



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

January 8, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, the great feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord, recalling the manifestation of God's glory to the magi who left their homelands in pursuit of the Messiah, will be celebrated here in Minnesota as Immigration Sunday and as a kickoff to National Migration Week, which this year will focus on the theme: "Creating a Culture of Encounter."

The week is intended to be an opportunity for stepping outside of our comfort zones to encounter our brothers and sisters who are different than we are. It is my hope that this would be advantageous for all of us, whether we were born here in the United States or abroad. It is only through such encounters that we can grow in our ability to see each other as children of God.

Immigration Sunday and National Migration Week are also ideal opportunities for informing and examining our conscience in this area, requiring that we take the time to learn what the Church teaches about immigration and its connection to our Catholic understanding of the dignity of each and every person created by God. The Catholic Church has a rich history of both protecting the vulnerable and ensuring that just laws and regulations are followed. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly asserted that our immigration system is in need of reform but has been just as adamant in reminding our legislators that the reform must take place without compromising public safety. It is clear that there is no simple solution to this complicated issue, but our bishops have consistently taken the position that a fair and effective reform would be possible if people of goodwill work together honestly and in charity.

In his letter for this year's World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis has reiterated a passage from the Book of Exodus (22:21): "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," while reminding our immigrant brothers and sisters that they need "to cooperate ever more closely with the communities that welcome them, for the good of their own children."

That same balance is reflected in the helpful resources that the Minnesota Catholic Conference has prepared for parishes, schools and families, including insights drawn from Catholic social teaching, frequently asked questions, and immigration studies and statistics. As we together strive to be better Catholics and better neighbors, I encourage you to prayerfully read through the Minnesota Catholic Conference materials that can be found at: mncatholic.org/advocacyarea/immigration-sunday-mn/.

May the longstanding principles of our Catholic teaching be the star that guides us to the Christ child so that we, like the magi, might catch a glimpse of His glory and adore Him.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis