THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

DIOCESE OF PHOENIX BISHOPS PASTORAL LETTER: In Solidarity with the Stranger

June 20, 2025

> "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."
> — Matthew 25:35

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, as the Church of Phoenix, we raise our collective voice and hearts in prayerful solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters; especially considering the recent ICE operations that have brought confusion, fear, and heartache to many of our communities.

These men, women, and children—many of whom have fled economic hardship, violence, and political instability—come to our land seeking refuge and hope. They are not statistics; they are our neighbors. They are members of our parishes, our schools, and our communities. They are members of the Body of Christ. Just as Christ humbled Himself to share in our humanity, they too bear the image of God and share in the dignity He bestows on every human person.

We affirm their humanity. We stand beside them in faith. And we pray with all our hearts for true and comprehensive immigration reform in our nation—a reform not rooted in fear, but in justice, compassion, and wisdom.

The Cry of the Migrant Is the Cry of Christ

Jesus Himself knew the experience of the migrant. As an infant, He was carried by Mary and Joseph into Egypt to escape the wrath of a tyrant (cf. Matthew 2:13–15). His earthly ministry was marked by movement and rejection—often with nowhere to lay His head (cf. Luke 9:58). He makes clear what discipleship demands when He teaches:

> "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)

"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40) These words are not suggestions. They are imperatives. They reveal the very heart of God for the migrant, the stranger, and the vulnerable.

Our Nation's Identity Is at Stake

Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once praised the United States in these words:

> "Our country has always had a great role. First of all, it was a sanctuary for the oppressed. Then it became an arsenal for democracy. And now it's a pantry for the world."

These were not merely aspirational words—they reflected the America he knew in the 1950s and '60s. Tragically, it is hard to see how these words reflect our current moment.

Yet we remain grateful for the bold, prophetic voices within our Church who call us back to the Gospel and urge us to move beyond fear. Here are just a few recent examples:

A Nation of Immigrants Must Not Lose Its Soul

Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, recently reminded us:

> "The situation is far from the communion of life and love to which this nation of immigrants should strive."

While enforcement of the law has its place, it must be carried out with proportionality, transparency, and due process. Otherwise, it risks tearing the fabric of our communities and betraying the very values that once made America a beacon of hope.

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles added:

> "It's been almost 40 years since the last reform of our immigration laws. That's too long, and it's time to do something about it."

> "Other nations have a coherent immigration policy that respects the natural right to migrate in search of a better life... America should too."

Bishop Michael Pham of San Diego, together with Auxiliary Bishops Bejarano and Pulido, highlighted the cruel paradox facing so many migrants:

> "We know that migrants and refugees find themselves in the difficult predicament of being called to appear, which is what the government asks of them, and then being given orders for expedited removal from our country."

Such policies, lacking in pastoral sensitivity and basic legal protections, erode trust between communities and authorities and wound the moral conscience of our nation.

Called to Be Light in the Darkness

Our Metropolitan Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe has spoken powerfully to our hearts:

> "We cannot remain silent when children are afraid to attend graduations, when workers are afraid to go shopping, when parents are not there when their children come home

from school... when the sick are terrified of going to the hospital, and worshippers are unable to pray together in church."

Here in the Diocese of Phoenix, we must rise above political paralysis and respond with Gospel courage. Therefore, we call upon every parish, school, and Catholic institution to join us in the following pastoral commitments:

A Fourfold Response of Faith

1. Public Prayer for Immigrants and Immigration Reform
At every Sunday Mass, let us include intentions for migrants, refugees, and for just and humane reform of our immigration laws.

2. Pastoral Solidarity
Welcome and accompany those affected in your community. Be present. Listen. Offer tangible support through Catholic Charities and parish outreach ministries.

3. Peaceful Public Witness
When appropriate, participate in lawful and peaceful demonstrations. Let us raise our voices—not our fists. Our witness should be a light, not a spark for division.

4. Eucharistic Intercession
Offer Holy Hours, Rosaries, and Chaplets of Divine Mercy in reparation and petition—asking God to enlighten the minds and hearts of lawmakers and leaders.

Let us entrust this cause to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas and Refuge of Migrants. May she, the Mother of Mercy, intercede for all who walk in fear this day. And may the Light of Christ (far brighter than the torch of Lady Liberty) guide our steps as we strive to be a Church of welcome, mercy, and hope.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, may Christ be our hope!

In the peace of Christ,

+ John P. Dolan
Bishop of Phoenix

+ Eduardo A. Nevares
Auxiliary Bishop of Phoenix

+ Thomas J. Olmsted
Bishop Emeritus of Phoenix