



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

November 13, 2025

Dear Diocesan Family,

On Tuesday, November 4, the Church called to mind St. Charles Borromeo, a true pastor of the Church. He was known for his deep humility, zealous service of the poor, and steadfast commitment to the Gospel and holiness of life. St. Charles Borromeo lived in Milan, Italy, in the mid-1500s. He came from a noble and wealthy family and was destined for a life of wealth and comfort.

He chose instead to be a priest, and at the young age of 27, he was chosen to be the Archbishop of Milan. In a short time, he became known for the extraordinary care he gave to his people. He was noted for his pastoral visits to parishes and insisted on being present to his people: walking among them, teaching, feeding, and caring for them. When the plague struck Italy during his time as archbishop, he remained in the city, where he ministered to the sick and the dying, helping those in need. He saw to it that his own earthly possessions were converted into money for medicine for the poor.

St. Charles taught catechism, found the sick and elderly places to stay, established schools, and ran the diocese. He lived a life of prayer. He once said, “Here all kinds of poor will be housed, outsiders as well as Milanese; men, women, and children, because charity knows no distinction of nations, and we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

St. Charles Borromeo is one of my heroes in life, and I wish I could receive regular counsel from him as a bishop. I certainly pray to him for his guidance and read his extant writings. Yet, I also find his way of life alive in another bishop of our day: Pope Leo XIV, Bishop of Rome, who made the following statement to reporters last Tuesday evening: “In the first place, the role of the church is to preach the Gospel.” Citing Matthew 25, he said, “Jesus says very clearly that at the end of the world, we’re going to be asked, ‘How did you receive the foreigner? Did you receive him and welcome him or not?’ And I think that there’s a deep reflection that needs to be made in terms of what’s happening” [in the present moment in our world – ed. Note].

This leads me to the statement released by the New York State Bishops today, the Memorial of St. Francis Xavier Cabrini—the first American Saint and the Saint of Immigrants—titled “For You Too Once Were Aliens.” As one of the signers of this statement, I am both inspired and challenged by its message. I invite the members of our diocesan family to read it carefully, pray over it, and to consider joining me in making the “Cabrini Pledge.”

Faith • Hope • Charity

In the final weeks of the Church's liturgical year, you and I are invited to focus on the Last Things, particularly the Last Judgment and Christ's Second Coming. As Matthew 25 reminds us, "Whatsoever you and I do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to [Christ]" for good or ill. This is why my brother bishops and I clearly state: "However, most important to recall is the law of Christ set down in the Great Commandments: To love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. All other imperatives are subject to this law of charity, and it is concerned neither with legal status nor country of origin. As individuals and as a society, we are bound to follow this supreme command and to make all our actions consistent with it, to the best of our abilities, even in difficult circumstances."

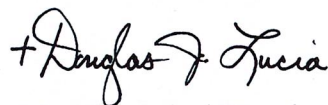
I know some will accuse the Catholic Church of meddling in politics and violating the rule of separation of Church and State. This could not be further from the truth! Rather, as St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis Xavier Cabrini did in their respective eras, the present world situation is calling all men and women of goodwill—but especially those who claim to be believers—to remember the gospel message of Jesus Christ and to use it as one's guiding light in dealing with the situations confronting our society. As the Letter of James directs you and me: "To be doers of the word and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22).

This same letter goes on to state: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone may say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works" (Jas 2:14-18)

In a short while, it will be our national feast of Thanksgiving. A time when you and I not only give thanks but also call to mind the less fortunate. This year, let us not forget both the documented and undocumented members of our communities, made in the image and likeness of God, as you and I are. Let us assist them with our prayers and works, just like other immigrants and aliens who came to a new world seeking a better life, and especially one where they could live out their faith in God.

Peace and blessings!

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

For You Too Were Once Aliens...

A STATEMENT BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF NEW YORK STATE
November 13, 2025 | Memorial of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini



Leviticus 19:33-34

"When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt."



In September, a striking mural depicting immigrants of the past and present was dedicated at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan. Among the multitude of those immigrants now gracing the narthex walls of our venerable metropolitan cathedral – nameless men and women who came to this land often "tired...poor...[and] yearning to be free" – stands a young Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini.

