



September 19, 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ and all people of goodwill,

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is asked by a scholar of the law, “And who is my neighbor?” when faced with upholding the greatest commandment. Jesus replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Today, our nation is divided by partisanship and ideology, which blind us to the image of God in our neighbor, especially the unborn, the poor, and the stranger. These negative sentiments are only exacerbated by gossip, which can spread quickly across social media with no concern for the truth or those involved.

From the beginning, the human race was made in the image of God, which distinguishes us from all other created things. The arrival of Jesus Christ in human history confirms the dignity God has given to each of us, without exception. It is our belief in the dignity of human life that guides our consciences and rhetoric when engaging in politics or personal conversation. Each of us, therefore, must turn to God and ask for eyes to see the infinite dignity of every person.

Throughout our nation’s history, Catholic immigrants have come to our shores seeking freedom to worship and raise their families. Over 70 years ago, Pope Pius XII urged the Body of Christ to understand the Christian responsibility to care for migrants and refugees, writing, "Indeed, there never has been a period during which the Church has not been active in behalf of migrants, exiles and refugees." Today, we witness newcomers to our dioceses who have escaped extreme violence and poverty and are seeking work to support themselves and their families. Some are Catholic, some are not, but all are welcome in our parishes, and all are individuals loved by God. What is our duty, as Catholics, to ensure all segments of our society, including our political leaders, view newcomers first as children of God while understanding the need to enforce reasonable limits to legal immigration? Do we ask ourselves how we would want to be received if forced to flee our homes?

Though national attention has turned to Springfield, we know that throughout Ohio our neighbors include Haitians and others fleeing inhumane conditions in their countries. Our Haitian brothers and sisters in Springfield have been granted ‘Temporary Protected Status,’ a humane federal program that protects foreign nationals from deportation to unsafe home countries. Like all people, these Haitians should be afforded the respect and dignity that are theirs by right and allowed the ability to contribute to the common good. The recent influx of so many migrants in a brief time has caused a strain on the city's resources. We applaud all those community groups working hard to advance the flourishing of Springfield, given the need to integrate newcomers into the social fabric. If we remain true to our principles, we can have a dialogue about immigration without

scapegoating groups of people for societal issues beyond their control.

The Letter of Saint James warns, "Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is also a fire... With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God" (James 3:5-6, 9). As the residents of Springfield, Ohio struggle with violent threats and life disruptions fueled by unfettered social media posts, we exhort the Catholic faithful and all people of goodwill not to perpetuate ill will toward anyone involved based on unfounded gossip. Instead, we ask for prayers and support for all the people of Springfield as they integrate their new Haitian neighbors and build a better future together.

Pope Francis, like Pope Benedict XVI and Pope St. John Paul II before him, reminds us that we are all migrants on this earth headed toward the "true homeland," the Kingdom of Heaven. On September 29, the [World Day of Migrants and Refugees](#), we are asked by the Holy Father to reflect upon the need to open our eyes to those brothers and sisters who might live in the shadows of our parishes and communities. The Catholic Church continues to pray and work in places of violence and economic despair so that individuals and families do not have to flee their homeland. In the meantime, let us reject a mindset of judging who belongs to our community and put on the mind of Christ to understand that God walks with all his people, especially those in need.

With you in Christ Jesus,



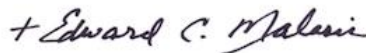
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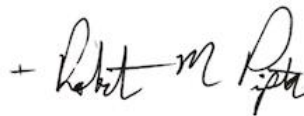
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