizens, permanent residents, and neighbors without documents alike benefit from understanding constitutional protections and legal obligations. The Archdiocese of San Antonio and Catholic Charities stand ready to support these sessions. Knowing your rights is not defiance but dignity. As the Lord said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (Jn 8:32).

69. All parishes must be ready to accompany those in fear and in need. To protect our flock, prepare for the worst and pray for the best. Each pastor is directed to appoint a Parish Response Coordinator and establish a Rapid Response Team in partnership with diocesan

The Eucharist fuels our mission; if people cannot come to you, go to them.

Photo: Matachines dance on the grounds of Mission San José during the annual festival, a living tradition carrying both Indigenous and Spanish roots.



Photo: Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, speaks with a couple after Mass outside San Fernando Cathedral.

counsel and the parish toolkit protocols.[97] Where more feasible, these actions may be taken at the deanery level. The teams should include a legal liaison, a food-and-transport coordinator, an interpreter, a caregiver for children, and a member devoted solely to prayer. Put the team in place before it is needed.[98] A prepared community does not panic.

70. We should assist our vulnerable families in creating an emergency plan now: to designate power of attorney, identify emergency contacts and child caregivers, and gather and protect essential documents.[99] Warn them against *notario* fraud. In Mexico and other Latin

97 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Parish Toolkit: Supporting Immigrants in a Time of Need," Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., April 10, 2026, 5–9., https://www.cliniclegal.org/resources/catholic-social-teaching/parish-toolkit-supporting-immigrants-time-need.
98 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Parish Toolkit Supporting Immigrants," 24–25, 42-50.
99 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Emergency Planning Guide," March 2026, https://www.cliniclegal.org/file-download/download/public/80301.

American countries, a *notario público* may give legal advice. In the United States, a notary public cannot.[100] Preying on desperation, fraudsters exploit that confusion, stealing savings and destroying cases. Refer only accredited, trusted legal representatives. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, through Caritas Legal Services, stands ready to assist.[101] Pastors and parish staff should consult archdiocesan counsel before drafting letters or affidavits for detained persons. Pastors and parish leaders should study and implement CLINIC's Parish Toolkit.[102]

We must accompany them under the weight of the cross...

71. The toxic stress of this moment leaves wounds that go beyond the legal and material: children absorb their parents' anxiety, and families live under chronic stress that medical professionals identify as harmful.[103] Parishes should urgently connect these families with Catholic Charities' expanded mental-health services.[104] We must promote the integral human development of every person entrusted to our care. We must accompany them under the weight of the cross, the sustenance that nourishes our faith.

72. Pastoral care for those who migrate must extend beyond social-justice ministries and Catholic Charities; it must find expression in every parish ministry, school, and lay association. Whether you serve in the

Pastoral care for those who migrate must extend beyond social justice ministries and Catholic Charities.

---

100 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Unauthorized Practice Toolkit for Community Education," Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), https://www.cliniclegal.org/toolkits/community-education/unauthorized-practice.
101 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, "Caritas Legal Services," ccaosa.org/caritas-legal-services/.
102 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Parish Toolkit Supporting Immigrants," 9.
103 Samantha Artiga and Petry Ubri, *Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress Are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health*, Issue Brief (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2017), https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/living-in-an-immigrant-family-in-america-how-fear-and-toxic-stress-are-affecting-daily-life-well-being-health/.
104 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, "Grace Counseling," gracecounseling-sa.org.

Christian welcome is a mark of discipleship.

Guadalupanas, Knights of Columbus, ACTS, youth ministry, altar society, or any parish group, ask: How are we welcoming the stranger? Every deanery, parish, and Catholic institution in the Archdiocese is encouraged to provide accompaniment in ways that fit each community's gifts and capacity. The model is one we already know from our sacramental life: sponsor couples paired with couples preparing for marriage, sponsors paired with adults in Christian Initiation. In the same spirit, families or small groups of parishioners can walk alongside a family in migration, or several families at once. The form will look different in every parish. The commitment is the same. This relationship is not charity alone but communion, walking together in Christ, learning from one another.[105]

Be the face of Christ to your neighbor.

