News



U.S. Border Patrol agents open a single gate to allow families to hug and talk Nov. 18, 2017, along the U.S.-Mexico border in Tijuana, Mexico. (CNS/Reuters/Jorge Duenes)



by Dan Morris-Young

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"People should not have to live in the shadows and in fear, nor should they have to risk their lives to come to a place where they can find honest work to provide for their loved ones," declares San Francisco's archbishop in a statement released for National Migration Week, Jan. 7-14.

"Sadly," Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone wrote, contention over immigration issues "continues to grow," marked "especially in this last year, with many of our friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers and fellow parishioners living in fear of being separated from their families at any given moment, afraid that any little misstep or untimely encounter could result in deprivation of livelihood and loved ones."

The archbishop exhorted Catholics to become "well versed in the Church's teaching on migration" and said it is "imperative that all people native to our country get to know immigrants and migrants, and listen to their stories."

"Immigration is an issue which … looks very different when one can put a human face to it," Cordileone said, continuing: "As Pope Francis has stated, 'Each migrant has a name, a face and a story.'"

Alluding to his pastoral experience in his native San Diego Diocese which borders Mexico, the Spanish-fluent Cordileone said he has seen "up close the need for immigration reform, and the human tragedy that results from our failure to achieve it."

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He described "one of the first pastoral invitations" as a young auxiliary bishop for San Diego "to celebrate Mass in a cemetery in the Imperial Valley… for those who had died trying to enter the United States through the desert."

"The graves were unmarked. They had to be," he wrote. "Their bodies were found, unidentified. There were over 200 such victims buried in that cemetery at the time."

Cordileone was also immersed in the lives of refugees and immigrants while pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Calexico, California, on the Mexican border in the early 1990s.

Echoing the theme of the 2018 National Migration Week, "Many Journeys, One Family," Cordileone stated, "Every one of us in this country has an immigration story somewhere in our families' lineage, and so in justice we must not see the newly arrived immigrant in our midst as 'the other' or, even worse, a statistic, but rather pay attention to and care for them."

Cordileone urged readers to study the 2003 statement, "We Are Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope," issued jointly by the Mexican and U.S. episcopal conferences.

San Francisco has declared itself a sanctuary city, and several Bay Area congregations have embraced sanctuary status, including San Francisco's two Jesuit parishes, St. Agnes and St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Since 1980, the U.S. bishops have set aside an early week in January to mark National Migration Week.

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