

February 2025

PAX CHRISTI LONG ISLAND
STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION

Pax Christi Long Island, a committed group of activists representing the Catholic peace movement, follows the teaching of Jesus and the Catholic Social Teaching that arises from the clear guidance that Jesus gave us, including his admonition in Matthew 25 that we welcome the stranger.

As a devout Jew, Jesus knew well the command in Leviticus 19:33-34: “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently from the natives born among you; you shall love the aliens as yourself, for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.”

Those inspired words are not the only examples of the abundant divine concern for the poor throughout Scripture. Formed by Scripture and conscience, our belief in the dignity of the human person demands that we treat immigrants with respect and love. We urge our neighbors to cultivate that same belief.

Sadly, our nation has an unfortunate history of both relying on and shunning immigrants, imposing quotas and bureaucracies that make legal immigration mountainously difficult, and branding those who flee their troubled homelands as “illegals.” At this moment, a new surge of that poisonous nativism is creating fear among immigrant communities across America. And Pope Francis has spoken clearly on the subject in a letter to the bishops of the United States:

I have followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations. The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality. At the same time, one must recognize the right of a nation to defend itself and keep communities safe from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival. That said, the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness.

This is not a minor issue: an authentic rule of law is verified precisely in the dignified treatment that all people deserve, especially the poorest and most marginalized. The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all—as I have affirmed on numerous occasions—welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable. This

does not impede the development of a policy that regulates orderly and legal migration....

As residents of Long Island, we have deep connections with the immigrant community as family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. We affirm our decades-long experience that the overwhelming majority of immigrants are hard-working, law-abiding persons.

We respect local law enforcement officers and value their services. We remind them that enforcing federal policy on immigrants is the responsibility of the federal government. We urge local law enforcement to refrain from collaboration with the federal government agencies, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, unless a person is detained because of a criminal act or has a criminal record. We also remind local law enforcement agents that:

- No one can enter a private dwelling unless they have a warrant signed by a judge. An administrative order signed by ICE does not meet legal criteria for entering a private dwelling.
- Hospitals, schools and places of worship have always been respected as places of refuge. No law enforcement agency should be allowed to violate those spaces without probable cause.
- Persons reporting crimes should not be forced to prove their identity before they are helped. This is especially true in cases of domestic violence.
- Minors should not be intimidated or questioned unnecessarily; rather, they should be protected.

We pledge, to the best of our ability, to accompany and nonviolently protect our immigrant neighbors from injustice and abuse. We invite all people of good will to join us in this endeavor and to follow the words of Jesus, the teaching of Leviticus, and God's loving, constant, unambiguously expressed concern for the poor.