Mother Cabrini, a woman consecrated to the Lord, was an indefatigable advocate, protector, and educator of newly arrived immigrants to New York. A native of Italy, she overcame anti-Italian prejudice in her adopted country of America and established, with God's grace, numerous charitable institutions and schools to serve those finding their way in a new land.

Mother Cabrini reminds us of the Church's longstanding care and concern for immigrants, as the mural itself, stunning in its scope, illustrates an indisputable fact: New York was and is a land of immigrants whose contributions have enriched and transformed, indeed built, our society.

Contemplating this magnificent mural at a moment when our nation considers again the plight of the immigrant, we recall that Christian charity, as lived so powerfully by Mother Cabrini, demands we welcome the stranger and treat every individual with respect and dignity.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes this clear.

"The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him."

"Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens." (n. 2241)

Pope Leo XIV, like his predecessors, has already taught this truth and shown particular solicitude towards migrant refugees—those who leave their homes not simply to seek a better life abroad, but who are forced to take flight because of violence and oppression in their own nations. In his first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, proclaimed on October 4, 2025, the Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi, he wrote:

"The Church, like a mother, accompanies those who are walking. Where the world sees threats, she sees children; where walls are built, she builds bridges. She knows that her proclamation of the Gospel is credible only when it is translated into gestures of closeness and welcome. And she knows that in every rejected migrant, it is Christ himself who knocks at the door of the community." (Section 75)

In recent years, many such refugee migrants have come to New York. Some have arrived from war-torn countries like Ukraine and Afghanistan; others from Central or South America have fled poverty, authoritarian governments, and drug cartels that made life in their country of origin dangerous for themselves and their families. Some have been granted refugee or temporary protected status, while others have no legal status. Most of these migrants – the majority, our neighbors – are good people who arrived on our shores seeking a better life.

Sadly, as in any group, some have exploited the system and committed serious crimes and other misdeeds. Those immigrants or refugees who commit crimes should face the appropriate criminal and civil penalties, including deportation. At the same time, general enforcement of the immigration laws must be carried out in a humane manner that does not target the hard-working and law-abiding; that does not permit the wanton and unnecessary separation of families; and that does not rely on campaigns of fear that cripple whole communities.

As such, we do not support the sweeping revocation of the temporary protected status that was granted to many migrants who arrived in this country to escape the horrors occurring in their own, and who have justifiably relied upon the legal protections our government offered to them. Such persons should not be subject to the arbitrary cancellation of their legal status and threatened with a sudden return to the troubled and dangerous nations from which they fled. At the same time, while we support the right to peacefully protest and witness opposition to political policies, we can never condone violence against immigration and law enforcement agents.

Before the complex questions of immigration, we maintain, without question, that our government has a duty to secure our borders and ensure that those who wish to enter the United States do so lawfully. In union with our brother Bishops across the United States, we have consistently urged our civil leaders to craft immigration laws that respect our borders and create an orderly process for those who wish to enter our nation, while offering a measure of forgiveness towards those who arrived here without legal status but who have proven their contributions and loyalty to our country over a period of time.

These are all good points to ponder. However, most important to recall is the law of Christ set down in the Great Commandments: To love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. All other imperatives are subject to this law of charity, and it is concerned neither with legal status nor country of origin. As individuals and as a society, we are bound to follow this supreme command and to make all our actions consistent with it, to the best of our abilities, even in difficult circumstances.

Returning to the example of Mother Cabrini, the Bishops of the United States have called on Catholics in all walks of life to stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees by signing *The Cabrini Pledge, an Invitation to be Keepers of Hope*. We encourage New York Catholics to sign the pledge. By doing so, you will follow in the footsteps of our beloved Mother Cabrini in acknowledging our duty to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate immigrants in accordance with the guidance proclaimed by Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church.

The Cabrini Pledge

Sign the pledge today by scanning the QR code or visiting this link: www.usccb.org/cabrinipledge. Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini is the patron saint of all migrants. We seek her intercession for the concerns we have mentioned. By joining us in signing the Pledge, you commit your prayers and energy for the welcome, protection, promotion, and integration of migrants.



Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York
Most Reverend Edward B. Scharfenberger, Apostolic Administrator of Albany
Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn
Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher, Bishop of Buffalo

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of Ogdensburg
Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano, Bishop of Rochester
Most Reverend John O. Barres, Bishop of Rockville Centre
Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia, Bishop of Syracuse

And the Most Reverend Auxiliary and Emeritus Bishops of New York State

