



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

February 11, 2025

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' PASTORAL LETTER ON IMMIGRATION

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In these challenging times, we, the bishops of Wisconsin, want all immigrants to know that we are here to walk with you – and that God Himself is with you. The prophet Isaiah encourages us, “Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand” (Is 41:10). Our Lord is with us always, especially in uncertain and fearful times. In laying out Church teaching below, we seek to touch the hearts and minds of all who live in this great nation and to uphold human dignity, the common good, and the rule of law.

Protecting Human Dignity by Welcoming the Stranger

- The Catholic Church’s position on immigration is based in the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted that when we welcome the stranger, we welcome Him (Mt 25:35,40).
- Our Catholic faith further teaches that “more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent that they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of security, and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 2241).
- When the Church supports immigrants, she is not doing so to impede the lawful enforcement of immigration laws, nor to encourage illegal entry. Rather, without contradiction, the Church instructs everyone to follow the law and to uphold fundamental human rights.
- In U.S. law, every person, regardless of immigration status, has certain fundamental human rights, which can never be infringed.
- All people have the right to religious freedom to attend church services and to receive sacraments and pastoral care.

Upholding the Rule of Law

- While the Catholic Church always welcomes the stranger, she also recognizes the right of nations to regulate immigration for the sake of the common good (CCC 2241).
- Nations have sovereign rights to control their borders. Indeed, safe and secure borders help everyone.
- The Church opposes both completely open borders and completely closed borders.
- Immigration policy must achieve a proper balance between migrant rights and sovereign rights.

Fostering the Common Good through Comprehensive Immigration Reform

- This current crisis exists because our U.S. immigration system has been broken for decades, no matter which party holds power.
- Legal pathways to entry, residency, and citizenship have become so few and so burdensome that many individuals risk everything to enter illegally. This puts them in danger of exploitation.
- Our nation will continue to face challenges without implementing immigration policies that are balanced and humane. Mass deportation of millions of people is not the answer.
- Distinctions must be made between immigrants who present genuine risks and dangers to society and therefore may be lawfully expelled, and those who have been here for years, have no criminal record, and have lived peacefully and contributed to the common good.
- The U.S. bishops have long advocated for [comprehensive immigration reform](#) that enables legal entry, provides pathways to citizenship, and maintains family unity. As our brother bishops [wrote this past November](#),

We hope that our country can develop an effective asylum system for those fleeing persecution and an immigration system that keeps our borders safe and secure, with enforcement policies that focus on those who present risks and dangers to society, particularly efforts to reduce gang activity, stem the flow of drugs, and end human trafficking. The United States should have an immigration system that protects vulnerable migrants and their families, many of whom have already been victimized by criminal actors.

To Our Immigrant Sisters and Brothers

We want you to know of our love for you. You have inherent dignity. There are many secular and religious agencies, including our own Catholic organizations, ready to assist you. We encourage you to know your rights and obligations as immigrants. Carry a [Know Your Rights](#) card and read the other [resources](#) provided by [CLINIC](#) (Catholic Legal Immigration Network). If you have questions or are in need of assistance, our Catholic Charities in the [Archdiocese of Milwaukee](#), the [Diocese of Green Bay](#), and the [Diocese of La Crosse](#) provide specialized and accredited immigration legal services. Those living in the Diocese of Superior will be directed to Catholic Charities in the Diocese of La Crosse. In the Diocese of Madison, the same services are provided by the [Catholic Multicultural Center](#).

To All Catholics and People of Good Will

We are all sisters and brothers in Christ, made in the image and likeness of God. Let us all show great tenderness and solidarity to those who fear that their families could be separated and their lives uprooted. Let us press our federal elected officials so that they finally pass comprehensive immigration reform. As citizens, it is our responsibility to ensure that we are governed by just laws. There is no inherent contradiction in upholding human dignity, the common good, and the rule of law.

The United States is a nation of immigrants. It is a nation where immigrants breathe free and contribute astonishing energy and creativity. Let us resist the temptation to consider this great land of ours as only for its current citizens. Everything we have is given to us by God and therefore we are called to offer the love of God to all.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, counseled, “Am I not here, I who am your mother? ... Let nothing else worry or disturb you.” We ask for her intercession as we pray that citizens and immigrants may work together to uphold the dignity of every human being and the common good of our state and nation. May we be sisters and brothers to each other and together resolve to be one, peaceful nation under God.

Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob, Archbishop of Milwaukee

Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of Madison

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay

Most Reverend James P. Powers, Bishop of Superior

Most Reverend Gerard W. Battersby, Bishop of La Crosse

Most Reverend Jeffrey R. Haines, Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee

Most Reverend James T. Schuerman, Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKI, Archbishop Emeritus of Milwaukee

Most Reverend William P. Callahan, Bishop Emeritus of La Crosse