



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

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

August 22, 2025

Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This link between migration and hope is clearly evident in many contemporary experiences of migration. Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.

— Pope Leo XIV **Message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025**

My dear family in Christ:

Catholics in Vermont are generous people. Throughout our history in the Green Mountain State, we have reached out to help neighbors in need: bringing meals, offering rides, sharing work, sharing faith and opening our hearts to those who are struggling. To this day, we see the person in front of us, and we respond with compassion. This is the Gospel in action.

In our country and in our state, it is reported by bishops and others that many of our immigrant and migrant neighbors, especially those working on farms, in service jobs, and in small businesses, are living in fear because of their immigration status. Many are Catholic and they are afraid to attend Mass. Afraid to have their children baptized. Afraid to call a priest or deacon when someone is sick or dying.

Being undocumented should not exclude anyone from the life of the Church. The Church teaches that the dignity of every person, including migrants and immigrants, must be respected always and that more prosperous nations, while having the right to establish immigration policies to serve the common good, have an obligation to welcome those seeking security and livelihood, especially when threatened with death or in fear of survival. (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2241).

For some faithful Catholics, speaking out about immigration policies, or about the suffering we see caused by their enforcement, feels uncomfortable. Some see it as stepping into politics, something they believe the Church should avoid. But what I am addressing here is not a matter of partisan debate, it is a matter of pastoral care, Christian responsibility, and human dignity.

Please join me in praying for all those who have a role in shaping immigration policies, both locally and nationally, that they may come together in wisdom and good faith to craft solutions which protect the integrity of our borders and respond compassionately to the needs of our vulnerable brothers and sisters who are seeking a better life. I also encourage Catholics to reach out to government officials to express your thoughts and concerns about the present immigration situation in our state and nation.

To our migrant and immigrant brothers and sisters in Vermont, please know that we are praying for you and wish to help. You are not alone. You are part of our local Church. You are welcome at the table of the Lord. Your presence here is a blessing to the Catholic Church of Vermont.

For those looking for ways to aid these our brothers and sisters in Vermont, there are existing ministries in some of our parishes, which provide food, clothing and other support to those in need.

Contact information and other details about these charitable efforts taking place in Addison, Franklin and Chittenden Counties will be made available on our diocesan website.

To my brother priests and deacons, continue to serve faithfully and tenderly, caring for all who come under your pastoral care. The sacraments are never to be withheld due to immigration status. Our call is to minister to all for the salvation of their souls.

Just as in the past when Catholics in Vermont have heeded the call of the Lord to care for the needy, this present situation is an invitation to live out our Christian faith. To assist our migrant and immigrant neighbors is another opportunity for us as followers of Jesus to proclaim the good news to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, and welcome the stranger. Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

In closing, I renew my response to the immigration situation shared this past February:

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 (immigration) 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... 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.

Let us invoke the intercession of Mary, refuge of the poor, and St. Joseph, her spouse, as we seek to assist our sisters and brothers in need.

God alone suffices,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. McDermott", with a small cross to the left of the first letter.

The Most Reverend John J. McDermott
Bishop of Burlington