



Statement of the bishops of the border between Texas and Northern Mexico

The cry of Christ in the voice of the migrant moves us

1. We greet you joyfully from the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, in the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas. We speak on behalf of the bishops, priests, religious, and committed lay persons who are participating in the biannual meeting of the Tex-Mex Border Bishops. For this meeting we have also invited representatives from other border dioceses between the United States and Mexico.
2. We began these biannual meetings in 1986 as an expression of the communion of the Universal Church. The primary concern in all these years has been to address the life and pastoral needs of our migrant brothers and sisters.
3. In this difficult moment in our history we hear the cry of our migrant brothers and sisters, in whose voices we hear the voice of Christ Himself.
4. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as immigrants and refugees, sought a place to live and work, hoping for a compassionate human response. Today this history repeats itself; this morning we visited detention centers and respite centers for mothers and their adolescent and minor children traveling with them. Centers like these have been described as places of intolerable and inhumane conditions. There we heard the gospel call: "Because I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was hungry and you gave me food..." (Mt 25:35-36).
5. Over the years we have seen firsthand the suffering that is brought about by a broken immigration system caused by political structures and economic conditions that result in threats, deportations, impunity, and extreme violence. This situation occurs in relation to immigration both between Central America and Mexico and between Mexico and the United States.
6. We have seen the pain, the fear, and the anguish suffered by the persons who have come to us and who have to live among us in the shadows of our society. Many have been exploited in their workplace, have lived under the constant threat of deportation, and have suffered the fear of possible separation from their families and friends.
7. This reality is made evident today as we consider the measures taken by civil authorities. We can sense the pain of the separation of families, loss of employment, persecutions, discrimination, expressions of racism, and unnecessary deportations that paralyze the development of persons in our societies and the development of our nations, leaving them empty and without hope.

8. Immigration is a global phenomenon arising from economic and social conditions of poverty and insecurity. It directly displaces entire populations causing families to feel that migration is the only way to survive. The migrant has a right to be respected by international law and national law as he/she faces the violence, criminality, and inhuman policies of governments as well as the world's indifference.
9. Regardless of one's migration condition, the intrinsic human dignity that every person possesses must be respected in the person of the migrant. They are commonly subjected to punitive laws and are often mistreated by civil authorities in their countries of origin, the countries through which they travel, and the countries of their destination. It is essential that governments adopt policies that respect the basic human rights of undocumented migrants.
10. The border cities consider themselves to be sister cities and friends, sharing a long history of the same land, faith, traditions, culture, and solidarity. We bishops shall continue to follow the good example of Pope Francis; we shall seek to construct bridges among peoples, bridges that help to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation.
11. We affirm that the friendship between families and neighbors can result in friendship between peoples and nations. Our encounter is already a clear manifestation of joy and a profound sign of lasting hope. The cross that Pope Francis blessed between the cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, in memory of his visit in February of 2016, has become a symbol of encounter, unity, and fraternity.
12. As a Church, we reiterate our commitment to care for pilgrims, strangers, exiles, and migrants, affirming that all persons have a right to live in conditions worthy of human life. If these are not given, they have a right to migrate (Pope Pius XII), and we pledge ourselves as bishops, members of two different Episcopal Conferences, to walk with and care for the suffering of our migrant brothers and sisters.
13. In the Church, no one ought to feel like a stranger, and migrant families should feel at home in every church as their homeland. (Pope John Paul II)
14. Through Catholic Charities USA and various houses for migrants in Mexico, we will continue to offer quality services to migrants, including spiritual, legal, material, and family assistance.
15. Likewise, we will maintain our constant presence in detention centers and assistance centers for migrants, from the southern border of Mexico and throughout the USA.
16. In addition, there are recognized lay organizations that offer wholehearted support to migrants.
17. We affirm the many families in Mexico and the United States who open their hearts and their homes to migrants on their journey.

18. In these initiatives we find our support in prayer and in the significant presence of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who has accompanied the migrant and our peoples since 1531. “Am I not here who am your mother?”

19. We invite all persons of good will to join us in carrying out this ministry and in this simple prayer: “We fly to your patronage, O Holy Mother of God; do not despise our petitions in this hour of need, but free us from all danger, O Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.”

February 15, 2017
San Juan, Texas, USA

Most Rev. Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSpS
Archbishop of San Antonio

Most Rev. Rogelio Cabrera López
Archbishop of Monterrey

Most Rev. Joe S. Vasquez
Bishop of Austin
& USCCB chairman of the Committee on
Migration

Most Rev. Alfonso Gerardo Miranda
Guardiola
Secretary General of the Mexican Episcopal
Conference

Most Rev. Daniel E. Flores
Bishop of Brownsville

Most Rev. José Guadalupe Torres Campos
Bishop of Ciudad Juárez

Most Rev. Raymundo J. Peña
Bishop Emeritus of Brownsville

Most Rev. Guillermo Ortíz Mondragón
Bishop of Cuautitlán

Most. Rev. Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso

Most Rev. Eugenio Andrés Lira Rugarcía
Bishop of Matamoros

Most. Rev. James Tamayo
Bishop of Laredo

Most Rev. José de Jesús Herrera Quiñonez
Bishop of Nuevo Casas Grandes

Most. Rev. Oscar Cantu
Bishop of Las Cruces

Most Rev. Enrique Sánchez Martínez
Bishop of Nuevo Laredo

Most. Rev. David O'Connell
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Most Rev. Alonso Gerardo Garza Treviño
Bishop of Piedras Negras

Most. Rev. Michael James Sis
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Most Rev. Raúl Vera López, O.P.
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Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop Emeritus of San Angelo

Most Rev. Hilario González García
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Most Rev. Michael Boulette
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