



Muskegon Catholic Central

1145 West Laketon Avenue † Muskegon, MI 49441
Phone 231.755.2201 † Fax 231.755.2415 † www.muskegoncatholic.org
† Ken R. Rasp, President †
krasp@muskegoncatholic.org

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President's Remarks

Welcome back! It is certainly my hope and prayer that all had a great, relaxing, family-filled Spring Break. How incredible that we come back to the celebration of Holy Week! We have a God who loves us so much that He shared His Son with us totally and fully. Through His passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus breaks down all barriers, opening the pathway to heaven for each of us. Holy Week provides an incredible opportunity to step back and reflect about a God who loves each of us unconditionally. We have an amazing God! As I participate in the Tridium celebrations, please know that all in the Muskegon Catholic Central family will be remembered in my prayer and spiritual reflection.

During the week prior to Spring Break, we were requested by Bishop Walkowiak via email to forward to our parents and friends his most recent pastoral letter on immigration. The pastoral letter is attached in both English and Spanish.

Bishop Walkowiak's email message:

Dear Monsignor, Father, and Pastoral Director,

Approximately one out of every three Catholics in the Diocese of Grand Rapids is Latino or Hispanic. This means many of our parishes, schools, and communities are affected by recent executive orders and changes in immigration policy. This year, more than ever, we are focused on welcoming our Hispanic brothers and sisters into the Catholic Church through our "Plan Pastoral" process. This process invites us to welcome and engage all who are in our midst.

As a Church, we stand in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters. We believe in secure borders. We also call for an immigration policy that treats people with compassion and respect. Please share the attached letter with your parishioners which contains my pastoral response to this immigration crisis.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids*

I appreciate all you do to help us fulfill our mission of excellence in Catholic faith formation and academics. Your comments and insights are important to me. I can be reached via phone at 231.291.0324 or via email at krasp@muskegoncatholic.org.

May God's peace be yours!

Ken R. Rasp, President
Muskegon Catholic Central



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

April 2017

Dear friends in Christ,

Approximately, one out of every three Catholics in our diocese is of Latino or Hispanic origin. This means that many of our parishes and communities are directly impacted by the recent executive orders regarding immigration. Pastors tell me stories from our parishes where people constantly live in fear, not knowing if they will return home each night, or of children filled with anxiety because they don't know if their parent(s) will be here one moment and gone the next.

Christ shows us in his life and in his word that we need to welcome the stranger and treat him/her with respect. The Gospels reveal how Jesus answered this call. We are reminded of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, the healing of the Roman centurion's slave, and the story of the Good Samaritan. These Gospel stories underscore the importance of encountering and embracing others who may not look, dress, or act the same as us.

With this background in mind, I offer the following pastoral letter to all Catholics in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, but most importantly to our immigrant brothers and sisters.

How we treat the least of our brothers and sisters is the measure of our authenticity as Catholic Christians. From beginning to end, the Scriptures abound with commands to assist the poor, widows, orphans – and strangers and aliens:

“You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt” [Ex 22:20]. “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God” [Lv 19:34]. “You must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt” [Dt 10:19]. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” [Mt 25:35].

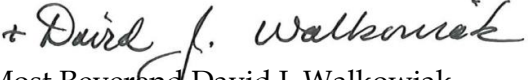
Times have changed since these words were spoken and written. There were no fixed national borders in biblical times, no passports or visas, no checkpoints or immigration officers. What has not changed, however, is the plight of so many people whose desperation moves them to risk a dangerous journey to a new country in order to flee war, violence, crime, or to seek work because they are unable to feed their families in their home country. The United States has become a destination of refuge and hope for millions of immigrants, many of them currently in this country without legal documentation. Our response to our immigrant population must consider people's right to live in peace and to share in the goods of the earth that belong to all God's people.

Our attitude must also recognize the considerable contribution that immigrants, both documented and undocumented, make to this country. Immigrant labor is essential for the well-being of the economy. Immigrants pay taxes; immigrants open businesses; immigrants buy goods; immigrants make our cities safer; immigrants are our neighbors, friends, and family members.

Because of these important contributions, our nation's response to those immigrants who are undocumented cannot be simply deportation. Deportations create far more problems than they solve. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has long called for a just and equitable reform of the country's immigration laws that, among other things, would grant those immigrants living in the country without authorization a path to be able to live and work in the United States legally.

