

February 21, 2025.

Pastoral Letter to the Paulist Fathers, Paulist Associates, Deacon Affiliates, Novices, Seminarians, and partners in mission.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As an immigrant serving as President of the Paulist Fathers, the first men's congregation of Catholic priests established in the United States of America, I write to you not only with a pastor's heart, but also as someone who personally understands the challenges and hopes of immigrants. My journey, like so many others, was driven by the hope for a brighter future. The experience of being welcomed by the Paulists and the Church in the U.S.A. has deepened my commitment to the Church's call to an expansive love that welcomes the "stranger," and stands in solidarity with those who flee persecution or seek a better life.

In his recent letter to the Bishops of our country, Pope Francis points us to Scripture, which "invites us to look at the reality of our time, so clearly marked by the phenomenon of migration, as a decisive moment in history to reaffirm not only our faith in a God who is always close, incarnate, migrant and refugee, but also the infinite and transcendent dignity of every human person." (Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops of the United States of America, February 2025)

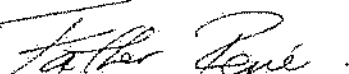
As someone who has experienced the complexities of immigration, I can testify that the journey of an immigrant is not simply about crossing physical borders but about crossing existential ones, often filled with vulnerability, uncertainty, and the need for hospitality. The pope's message resonates deeply, reminding us that the Church must continue to be a place of welcome, belonging, and protection of the dignity of all people, an inherent and inviolable dignity that comes from the Divine Creator and is not dependent on legal status or merit.

We Paulists and our collaborators are not threatened by diversity but are enriched by it. We support vibrant and diverse worshipping communities because we believe that our diversity is a sign of God's presence in the world and is not a threat to our unity (Acts 2:6). Our love of God makes us more attentive and empathetic to the needs of others especially those who are most vulnerable, for "Love of God and neighbor are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment." (*Deus Caritas Est*, 18). This is lived out in the soup kitchen, the food pantry, the clothing center, and the home of migrants at which our parishioners serve and minister from coast to coast.

When our sisters and brothers are hesitant to access basic health care and support programs or fear that going to Sunday Mass may be the last day they see their children because of the threat of mass deportation, the Body of Christ cannot remain silent or stay passive. As communities of faith, we must intensify our closeness to those in need—being the voice for the voiceless, joining hands with other people of good will in welcoming the "stranger," and advocating for those who seek a better life. We do this not motivated by partisan politics but in response to the command of Jesus Christ that "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

May the love of God and the love of neighbor compel us to persevere in our work of justice and peace!

In Christ,



Very Rev. René Constanza, CSP  
President