73. To all our parishioners: take the initiative to welcome our sisters and brothers—whether new to this country or new to your parish. Christian welcome is a mark of discipleship. I invite every Catholic here to sign the Cabrini Pledge,[106] publicly committing to welcome the stranger and affirm the human dignity of every person.[107] Join the USCCB's "You Are Not Alone" initiative.[108] Be the face of Christ to your neighbor. Open your home to a family in need, share a meal, and learn a new name. Accompaniment begins with presence. And presence leads to engagement.

Accompaniment begins with presence.

Ministry with the Detained

74. When we visit the imprisoned and the detained, we visit Christ Himself: "I was in prison and you visited

---

105 Leo XIV, "Message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees," The Holy See, October 5, 2025.
106 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Cabrini Pledge: An Invitation to Be Keepers of Hope," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB, https://www.usccb.org/cabrini-pledge.
107 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Special Pastoral Message on Immigration."
108 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "You Are Not Alone," Justice for Immigrants, USCCB, https://justiceforimmigrants.org/you-are-not-alone/.



me" (Mt 25:36). To priests, deacons, religious, and trained lay faithful: pastoral visitation of those held in immigration detention is a corporal work of mercy and a constitutionally protected exercise of religion that no civil power can lawfully forbid.[109] To pray with those separated from their families, to bring the consolation of the Word, and, where possible, the Eucharist, is a ministry as ancient as the Church. I direct pastors to coordinate this ministry with trained lay ministers in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Criminal Justice Ministry. Some of the priests in the Archdiocese have already shown us the way. Pastors have accompanied parishioners separated from their spouse across detention facilities, sat with them in the waiting rooms, and introduced them to the daily Rosary. A pastor recently told a group of priests, "Peace is found in the center of the storm, which is Christ within the community." If your family has been detained, tell us. We will go to them. The Body of Christ does not abandon its members in chains.

I was in prison and you visited me.
MATTHEW 25:36

Photo: Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, prays with incarcerated men at the Bexar County Adult Detention Center during a Father's Day Mass — an annual visit he also makes to the women's unit on Mother's Day.

109 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), "Parish Toolkit Supporting Immigrants," 16–17.



The Common Good: A Word to Those Who Govern

75. To civic leaders, elected officials, law-enforcement officers, and public authorities: I address you as a pastor and as a fellow human being, equal in the dignity bestowed by God, recognizing how our missions converge. You are entrusted with stewarding our community through public office, and I, by pastoral charge, with the care of our people. We have a shared commitment to defend the human dignity of all and the common good. Jesus is for us, never against us. Many of you show daily what faithful service looks like: county commissioners who opposed the expansion of federal detention, and public-safety leaders in our parishes demonstrate that security and compassion are not opposed. The Archdiocese of San Antonio sees your everyday witness, and we are grateful.

76. To all who hold authority: love your people. Politics, rightly understood, is among the highest forms of charity, and I pray for you daily. Using migrants and refugees as political pawns offends God, frays the fabric of society, and blinds us to Christ in the suffering of our sisters and brothers. Every public servant bears a conscience, the quiet voice placed by God in the human heart. Listen to it. Follow it faithfully.

77. To federal authorities, Members of Congress, and the current administration: the Catholic Church acknowledges a nation's right and duty to enforce its laws, but laws must serve human dignity. The right to asylum has been severely weakened, leaving those fleeing persecution with little chance of protection. Recommended reforms are therefore not abstract proposals but a moral obligation to change a system that has been allowed to fail the most vulnerable. Congress and the administration must reform the immigration system, and at the same time must address the root causes in countries of origin that force families

to undertake unsafe journeys in search of safety and economic security.[110]

78. The following recommended reforms must be read in two layers. The moral principles binding every Catholic conscience, such as the dignity of every person, the integrity of the family, due process, and protection of the most vulnerable, are not negotiable. The specific policy reforms I urge below are prudential applications of those principles. Faithful Catholics may differ on the means, but not on the ends. United with my brother bishops from the border states and beyond,[111] I call for the following urgent reforms:

Protect sensitive locations: places of worship, schools, and hospitals must be restored as safe spaces free from immigration enforcement. Denying sacraments, education, or medical care through intimidation is an assault on religious freedom and human dignity.