The Catholic Church in the United States will continue to advocate on behalf of the immigrant population of our country. In doing so we are being faithful to the biblical mandate to include all in the love, mercy, compassion, and justice of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

Abril 2017

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

Aproximadamente, uno de cada tres católicos en nuestra diócesis es de origen latino o hispano. Esto significa que muchas de nuestras parroquias y comunidades están directamente afectadas por las recientes órdenes ejecutivas de inmigración. Los párrocos me cuentan historias de nuestras parroquias donde la gente vive constantemente con miedo, sin saber si regresarán a casa cada noche, o de niños llenos de ansiedad porque no saben si sus padres están aquí y ahora y más tarde ya no.

Cristo nos muestra con su vida y sus enseñanzas que necesitamos acoger al extranjero y tratarlo con respeto. Los evangelios revelan como Jesús respondió a esta llamada. Se nos recuerda del encuentro entre Jesús y la mujer samaritana en el pozo; la curación del criado del centurión romano; y la historia del buen samaritano. Estas historias del Evangelio subrayan la importancia de acercarse y aceptar a aquellos que no se ven, visten o actúan igual que nosotros.

En base a lo anterior les ofrezco la siguiente carta pastoral a todos los católicos de la Diócesis de Grand Rapids, pero de manera especial a nuestros hermanos y hermanas inmigrantes.

El modo con que tratamos al menor de nuestros hermanos y hermanas es la medida de nuestra autenticidad como cristianos católicos. Desde el principio hasta el final, las sagradas Escrituras abundan en decretos para ayudar a los pobres, las viudas, los huérfanos, forasteros y extranjeros:

“No oprimirán ni maltratarán al extranjero, porque ustedes fueron extranjeros en Egipto” (Ex 22:20). “Si un extranjero se instala en la tierra de ustedes, no lo molestarán; será para ustedes como un nativo más y lo amarán como a sí mismos, pues también ustedes fueron extranjeros en Egipto. Yo soy el Señor su Dios” (Lv 19: 34) “Amen ustedes también al extranjero, ya que extranjeros fueron ustedes en el país de Egipto” (Dt 10: 19). “Era un extraño, y me hospedaron” (Mt 25: 35)

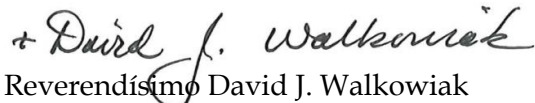
Los tiempos han cambiado desde que estas palabras se dijeron y escribieron. No había fronteras nacionales fijas en los tiempos bíblicos, ni pasaportes ni visas, ni puntos de control, ni oficiales de inmigración. Lo que no ha cambiado es la difícil situación de mucha gente cuya desesperación los lleva a arriesgarse en un viaje peligroso hacia un nuevo país huyendo de la guerra, la violencia, la delincuencia o en busca de trabajo porque no pueden alimentar a sus familias en su país de origen. Estados Unidos se ha convertido en un destino de refugio y esperanza para millones de inmigrantes, muchos de ellos están actualmente en este país sin documentación legal. Nuestra respuesta hacia la población inmigrante debe tener en cuenta el derecho de las personas de vivir en paz y compartir los bienes de la tierra que le pertenecen a todo el pueblo de Dios.

Nuestra actitud debe también reconocer la gran contribución que los inmigrantes, documentados e indocumentados, hacen a este país. La mano de obra inmigrante es esencial para el bienestar de la economía. Los inmigrantes pagan impuestos; los inmigrantes abren negocios; los inmigrantes compran bienes; los inmigrantes hacen nuestras ciudades más seguras; los inmigrantes son nuestros vecinos, amigos y miembros de familia.

Debido a estos importantes aportes, la respuesta de nuestra nación a los inmigrantes indocumentados no puede ser simplemente la deportación. Las deportaciones crean muchos más problemas de los que solucionan. La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos ha solicitado durante mucho tiempo una reforma justa y equitativa para las leyes de inmigración que, entre otras cosas, permitirá a los inmigrantes que viven sin autorización en el país, un camino para poder vivir y trabajar legalmente en Estados Unidos.

La Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos seguirá abogando en favor de la población inmigrante de nuestro país. De esta manera estamos siendo fieles al mandato bíblico de incluir a todos en el amor, la misericordia, la compasión y la justicia de Dios.

Sinceramente suyo en Cristo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Walkowiak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Reverendísimo David J. Walkowiak
Obispo de Grand Rapids