Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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November 21-22, 2026
(Solemnity of Christ the King)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I came to Arkansas as your bishop in June of 2008, it was in the wake of my having opposed anti-immigrant efforts in Oklahoma that were then being proposed for Arkansas, efforts there that led to harmful legislation that was eventually thrown out by the courts.

To bring our Catholic faith to bear on this threat to human dignity in Arkansas, I issued "I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me …a Pastoral Letter on the Human Rights of Immigrants." This letter was issued after the November 2008 elections to make it clear that I was not trying to engage in politics, but rather that this was an exercise my "*munus docendi*" — the role and obligation of every bishop to teach the full truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ courageously, in season and out of season. I view this as especially important regarding those Church teachings about which there is confusion or disagreement. And of course, human dignity is a moral issue.

Unfortunately, in the intervening 18 years the situation for immigrants has only gotten worse, and so the time has come for me to re-issue an updated version of that pastoral letter. As with the original, I issue this updated version after the elections, to make it clear that just as with other pro-life issues, while the teaching of the Church can have political implications, my message is not mainly about the politics involved.

I believe that the major current issue about which American Catholics are most confused today has to do with immigration. This is not to say that immigration is the "most important issue" or that American Catholics don't disagree on other fundamental moral teachings of the Church— but, even in those disagreements, there is no doubt or confusion about where the Church stands. With immigration, however, many people simply do not have accurate information, and this is certainly an area where the teaching of the Church is not well known — hence the need for me to teach briefly, but authoritatively, the biblical and theological principles that are the indispensable foundation on which any just and humane approach to immigration must be built. I then apply these principles to the current reality of immigration and immigration law in the United States.

This pastoral letter does not propose specific legislative solutions but does emphasize that the protection of human dignity and human rights should be the starting point for any attempt at immigration reform. For an application of Church teaching to current legislation, please refer to www.justiceforimmigrants.org, the official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' campaign for immigration reform.

Does Jesus find a warm welcome in our communities? What changes do we need to make here in Arkansas to ensure that today's Marys and Josephs — today's Marías and Josés — receive a warm welcome truly worthy of the Savior whose birth we will celebrate on Christmas in just a few weeks?

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock