

A Note from the Pastor

Dear Parishioners,

This column is a mid-Summer look at a major news item from a faith perspective. I am referring to the challenges faced by many immigrants especially at the southern border of the United States.

When I was pastor at Sacred Heart parish in Suffern, about seven or eight years ago I was asked to host a Catholic Charities roundtable in the parish because there was so much anxiety in the immigrant community there due to federal immigration policy impacting cities, towns and villages. Shortly after the roundtable, I was asked by a number of parishioners how I perceived the situation as a Catholic pastor. I can basically repeat now what I said at that time.

As a Catholic Priest who was a student at the Vatican Diplomatic School in Rome and who spent time working in a number of Vatican Embassies around the world, I have a somewhat unique perspective. I fully accept the fact that every country in the world has the right and obligation to protect its borders and its citizens. As an American citizen, I am proud of my country. Yet I realize not everyone is happy or safe in his or her own country. Often people desire to leave their country. Sometimes people leave out of necessity such as fear of violence, poverty or war.

Difficulties arise for countries when people try to enter or actually do enter without permission. Sometimes there are urgent reasons for immigration without legal permission, sometimes there are not. Countries must regulate admittance.

Our country has a great history of welcoming immigrants. I believe our country especially should do everything possible to help people enter legally. I believe those who have entered illegally, or without permission, should be treated with respect and that a safe solution should be found for them, such as return to their country, if possible. As Catholics, we should urge our elected officials and responsible authorities to treat everyone as they would themselves wish to be treated. They should be particularly mindful of children. As Catholics, we should never forget that Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me."

The immigration system in this country is facing great challenges, but I don't think those challenges can be solved without a moral and religious dimension. The legal aspect is paramount, but justice has to be balanced with mercy and compassion. That is the biggest challenge of the immigration crisis. May the Lord help everyone involved to do what is good and proper.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monsignor Giandurco". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned at the bottom right of the page, below the typed name.