



February 19, 2025

Dear Confreres,

Recently, CNN reported that U.S. officials kept about 100 deported Indian migrants in shackles during their 40-hour flight home, even during bathroom breaks. This mistreatment of immigrants — of our brothers and sisters — has led to an international outcry. In an open letter to the U.S. Catholic bishops, Pope Francis condemned the inhumane treatment of undocumented immigrants and the criminalization of immigrants, which implies that all undocumented individuals are criminals. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration, have also issued statements regarding actions taken by the Trump Administration, defending the dignity of immigrants and denouncing unjust treatment.



How have the crackdowns affected the parish communities we serve? I reached out to our Dehonian brothers serving in Mississippi and Texas for their insights. Fr. Rafael Querobin observed an initial decline in Mass attendance due to apprehension, although people are gradually returning to church for Mass. Fr. Hendrik “Ardi” Ardianto

and Fr. Paul Phong Hoang reported consistent attendance at the Spanish Mass at Christ the King in Mississippi. However, Fr. Ardi indicated that some parishioners are choosing to stay home because of ICE activity in the area. He also mentioned that some undocumented parents are fearful of allowing their children to attend religious education classes, these children have been given materials to study at home.

One surprising and troubling reality I have observed among certain immigrant populations is their support for harsh enforcement measures against undocumented individuals. This stance is particularly perplexing, as one might expect these individuals to demonstrate greater empathy, given their own experiences with the resettlement process and their understanding of the immigrant experience. It is

possible that their perspective is influenced by a desire to distinguish themselves from newer arrivals, whom they perceive as potentially compromising the narrative that immigrants contribute positively to society. Additionally, there may be an underlying fear of association with those who are viewed unfavorably. Or simply prejudices towards other ethnic groups.

For updates, I contacted the executive director of CMSM, Fr. Frank Donio, and Bishop Seitz for guidance. Fr. Frank informed me that no statements have been released yet, as a joint statement requires collaboration among many member communities. He directed me to some religious communities that have issued statements. I am still waiting for a response from Bishop Seitz.

As we continue to seek ways to help people impacted by recent events, I'd like to invite you to say this prayer for our immigrants and refugees.

Give Us Hearts

God of love and compassion: may we always recognize your spirit:

- in the refugee family, seeking safety from violence;
- in the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables;
- in the asylum-seekers, seeking justice for their families;
- in the unaccompanied child, traveling in a dangerous world.

Give us hearts that break open whenever our brothers and sisters turn to us.
Give us hearts that no longer turn deaf to their voices in times of need;

Give us eyes to recognize a moment for grace instead of a threat. Give us voices that fail to remain silent, but which decide instead to advocate prophetically.

Give us hands that reach out in welcome, but also in work, for a world of justice until all homelands are safe and secure.

Bless us, O Lord...

- Fr. Dan Hartnett S.J.

Fraternally,

