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*Cathedral Square Plaza*

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**To: Priests, Deacons and Parish Life Coordinators**  
**From: Bishop Edward C. Malesic**  
**Date: 13 February 2025**  
**Re: Message regarding immigration**

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In light of the current immigration situation nationwide, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Cleveland, is providing information that will help you respond to questions you may get or might already be getting from your parishioners. With the in-pew Catholic Charities appeal kick-off this coming weekend, it is important to know how to address potential inquiries.

First, most would agree that the current immigration system is broken and needs to be rectified by our government leaders and representatives. An authentically “Catholic” solution would be one that respects the need to maintain our national borders with appropriate limits on immigration, but that is open to humanly receiving our brothers and sisters from other countries who desire to become a part of our national family, while also furthering, as far as possible, the good of our brothers and sisters in need.

First, the Catholic Church in the United States has recognized, along with many government leaders on all sides of the political spectrum, the need for serious immigration reform for over two decades. However, the consistent failures of both parties to rise toward a political consensus on this issue has led to continued uncertainty for immigrants seeking a better future and the common good of our nation. An authentically “Catholic” solution would be one that respects the need to maintain our national borders with appropriate limits on immigration but that is open to humanly receiving our brothers and sisters from other countries who desire to become a part of our national family and allow their loved ones to live a dignified life.

In the meantime, as disciples of Christ, we must continue to recognize and honor the dignity of every person and do all we can within the law to help our brothers and sisters in need, even if they are here without recognized documentation. This does not mean the Church encourages illegal immigration or is actively seeking to undermine the country’s immigration laws. What it does mean is that the Church sees Jesus Christ in every person, citizen or foreigner, and meets that person as if meeting Christ Himself.

As a number of bishops have noted, we must not presume that there is a conflict between respecting human dignity and upholding the rule of law and the common good.

Regarding Catholic Charities, Diocese of Cleveland (CC-DOC) and the services it provides, the following information may be helpful to know and share as needed:

- All funds raised through the Catholic Charities annual appeal stay in the Diocese of Cleveland and are used to support only those people in need within our eight counties.
- CC-DOC is committed to providing services in a manner compliant with all federal, state, and local laws and in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- The number of clients CC-DOC serves through migration and refugee services represents 1.4 percent of the 400,000 people CC-DOC serves each year.
- CC-DOC does not discriminate, including on the basis of immigration status, and provides services to all those in need through a comprehensive continuum of health and human services.
- CC-DOC does provide immigration legal services to individuals/families seeking lawful status or who need legal representation in immigration proceedings.
  - Such services are funded by client fees and a combination of federal, state, and local foundations, and represent 1.6 percent of CC-DOC's total budget.

We will continue to echo Pope Francis' message issued to the Bishops of the United States on Feb. 11: "The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all ... welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable. This does not impede the development of a policy that regulates orderly and legal migration."