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A group of mainly Venezuelan migrants sent by bus to Washington from detention in Texas are dropped off Sept. 17 outside the Naval Observatory, the official residence of Vice President Kamala Harris. (CNS/Reuters/Marat Sadana)

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The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic moral teaching. As Christians, we believe that human life is sacred, that people are more important than things, and that society must protect human dignity. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, this dignity is rooted in humans' "creation in the image and likeness of God," and it is inalienable and intrinsic — that is, it is not based on any quality or action of the individual person.

So it's not hard to determine that using people—especially already vulnerable people—as objects to a political end is not consistent with Catholic teaching about humans' inherent dignity.

We're talking to you, Govs. Greg Abbott of Texas and Ron DeSantis of Florida. These two politicians decided it would be clever to protest President Joe Biden's immigration policies by shipping migrant men, women and children to cities in blue states, including Chicago, New York and Martha's Vineyard, even dropping some outside Vice President Kamala Harris' residence in Washington, D.C. Thousands of immigrants have been bused or flown north in the past months.

Abbott and DeSantis are both Catholics. But even if they weren't, common decency should prevent them from hatching a stunt that uses vulnerable human beings — people who have fled violent homelands, often risking their lives and walking for weeks or months to reach our borders and plead for asylum — to embarrass their political enemies and score points with their immigrant-bashing base.

That Abbott and DeSantis claim to believe that these people are made in the image and likeness of God makes their actions all the more shocking and disgusting.

Some have called the move of vulnerable people "trafficking," while others have compared it to the "Reverse Freedom Rides" of the 1960s, a segregationist tactic used by some southern governors to trick Blacks into going north with false promises of high-paying jobs and free housing.

Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich said "treating children of God as political pawns" was "unbecoming of any elected official," noting that "welcoming the stranger, including the immigrant, is a fundamental moral imperative of Christianity."

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A statement from the Miami Archdiocese called it "disconcerting." "Any action to transport persons under false pretenses and leave them stranded with no assistance would be to diminish their human dignity and objectify them," it said.

We have not included any quote from a U.S. bishops' conference statement because, as of press time — five days after the Martha's Vineyard flight brought renewed attention to the busing that has been going on for months — the bishops' body had still been silent on the issue.

Both Cupich and the Miami Archdiocese noted the refugees' inherent human dignity. "We Christians are called to welcome the stranger, the migrant, the refugee, because they, too are children of God, all of us members of the same family, the human family," Cupich wrote. The Miami statement reminded its governor that "immigrants are not faceless numbers — but human persons. They are our brothers and sisters."

Thankfully, these brothers and sisters have been welcomed as such in the northern cities, often by church groups. In Chicago, New York and Massachusetts, Catholic Charities was among the organizations welcoming the bused migrants and providing material assistance.

Next Sunday (Sept. 25) is the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. In a statement for the day, which has the theme, "Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees," the Vatican said that God's plan involves "leaving no one behind."

Apparently Abbott and DeSantis did not get the message. Their behavior is despicable and should be condemned by all Catholics.

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