

The Church's Response to Violations of Human Dignity Surrounding Migrants

Friends,

As people of faith, we are called to treat migrants — regardless of legal status — as our brothers and sisters. Nations have a legitimate right to protect their borders, but that right *never* outweighs basic human rights. Both Pope Francis and Pope Leo have reminded us that respecting the dignity of every person is at the heart of what it means to be truly pro-life. These are not political statements, though they address politics, rather these are statements of faith based on the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reports of excessive force used by Border Patrol and ICE continue to surface. A running teammate of St. Thomas parishioner Ben Bocher was assaulted by federal agents upon returning home from a run on Saturday, October 25. This man is about 70 years old, white, male and a U.S. citizen born and raised here. He committed no crime and offered no resistance. Yet as Border Patrol terrorized his neighborhood, they pulled him out of his car, threw him to the ground, broke six of his ribs and caused internal bleeding. I viewed the video of the incident and heard his neighbors plead with the agents to get off him because they were crushing him.

Also on October 25, Federal agents used tear gas in the Old Irving Park neighborhood of Chicago, which drew criticism for deploying chemical agents on residents, including children walking to a Halloween parade. The Department of Homeland Security stated the use of force was justified because agents felt “boxed in.”

Monday, November 3, Dayanne Figueroa was on her way to get coffee before heading to work when an unmarked vehicle driven by federal agents struck her car according to multiple videos reviewed by the Chicago Tribune. “Seconds after the crash agents stopped their vehicle and exited with weapons in hand pointing at Figueroa, a US citizen. Agents then forcibly opened her door, pulled her out of the vehicle by her legs without identifying themselves, presenting a warrant or informing her that she was under arrest as bystanders yelled “you hit her, we have it on video.” They forced her into a red minivan and drove away. Her car was left behind in the middle of the road, her coffee cup still in the cupholder her keys in plain view. The Homeland Security Department later released a statement claiming that she was at fault and saying she crashed into an unmarked government vehicle and resisted arrest ... Daniel Hogan, a witness who recorded the agent crashing into Dayanne’s car said “of course she resisted. She did nothing wrong. They never told her why they were taking her. They came at her with guns. She was scared.” Hours later Dayanne’s mother picked her up from an ambulance in a parking lot in Lombard in shock and bleeding from recent surgery.” (*Chicago Tribune P. 1, 11/3/25*) What happened to showing your badge and asking for a driver’s license?

The border patrol commander has claimed that he is ridding Chicago streets of the “worst of the worst” illegal immigrants who have a history of violent criminal behavior. “However scant details on those arrested have been officially released and critics say the vast majority have had no criminal backgrounds whatsoever.” (*Chicago Tribune P. 3, 10/31/25*)

The Church takes her place on the side of the marginalized, as Christ did, for “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (MT 25:40). Let us pray about what is ours to do next.

In peace,



Fr. Peter Infanger



Pope Leo

“With the abuse of vulnerable migrants, we are witnessing, not the legitimate exercise of national sovereignty, but rather grave crimes committed or tolerated by the state. Ever more inhumane measures are being adopted — even celebrated politically — that treat these ‘undesirables’ as if they were garbage and not human beings. Christianity, on the other hand, refers to the God who is love, who creates us and calls us to live as brothers and sisters.”

Pope Francis

“The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality.”

US Catholic Conference of Bishops

“The chronic lack of opportunities for legal status ... together with the growing denial of due process ... is injurious to human dignity and is a considerable factor in the breakdown of the rule of law.”

Cardinal Cupich, Chicago

“In this moment it is important to state clearly that keeping the nation safe and respecting human dignity are not mutually exclusive. In fact one cannot exist without the other. The safety of a nation cannot come at the expense of violations of human dignity and surely the dignity of the undocumented can never be violated by unnecessarily aggressive tactics that go far beyond the task of apprehending people and which seem to be intended to cause fear and chaos, rather than fulfilling the noble calling of law enforcement. No one working in this noble calling should be put in the position of acting this way. Not only do they risk violating the dignity of others but such activity is beneath their own dignity.”

Bishop Wack, Pensacola-Tallahassee

“As a pro-life people, can we support the separation of families with mixed immigration status? Can we, in good conscience, endorse policies that deport a working father — knowing the devastating impact it will have on his family — without also acknowledging his contributions to our communities? Can we accept that more children are being pushed into the foster care system because both parents have been deported? Can we continue to ignore the cry of the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers — members of our own parishes — with whom we share the Eucharist every Sunday?”

Archbishop Gómez, Los Angeles

“We all agree that we don’t want undocumented immigrants who are known terrorists or violent criminals in our communities. But there is no need for the government to carry out enforcement actions in a way that provokes fear and anxiety among ordinary, hard-working immigrants and their families.”

Bishops from US & Mexico

In a statement, Binational Encuentro: Migrants, Pilgrims of Hope in Christ, 13 bishops “call for unity, compassion and action on behalf of migrants and refugees.” They urge all people of faith and goodwill to join them in helping by:

“Encounter and Accompaniment: ... of our brother and sister migrants.

Fervent Prayer and Advocacy: Pray and advocate fervently for the safety and well being of migrants and refugees.

Continued Prayers for Policymakers: in the US and Mexico and advocate for them to implement laws and policies that promote safety for people fleeing violence and uphold the sacredness of family unity.

Peaceful and Prayerful Public Witness: for migrants.”