



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1150 Buffalo Road  
Rochester, New York 14624  
(585) 328-3210

*January 30, 2025*  
*Jubilee Year 2025*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Jurisprudence is defined as “The philosophy of law, or the science which treats of the principles of positive law and legal relations... and to choose that rule which, when so applied, will produce the greatest advantage to the community.” (*Blacks’s Law Dictionary*, © 1979, p. 767).

Based upon this principle one understands that good law, just law can never paint with a broad brush, but must apply the law with due consideration for the common good, but also with an understanding of the circumstances of the individual person and the motive and intent of the person and avoid rash or harsh judgements when evaluating a troublesome situation. The fault of some cannot characterize an entire group of people; if it does, whole groups of people become targets of violence and civil disturbance.

So it is that the subject of immigration must be addressed rationally and with an understanding of the situation of those, who like thousands of others, have literally or figuratively passed that Statue of Liberty and landed on our shores to begin a new life, many coming from impoverished countries, escaping persecution and violence in war-torn places and still others wanting the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness guaranteed by a democratic society. And yes, some have come with very bad and corrupt intentions and caused severe pain, suffering and even the death of others. Tragically, even children have been caught up in these inhumane situations and have been trafficked by the evil actions of some at a time when these precious children need protection, care, serenity, stability and love. But again, everyone cannot be painted broadly with the same brush.

Because a very needed reform of immigration laws has yet to be achieved, persons who have come to this country to build a new life and who are contributing to society in many ways have found themselves in uncertainty. Like our ancestors who sought a new beginning in America, many hard-working immigrants desire a legal path to permanent residency and citizenship but a broken immigration system has not yet afforded them this possibility.

The need for secure borders is legitimate and acknowledged; however, we cannot secure our borders by creating unjust insecurity among refugees and migrants who work on our farms, in service industries, health care facilities, and enhance the religious, cultural and educational mosaic of these United States. Many gifted and talented people of diverse backgrounds have come to this country and made outstanding contributions. They came with so little but have given so much; they came with a love for their faith and their families; they built schools, hospitals and churches. How sad it is that a faulty, broken immigration system could deprive us of these sisters and brothers. Pope Saint John Paul II said, “The challenge is to combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning

of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life.” (*Message for the 2001 World Day of Peace*, no. 13). Yes, deport criminals, secure borders and swiftly reform immigration legislation with this challenge in mind, but do not paint everyone with the same broad brush.

Immigration for me is more than a legal matter; it is quite personal. I know the harm caused by painting a whole people with a broad brush. Like many of you, whose ancestors came from a foreign country, my roots were planted by my ancestors who came from Italy and loved this country; although at time both challenging and difficult, they were able to follow an immigration protocol. Many of these ancestors would go on to serve in the military and some lost their lives defending this land they loved. Sadly, a group known as the “mafia” deeply scarred our people and at times we were painted with the same broad brush when many of our families had absolutely no association with this corrupt organization. Certainly, movies like the “Godfather” and shows like the “Sopranos” only further characterized our nationality in a very harmful way. And how many persons from other countries have experienced this same feeling and have been unjustly characterized?

It also is personal for me as a Catholic and one called to be a shepherd who seeks out the lost sheep, the forgotten, and the refugee. You may recall that in September 2024, the Catholic Church throughout the world celebrated the 110<sup>th</sup> annual World Day of Migrants and Refugees. This long tradition is testimony to our ongoing prayer for the justice and charity expected of all disciples of Jesus Christ, who calls us to “sincerity of heart [so] we may show true compassion toward strangers and the abandoned...” (*Roman Missal*, Third Edition, Prayer after Communion from the *Mass for Refugees and Exiles*). It is this gift of faith that keeps us from painting others with the same broad brush and ruining innocent lives.

Reasonable people, yes, including Catholics, see the need for law and desire a well-ordered society, but these laws must be just. And “Justice,” true justice must be accompanied by faith, the faith which gave us the immortal Ten Commandments, beautifully summed up by Jesus: “Love God, love your neighbor.” (Cf. Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:30-31). Jesus is “the Way, the Truth and the Life,” (John 14:6), the foundation upon which just laws rest, laws respecting the dignity of every person, laws that call us to accountability, laws that punish crime, laws that do not create crime, laws that do not paint broadly with the same brush individual persons, neither grouping them as “deplorables” or “illegals.” Rather, as with true jurisprudence, it “will produce the greatest advantage to the community.”

Please, dear Lord, guide those who govern our immigration laws, to fix what is broken and make our nation whole again, under God.

Assuring you of a continued remembrance in my prayers, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*

*The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano*  
*Bishop of Rochester*