



*Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Saint Cloud*

214 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH
P.O. BOX 1248
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA 56302-1248
TELEPHONE (320) 251-2340

February 14, 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In recognizing the dignity and rights of all people, Pope Francis has called for leaders to welcome, protect and create safe pathways for migrants. We must remember that many of those on the move are fleeing from violence, oppression and extreme poverty. Those affected by such circumstances are our neighbors, our coworkers and our fellow parishioners. Our longstanding tradition of welcoming the stranger not only enables us but impels us to care for the vulnerable and uphold the inherent dignity of every human person.

Our diocese, rich in diversity, is blessed by the presence of so many who have journeyed here from distant lands. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me," from the Gospel of Matthew calls us to extend our love and compassion to all, regardless of their origin or legal status.

Recent executive orders have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty for many immigrant families within our community and for refugees seeking safe haven. In recent weeks, I have held many conversations and sought input from members of my diocesan presbyterate and pastoral team, Catholic schools, legal counsel, civil and state authorities, local advocacy organizations and people living in and working with Hispanic/Latino populations. I also rely heavily on the wisdom and prudence of my brother bishops, especially those working closely on these issues, and join them in upholding the Church's social teachings.

As your shepherd, I am committed to staying apprised of the needs of our people and to collecting and sharing as much information as possible so that our parishes and schools can continue the work the Church has always done in caring for all of God's children.

To our immigrant brothers and sisters, I stand in solidarity with you and commit to continuing to accompany you through these uncertain and challenging times.

I call upon others to join me in working toward advocacy and reform, as we:

- **Pray** for those affected by these policies and for our leaders.
- **Educate** ourselves about the challenges faced by displaced people around the world and seek out opportunities to engage in respectful dialogue. May we dive deeper into the Church's teaching regarding our call to action.
- **Advocate** by contacting elected officials and expressing concerns about the impact of these policies.
- **Support** immigrant families in need. Volunteer with or support organizations that provide legal aid, social services, resettlement efforts and pastoral care, especially to the most vulnerable.

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Our diocesan website has been updated with extensive resources including educational sources, prayers and concrete ways to respond and support those experiencing crisis. Visit stdio.org/immigration for a full list.

Together may we be pilgrims of hope in these challenging times, a voice for the silenced and a refuge for the vulnerable.

Yours in Christ,

+ *Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.*

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Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud