



# ADDRESSING IMMIGRATION IN MARYLAND

A Call to Compassion, Prudence, and Cooperation from the Catholic Bishops of Maryland

The issue of immigration continues to raise controversy at both the national and state level, often spurring passionate debate that offers little hope for reconciliation and resolution. This situation urgently calls for the Catholic Church and all people of faith and good will to come together in a spirit of compassion, prudence, and cooperation to address the challenges faced by immigrants, elected officials, law enforcement and our communities as a whole. The complexity of federal immigration enforcement policies and their effect at local levels is of particular concern. In Maryland, this is especially the case in light of the unsuccessful efforts to pass state legislation aimed at identifying uniform state parameters for cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration agents. As more and more local governments in our state take up this issue moving forward, we, the Catholic bishops of Maryland, urge all Marylanders to consider the following principles as a basis for engaging in dialogue as we work toward the common good.

Let us be guided by the words of Pope Francis, who in his historic address to the U.S. Congress reminded us: *“If we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us give opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.”*

**We urge state and local elected officials and lawmakers at the executive, legislative and judicial levels to enact and uphold immigration policies that:**

- Respect the spirit of our country’s Fourth Amendment protection against apprehension and searches of persons or homes without probable cause, and against detention beyond normal criminal procedures, while at the same time respecting the necessary role of law enforcement to uphold laws and policies that keep our communities safe.
- Give priority to ensuring the integrity of families and the ability of working parents to support and care for their children.
- Build trust with our immigrant communities by establishing a clear division of duties between local law enforcement and federal immigration agents so that immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and

cooperating in police investigations.

- Create safe environments by enforcing clearly established consequences for criminal violations of the law.
- Reduce fear among our immigrant communities by protecting their ability to congregate and move freely at their churches, schools and other community gathering places.

**We urge Maryland’s Catholics, other faith communities and all people of good will to:**

- Respect differences of opinion on this issue in a spirit of listening and understanding rather than accusation and name-calling.
- Engage in the political process and communicate your opinions to your elected officials. We encourage you neither to shy away from the political arena, nor to allow partisan and hyperbolic factions to dominate the political debate on immigration.
- Seek to learn more about the root causes of immigration and the challenges immigrants face in navigating our country’s complex immigration system.
- Develop personal relationships with immigrants in your communities and learn firsthand about their hopes and dreams, fears and sorrows.

**In closing, we offer a word of hope to our immigrant brothers and sisters who have come to Maryland in search of a better life:**

We pray that you will find in the Catholic Church and many other communities in our state places of welcome, fellowship and support. We pledge through our parishes and institutions to minister to you as you learn a new language; as you seek employment, shelter, food, clothing and healthcare; and as you celebrate your faith in a loving God. We thank you for your inspiring example of fortitude, industriousness, and strong family values, and for your contribution to the qualities of life that truly define the greatness of America. May the grace of God bless you and bless our work together to build communities of peace, prosperity and friendship.



*Most Rev. William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore*

*Most Rev. Adam J. Parker  
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore*

*Most Rev. Mark E. Brennan  
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore*

*Donald Cardinal Wuerl  
Archbishop of Washington*

*Most Rev. Barry C. Knestout  
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington*

*Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville  
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington*

*Most Rev. Roy E. Campbell Jr.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington*



*Most Rev. W. Francis Malooly  
Bishop of Wilmington*