Keep families together: we oppose family separation and the deportation of members of mixed-status households. The family is the first cell of society.

Restore asylum and due process: asylum seekers must not be abandoned to the dangers they fled. End enforcement tactics that intimidate communities, especially stops without probable cause, warrantless arrests, and racial profiling.

End mass detention and mass deportation: children, pregnant women, the elderly, and the disabled must never solely be detained for immigration offenses. Every person in custody must receive their right to due

We have a shared commitment to defend the human dignity of all and the common good.

Politics, rightly understood, is among the highest forms of charity.

Photo: St. Anthony of Padua, patron of migrants, of the City of San Antonio, and of this Archdiocese. A migrant himself, born in Lisbon and shipwrecked returning from Morocco, he died at 36. A Spanish expedition reaching the Indigenous village of Yanaguana named the river for him on his feast day, June 13, 1691; the city and this local Church later took his name as well.

110 John Paul II, "Message for the 90th World Day of Migrants and Refugees," Address, The Holy See, December 15, 2003, No. 3.
111 US Catholic Bishops in Border States and Beyond, "Statement of the US Catholic Bishops in Border States and Beyond On Recommended Reforms to Immigration Enforcement in the United States," Center for Migration Studies, February 24, 2026, Joint Statement, https://cmsny.org/border_bishops_statement_feb242026/.

The Gospel and our best national traditions call us to build, not tear down.

process and have full access to pastoral care, including Mass and the sacraments.

Build just pathways to citizenship: address root causes and enact bipartisan immigration reform that offers a pathway to citizenship for those already contributing to our communities, raising children, paying taxes, and serving this nation.

The Gospel and our best national traditions call us to build, not to tear down. Inspired by the Gospel, I pledge to labor tirelessly, unbending and unbroken, alongside our clergy, ecumenical and interfaith partners in San Antonio, community organizations, business leaders, and all who seek a more just and merciful world, until meaningful immigration reform is secured for our people.

Listen to the Holy Spirit as we step beyond our fears and extend Christ's love to every person we meet.

79. To the People of God and all people of good will: the sisters and brothers in migration are not a threat but a gift the Church must never take for granted. Let us seize this moment to become agents of lasting change, strengthened by God's grace. Listen to the Holy Spirit as we step beyond our fears and extend Christ's love to every person we meet. We are all missionary migrants and we are all sent. To those who have accompanied migrant families in so many ways, welcoming an anxious family, driving a neighbor to an appointment, buying groceries for one afraid to leave home, thank you. ¡Gracias! May God reward you. Together, we walk this road united in mission. *¡Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

PART V

SHE KNOWS THIS ROAD

Am I not here, I who am honored to be your mother? Are you not under the shadow of my protection? Am I not the source of your joy?

NICAN MOPOHUA

80. May we seek refuge with Mary: our Mother of Mercy and Hope, and Solace of Migrants.[112] Although we can do nothing alone, we have a mother. Long before she was Queen of Mexico, Patroness of the Americas, Star of Evangelization, or Patroness of our Archdiocese, she was a mother who crossed a border. She knows this road; she walked it with her own feet and has walked it with our people long before any of us were born. In 1531 she crossed borders of culture and race when she appeared on the hill at Tepeyac to a humble man whose voice the powerful dismissed.

81. Juan Diego was afraid and tried to avoid her, taking the long way around because his burdens felt too heavy to lay before her. The words Our Lady once spoke to him she now speaks to those in our archdiocese who are afraid: "Am I not here, I who am honored to be your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection?



112 Vatican News, "Pope Adds Three New Invocations to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary," Vatican City, June 20, 2020, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-06/pope-francis-loreto-litany-new-invocations.html.

Photo: The 16th-century tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe hangs in the sanctuary of the New Basilica in Mexico City, framed against a towering cedar and gold-leaf wall.

In 1531 she crossed borders of culture and race when she appeared on the hill at Tepeyac to a humble man whose voice the powerful dismissed.

Am I not the source of your joy?"[113] She continues to walk with us. She has always been here.

82. We entrust to her every family in San Antonio and our rural communities who live in fear of tomorrow: every mother who has not slept, every father weighing the risk of the drive to work, every child who has learned to watch the door, every person held in a detention center and separated from loved ones, every family torn apart, every person sent away, and every life lost in search of a better future. We lay them all at her feet. She is their mother and our mother.

