



Pastoral Message on Mass Detention & Mass Deportations in El Paso

*Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. (Ephesians 5, 8-9)*

In this holy season of Lent, God invites us to journey with the suffering Jesus to the Cross and to new life in the Resurrection. For this reason, I take this opportunity to speak to all the faithful in our El Paso Catholic community, and in particular, to immigrant families.

God's people began as a people on the move. In the Hebrew Scriptures, we encounter Abraham and the prophets, people of the tent, forced to move by famine, drought and conflict and always on a journey towards freedom. In the Gospels, we meet Jesus as a child living in exile and as an adult with no place to lay his head. In his ministry, Jesus called his followers to join him on the road, and we Christians have always been a people on the move.

Here in the borderlands, we have seen generations of migrations, each with their faith, their struggles, their culture and their hopes. Together, we have worked to forge a common home. Building community at the border has always been an act of hope, whether against the desert's dryness or manufactured fears about those who are different. The fiesta that we celebrate has always been a dance that challenges division and death, a reminder of our Eucharistic hope.

In recent months, I have heard your fears, sufferings and worries about deportation. I have heard the stories about families being separated and of members being taken away from our community.

Neighbors are being snatched as they walk out of immigration court proceedings downtown. Workers are being taken from construction sites across the city. Mothers and fathers are no longer able to work because the government has taken away their legal work permits. Young women are languishing in mental torture for months in private detention centers, even when, coerced by the conditions of their imprisonment, they beg to be deported. So many people are once again being made to feel like they are less than American. People are dying in El Paso's Camp East Montana immigrant detention center.

To those of you affected by hatred and discrimination and afraid of what comes next, know that the church stands with you. As your Bishop, I carry your pain daily in my heart and in my prayers. I stand with you. Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, told me personally to stand in solidarity with suffering migrant families and not to remain silent. I will do everything I can to uphold the God-given dignity of every person in our borderlands community.

Our El Paso Catholic Church will redouble our ministries with those in the downtown courthouse, in the detention centers, in Ciudad Juárez and with families in our parishes. We will continue to

celebrate your contributions to our community, to defend your human dignity, and to work to end racism and make immigration reform a reality.

I am blessed with many friendships with our local law enforcement and immigration enforcement agents. Their work to keep our community safe is vital. But the death of those in immigration detention is unacceptable. An unjust immigration system that leads to deadly outcomes is destructive of our shared humanity. No one has to obey an immoral order. I implore all involved to carefully discern the moral requirements of the Gospel at this moment with integrity and honesty. When we take off our masks and encounter each other as neighbors, we can reclaim our common dignity. I promise the pastoral support of our priests, chaplains and myself as you navigate the demands of conscience with sincerity. You are also in my prayers.

Mass deportations will not make our communities safer. They separate families, divide neighbors and threaten our economic wellbeing. While we do need significant immigration reforms, it is an injustice to make families, children and the vulnerable pay the price of our inaction. Policies, laws and borders must always be at the service of human dignity, genuine community security and human flourishing.

For these reasons, I must make clear, the current national campaign of mass detention and deportations is a grave moral evil, one which must be opposed, with prayer, peaceful action and acts of solidarity with those affected. In these acts, we touch the wounds of Jesus Christ, and in this solidarity, we carry forward the hope of the Resurrection. God is on the side of justice, and as we journey towards Easter, we know that God is fashioning a new humanity that reflects God's blessings for all people.

Finally, I ask our entire diocesan community, our clergy, religious women and men, our Catholic students and teachers, all our Catholic faithful, and all people of conscience and goodwill to join me and Bishop Celino as we pray and march for an end to mass detention and deportations and plead for respect for human life at 6 o'clock in the evening, on Tuesday, March 24th at the Plaza de los Lagartos downtown. I ask all who enjoy the privileges of US citizenship to participate, as an act of Lenten solidarity with those who are unable to march and pray with us, because they are afraid.

May Mary of Guadalupe, who challenges us to build up a common home of tenderness and love, pray for us.

I order this to be read in all parish churches and chapels during the Sunday Celebrations of the Eucharist on the 15th of March, 2026. Given on the same day, the IV Sunday of Lent, at the Cathedral of Saint Patrick.

✠ Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso

Patricia Lopez Rueda
Chancellor