

Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



“The Pursuit of the Common Good and Human Dignity: The Catholic Approach to Immigration”

As Bishop and Shepherd of the faithful in the Diocese of Toledo, I find it necessary to speak with clarity amidst the confusion and polarization that currently surrounds the issue of immigration, which has recently come to the forefront of our national discussion.

As recently reiterated by Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), “The Catholic Church is not aligned with any political party... No matter who occupies the White House or holds the majority on Capitol Hill, the Church’s teachings remain unchanged.” Immigration issues are complex and we must be diligent in offering and advocating for the Church’s teaching, especially concerning the common good and each person’s right to human dignity.

Catholic Social Teaching has as its first principle the affirmation that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore possesses an inviolable dignity. Enforcement of just

immigration laws is the right of every nation and is not in itself an affront to this dignity. Nations in their prudential judgment must discern how best to regulate their borders while maintaining the common good and respect for each person, both immigrant and native citizen. The Catechism of the Catholic Church lays out two balancing principles (welcoming the



foreigner and the responsibility to regulate national borders) which must be held together in balance. The disregard or overemphasis of either principle will lead to a distortion of the Church’s full teaching on this vital issue.

First:

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him” (CCC 2241).

Flowing from this, we cannot affirm any immigration or deportation policy which:

- dehumanizes immigrants, legal or illegal, through hostile rhetoric or implies that they are anything less than children of God, made in His image and likeness.
- Detains immigrants indefinitely or deprives them of basic human necessities while in custody.
- permanently separates families, especially children from their parents, except where children are in danger of abuse.
- deploys excessive violence in enforcement of the law, except where needed to protect lives.

The second principle, which balances the first, states: “Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens” (CCC 2241).

Because of this, we must reject any immigration policy (or lack thereof) which:

- encourages or normalizes illegal immigration.
- leads to de-facto “open borders,” which harm the common good of both

immigrant and native citizen by facilitating the grave sins of violent crime, human trafficking and drug trafficking.

- exploits immigrants for cheap labor, which degrades their dignity and depresses the wages of native citizens.
- implies that immigrants, whether legal or illegal, have no responsibility to serve the needs of their host country or obey its laws.

As faithful Catholics and responsible citizens, we are duty-bound to pray for unity and to advocate for just immigration laws that prioritize the common good and protect the human dignity of each person. You are encouraged to contact your elected officials and urge them to uphold our nation’s laws without compromising our Catholic principles.

Christ founded the Church, his Mystical Body, to be “the pillar and foundation of truth” (1 Timothy 3:15) amidst a chaotic and sinful world. We stand firmly upon this pillar, trusting our Lord to enlighten our minds, direct our hearts, and lead us to the fullness of truth. Only in this balanced pursuit of truth, enabled by God’s grace, can we hope to defend the common good and the human dignity of all peoples, both immigrant and native citizen.



Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo
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Further Reading:

- Statement of Archbishop Broglio on Executive Orders Signed by the President
<https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/statement-archbishop-broglio-executive-orders-signed-president>
- “Human Dignity is Not Dependent on a Person's Citizenship or Immigration Status”
<https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/human-dignity-not-dependent-persons-citizenship-or-immigration-status>
- USCCB – Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration and the Movement of Peoples
<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples>