83. The road ahead will not be easy. But fear cannot yield to passivity. Be bold and courageous in Christ! Unjust systems do not correct themselves overnight, and accompanying sisters and brothers in migration will come with a cost: time, toil, and the comfort of standing still. We were not baptized into comfort but into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who taught that losing our life is the way we find it (Mt 16:25).

We were not baptized into comfort but into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

84. God has given us everything we need for this moment: the Word of God, the teaching of the Church, the history and witness of our Archdiocese, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, poured out at Pentecost upon peoples of every nation under heaven. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us:

> *The Spirit opens borders, first of all, in our hearts. He is the Gift that opens our lives to love. His presence breaks down our hardness of heart, our narrowness of mind, our selfishness, the fears that enchain us and the narcissism that makes us think only of ourselves. The Spirit opens our interior borders, so that our lives can become places of welcome and refreshment.*[114]

Blessed Mother, with you, we are not afraid!

---

113 Antonio Valeriano, "Nican Mopohua: En Español, Inglés, Italiano, Portugués, Francés y Nahuatl," with Role: Institutional Author / Editor and Instituto Superior de Estudios Guadalupanos, 1531, https://www2.kofc.org/es/resources/our-lady-of-guadalupe/nican-mopohua.pdf, No. 119.
114 Leo XIV, "Homily for Pentecost Sunday," Homily, The Holy See, June 8, 2025.

A PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mother of God and Mother of our Americas,
you appeared on this continent as a mother to the poor,
as a comfort to the frightened,
as a sign that God had not abandoned his people.

You know what it is to be a refugee.
You carried your Son across a border.
You know the weight of fear and uncertainty.
You know the love that unites a family.

We place before you the families of this Archdiocese
who are living in fear right now:
the parents who do not know if they will see their children tonight,
the children who carry a weight they are too young to name,
and the detained, the separated, the lost, the forgotten.

Wrap them in your mantle. Hold them in your arms.
Let them feel the peace that only your Son Jesus can give.
Remind them that they are not alone.

Move the hearts of this Church,
that we may go to them, to walk with them,
as you walked with Juan Diego
with patience, with tenderness, and with compassion.

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
keep us united with your Son,
and with one another.
Amen.

I INVITE YOU NOW TO PRAY

O Holy Spirit, receive the perfect and complete consecration of my whole being. In all my actions, grant me the grace of being my Light, my Guide, my Strength, and the Love of my heart.

I surrender myself to You, and I ask You for the grace to be faithful to Your inspiration. Holy Spirit, transform me through Mary and with Mary into a true image of Christ Jesus, for the glory of the Father, and the salvation of the world. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit reign and may all the world be consecrated to him! Amen.

Fr. Felix de Jesus Rougier, MSpS,
Missionary of the Holy Spirit – Founder

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With prayer and deep gratitude, I acknowledge the following collaborators whose listening, dialogue, and faithful counsel helped shape this Pastoral Letter and reflect what it means to walk together, united as a synodal Church:

Most Rev. Gary Janak, JCL, Auxiliary Bishop, Chancellor, and Rector of Assumption Seminary • **Most Rev. Arturo Cepeda, STD,** Auxiliary Bishop and Moderator of the Curia • **Dylan Corbett,** Executive Director, Hope Border Institute (El Paso), and Member, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development • **Kevin Appleby, JD,** Senior Fellow for Policy and Communications, Center for Migration Studies (New York) • **Sr. Elizabeth Ann Vázquez, SSCJ,** Episcopal Delegate for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life • **Virginia Mata, PhD,** Director of Life and Social Justice Ministries • **Joan Martinez, MAPM,** Department Head for Pastoral Ministries • **Ada Saenz, MS,** President and CEO of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio • **Jordan McMorrough,** Director of Communications • **Alejandro Orbezo,** Associate Director of Communications • **Deacon Adrian Cepeda,** Director of Criminal Justice Ministry • **Charles T. Ramírez, MA,** Project Manager, Department for Pastoral Ministries.



ARCHDIOCESE
of
SAN ANTONIO