



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

2500 North Tyler Street • P.O. Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 Fax (501) 664-6304

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To all people of good will,

As you know, the contentious issue of immigration continues to dominate the public square, often without any serious consideration of what Jesus and our Christian faith has to say about this matter. It is my hope that our elected officials will have the courage and wisdom to do what is right, to do what Jesus would do—to do the loving thing. You may feel like there is nothing you can do to change politicians' minds. But the place to begin is with ourselves, our own hearts and our own parishes, and our own discomfort in dealing with another culture and immigrant group. And to not forget about the human dignity and the human rights of the other person.

As you also know, I've written a pastoral letter which you can download from the Diocese of Little Rock website. I have preached and taught on this issue throughout my time here as your bishop. And so, I don't want to rehash all the Catholic principles that must be taken into account. Rather, I want to appeal to your hearts—to the reality that we are all brothers and sisters—including the 1/3 of Arkansas Catholics who worship in Spanish in 43 of our parishes. And right now, this Spanish speaking part of our body of Christ is hurting and living in fear.

If you're living in fear today, I want you to know we stand in solidarity and in prayer with you.

And if you're not familiar with the parts of our one body of Christ who are living in fear, I implore you to pray for them and try to find ways to get to know them. Find ways to help your fellow believers feel welcomed.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us at the last judgment he will say to his chosen ones: *"I was a stranger and you welcomed me As often as you did it for one of my least brothers and sisters, you did it for me."* And to others he will say: *"As often as you neglected to do it to one of these least ones, you neglected to do it to me."*

I could go into all the theological reasons behind the Church's teachings on the rights of migrants, and all the arguments as to why our current immigration system is deeply broken. For example, many of us are under the mistaken impression that people who want to migrate to the United States can easily do so by getting in line. But for most people there really is no line, which is why circumstances forced them to come here without papers. And anyone who's tried to navigate the system can tell you how bureaucratic, complex, inconsistent, and expensive it really is—and that's for people who have financial means and family or highly skilled employment-based connections! But all those arguments aside, what Jesus is challenging us to do here regarding immigration is to let him share his heart and mind with us. All that I've said in the past really boils down to Jesus' call for us to love as he loves, without fear, trusting in God's providence.

One of the most distinguishing features of our Catholic faith is that we are called to be "universal" in fact as well as in name. This means that there must be no dividing lines within our parishes, no second-class parishioners—all are welcome, no exceptions. But there's more to it than that. You and I are being offered a unique and privileged opportunity to share the mind and heart of Jesus Christ, the same Jesus whom we honor with so many images of the Sacred Heart, his heart visible, crowned with thorns and on fire with love. And that's who he now invites us to be, Christ for others. In this, God will use us to be not only a light to our nation (enlightening others about human rights, about truth, about life), but also more importantly a source of love, love that banishes fear, love that brings hope and healing, and in this way become a model for what all of American society is called to be.

+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock