



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

Office of the Bishop
Fifty-five Joy Drive
South Burlington, Vermont 05403
Phone: (802) 658-6110

Statement of the Most Reverend John J. McDermott on Immigration February 7, 2025

Over the last several weeks I have received a number of communications expressing concerns about the recent changes to and enforcement of U.S. immigration laws and I have also been asked to offer a statement concerning the Diocese of Burlington's response to these changes.

While it has taken me some time to consider the situation and formulate a response, I believe that such an important matter requires careful consideration and much prayer. Responding too quickly could result in a statement that is confusing and unhelpful.

First, I must admit that I do not have a solution to the immigration challenges we face as a nation, but I do know that as a follower of Jesus Christ and successor of the apostles I cannot turn my back on those who are in need. As a bishop I am called to be a shepherd to all those in my midst, regardless of immigration status. I must seek to imitate the Good Shepherd who came to seek the lost sheep and share with them the Good News of salvation. And so, that is what I will do. I will continue to visit parishes and individuals around Vermont and listen to their concerns. I will offer my prayers and the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Most Holy Eucharist, for their intentions. I will help people to the best of my ability knowing that this help will most likely be inadequate to address every issue.

For those wishing to know what the Church teaches about immigration and refugees, I ask all of us to consider what the Church already shares in these matters: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cf. #2241); the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops guide to *Catholic Elements of Immigration Reform* (www.usccb.org); the homilies and letters of Pope Francis (www.vatican.va) and numerous statements of individual bishops and state bishops' conferences (e.g. Statements of the Bishops of Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina and others, which are available online). We find in these and other church instructions the wisdom of those who have been ministering to immigrants and advocating for them for many years.

All these documents acknowledge the right and responsibility of a nation to secure its borders, but they also call for immigration policies that recognize the dignity of every person,

prioritize family unity and seek to address the root causes of forced migration. The Catholic Church continues to call on political leaders around the world to work on immigration policies that respect human dignity, protect the vulnerable, ensure the security of all people (citizens and immigrants) and encourage the just enforcement of immigration laws.

Finally, regarding our diocesan and parish response to the present situation we are facing as a nation and as a state, I ask that all of us look for opportunities to assist those in our communities who are living in fear because of the recent changes. While we cannot meet every need, we must try to assist those who seek our help, knowing that when we aid them, we are helping Christ. (Cf. Mt. 25:31-46). The Catholic Church in Vermont must continue to do its best to fulfill the demands of the Gospel by striving to care for those in any kind of difficulty. The Diocese of Burlington will offer updates on its website to provide additional information and resources regarding immigration.

I am sure that some will find this statement inadequate considering the gravity of the present situation, and for this I apologize. Please pray that the Lord will continue to guide me in my on-going discernment of leading the Diocese of Burlington to address this present challenge and the challenges to come.

God alone suffices!

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "John J. McDermott" in a cursive script, ending with a long horizontal flourish.

+John J. McDermott
Bishop of Burlington