



- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

22 JANUARY 2025

Peace, my Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As Donald Trump was sworn in as president of the United States on Monday, 20th of January 2025, we pray that he and all our elected officials will have the wisdom and strength to know and to do God's will and be filled with the love of truth and righteousness.

Even as we gave thanks for a peaceful transfer of power, we saw that the new presidential administration has issued a series of executive orders that are a harbinger of President Trump's pledge to deport undocumented immigrants at a historic scale, restrict asylum, and direct other immigration actions. We read this news with concern and urge our new president and congressional leaders to exercise mercy and compassion, especially toward law-abiding, long-term members of communities; parents and children who are under threat of separation in the name of immigration enforcement; and women and children who are vulnerable to abuse in detention and who fear reporting abuse to law enforcement.

The issue of emigration is not isolated to the United States. This is neither a media or political exploitation opportunity nor should it be a conservative or liberal issue – this is a human condition. Recent numbers from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that the number of displaced people around the world as 65 million with an estimated 37.5 million living in the United States.

As Christians, our faith is shaped by the biblical story of people whom God led into foreign countries to escape oppression. Exodus tells us the story of the ancient Israelites escaping slavery in the land of Egypt and wandering in the wilderness without a home. God commands that we remember this sojourn as part of our own story of faith.

Do not mistreat the foreigners who reside in your land. The foreigner who lives among you must be treated like one of your own. Love them as you love yourself, for you too were a foreigner in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh.

Leviticus 19: 33-34 (TIB)

Saint Paul tells us in Ephesians

At one time foreigners had no part in Christ and were excluded from the community of Israel. You were strangers to the Covenant and its promise; you were without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For Christ is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart. In his own flesh, Christ abolished the Law, with its commands and ordinances, in order to make the two into one new person, thus establishing peace and reconciling us all to God in one body through the cross, which put to death the enmity between us. Christ came and “announced the Good News of peace to you who were far away, and to those who were near”; for through Christ, we all have access in one Spirit to our God.

This means that you are strangers and aliens no longer. No, you are included in God's holy people and are members of the household of God,

Ephesian 2: 12-19 (TIB)

We are no longer foreigners. Christ Jesus has made us citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

In the First Letter of Saint Peter, we read

You, however, are a “chosen people, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart” to sing the praises of the One who called you out of the darkness into the wonderful, divine light. Once you were “not a people”, but now you are the people of God; once there was “no mercy for you”, but now you have found mercy.

Dear friends, I urge you, as strangers and foreigners in this world, to abstain from sinful passions which attack the soul. Live such good lives among the Gentiles that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2: 9-12 (TIB)

We have received God's grace, and we must demonstrate this sacrificial love in our lives and deeds. Because our true citizenship is not here on earth but in heaven, we are called to transcend the earthly distinctions made among us by the leaders of this world. We must proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is promised to the persecuted and answer Christ's call to welcome the stranger among us. In this way we can best advance our often repeated motto of our Church, ***Celebrating God's Unconditional Love For All.***

This vision of God's kingdom, this new reality, is the one to which we Christians are pledged in our baptism above any political preference or policy, and to which our church must bear witness through word and deed. This sacred call shapes both our churchwide commitment to stand with migrants and the ministries of congregations across our church who serve vulnerable immigrants and refugees in our communities.

Since our founding, the National Catholic Church of North America, we have long advocated for inclusivity in society and in the church. Beyond providing spiritual and belonging and care, one

of the most important resource the NCCNA churches may do for someone who is a migrant, immigrant, asylum seeker, refugee, or undocumented, is to connect that person with resources for legal representation. The NCCNA follows this call by welcoming immigrants and refugees to the United States, and today, almost every NCCNA parish, mission, and ministry is involved in various social justice programs. Through our baptism we are endowed with the command to advocate with unceasing persistence for our dismissed, disenfranchised and cast-off sisters and brothers. We join with other ecumenical and interfaith partners to urge compassionate and humane policies that at the same time recognize the need to protect borders and address security threats.

As more immigration enforcement policy changes are announced, our churchwide ministries will continue to advocate for practical pathways to protect the most vulnerable among us. We invite you to join us by:

- Advocating with our elected representatives and senators in Congress by using action alert to take action to protect immigrants, known as Dreamers, who were brought to the United States as children and have lived here most of their lives. The long-standing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that offers a respite from the fear of deportation is at risk, and Congress must act.
- Standing against mass deportation which would have severe negative consequences for our communities and economy.
- Supporting sensible and orderly border management that is proportional and humane and respects the “right of asylum”.
- Formulating, Enacting and Supporting programs that protect vulnerable groups of people, including *Temporary Protected Status (TPS)*, *Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)*, humanitarian parole, and the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.
- Speaking out against anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions, including race-based targeting, vigilantism and violence, family division, and detention and deportation without charges or convictions. As Christians, we must stand against these expressions of hatred and fear with a clear witness to our sacred promise to respect the dignity and agency of every human being.
- Encouraging our congregations to use the resources of the NCCNA as a national platform to embody and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ through direct witness on behalf of immigrants in our communities.

One of the hallmarks of the NCCNA is that we draw strength from the richness of our diversity and creativity. Across our church, migrants are members of the Body of Christ and part of our congregations and communities, and our common life is richer thanks to their contributions. To our cherished siblings who are at risk of deportation or of being separated from those you love,

know that your story is our story, and your dignity is inseparable from our own. We stand with you, and we will face these challenges together.

If any clergy member of the NCCNA has any questions, please contact Father Saúl Mejía-Fuentes (email: saul.mejia-funes@nccna.church)

As one church united in the Body of Christ, please pray especially for families who live under the shadow of separation and for all who seek asylum for protection from persecution. Let us pray always for the people of our congregations and dioceses who work tirelessly to serve immigrants and refugees, and who now face new and heartbreaking challenges to their ministry.

The most powerful tool we have is prayer and our voice for action. Let us join our prayers and voice with the countless people in our amazing country who stand in solidarity with our siblings who find themselves in our country as refugees and immigrants. Always, thank you for sharing your hospitality, energy, expertise, and contributions to the National Catholic Church of North America to advance the mission of the Church. May Almighty God in mercy watch over us and our country.

Fraternally Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Jim". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Jim" is written in a fluid, elegant cursive.

Most Reverend James N. Sherlock, O.F.J., D.Min., D.D.
Presiding Bishop
The National Catholic Church of North America