

St. Thomas More Parish Council
Meeting Minutes Final
2.11.25

Zoom option link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86448337039?pwd=wuMFGezAr6F9v56nt6rxuwNhHhzdVW.1>

Present: Father Chuck Adam, Mary Lu Callahan, Wayne Fett, Mick Languth, Wade Long, Joan Maley, Bill Mausser, Bill Montag, Adam Summers, Logan Vittetoe, Meliza Wise, Bill Mausser

Excused: Tayler Knight, Barb Lopez, Cece Roudabush, John Maxwell

Guest: Linda Myers

Opening Prayer

The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos into the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise forever. Amen

OLD BUSINESS:

Review January meeting minutes - with a few corrections, Wayne motioned to approve the 1.14.25 minutes and Joan seconded. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Linda Myers – Catholic Worker Project: Transforming Congregations and Communities Through Sacred Conversations Organizing Initiative.

Linda shared information concerning a \$65,000 grant involving a cohort of 5 Catholic Churches in the Iowa City Deanery including St. Thomas More, St. Patrick's, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's (West Liberty and Columbus Junction) in collaboration with Escucha Mi Voz (Hear My Voice) and The Iowa City Catholic Worker.

This project is a part of **The Gamaliel National Network** - <https://gamaliel.org> . Their “mission is to empower ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social, and economic decisions affecting their lives.” Reverend David Gerth, Executive Director of Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU), Gamaliel Affiliate in St. Louis, MO, Co-Chair of

Gamaliel Directors Table, assisted with the January 18th training day and spoke with Fr. Chuck about the initiative.

Linda shared that she has received 1-1 training as a listener for this project on January 18th and February 22nd.

This project is being conducted to foster improved communication and understanding of our complex immigration issues from a non-political perspective.

More listening trainers are needed before they begin enlisting feedback from Parash Parishioners, their launch initiative is on the weekend before Lent, March 1&2 and will continue through June.

For complete information refer to attachments 1-3. As well as a link to the 7 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Handout, <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/upload/catholic-social-teaching-handout-adults-digital.pdf>

Mary Lu offered support of this project based on Pope Francis commination supporting U.S. Bishops in Migrant advocacy dated 23/01/25, located in attachment 4. Wayne also shared that NPR also report on this letter today as well.

Church Construction Update

- building continues with design elements now being considered.
- Lower-level windows have been installed, with upper window hopefully begin completed this week or next.
- Cabinets in the lower level have been installed, and Fr. is pleased.
- Elevator issue is being worked through
- With the new roof installed it was noted that a miss-match due to fading exists, Our present roof is about 15 years old. If the budget permits, we might be looking to have the old roof replaced.

Church Dedication Date and Celebration.

Fr. has gotten the weekend of August 23^{rd-24th} on the Bioship schedule for our Church Dedication. He is open to hosting the dedication during the 5:15 mass on Saturday or 1400 on Sunday August 24th.

Tonight, the council debated the pros and cons of each. If dedicated on Saturday, we could return to normal mass times and use the new church on Sunday. But the dedication is anticipated to take at least two plus hours, which might be too long for families with young children. If held on Sunday, we might reduce the mass times to maybe 0830 and 1400, since we will be able to host 1100 parishioners during the 1400 service.

In addition, the 2 p.m. service might entice additional priests to attend this celebration.

Fr. is hopeful to also have a post-parish celebration hosted by Church and Family Life but has left both the times of celebration as well as what is served to this commission to decide. Bill shared that Church and Family Life meets Wednesday February 19th so we will be getting back to him with plans

Parish Council Elections.

Mick is finishing his second 3-year term with Barb so they will both be going off council. Bill Montag and Cece are completing their first three-year term and have elected to remain for a second term Request for applications will need to be published in March. The election will be held after Easter.

Tonight Fr. shared that due to health concerns, John Maxwell has submitted his resignation. Under normal circumstances we would seek a new replacement for John's position, but since we are so close to seeking new council members for next year it was agreed that we would just wait on John's replacement for this year.

Report from Fr. Chuck

ADA update, our goal was \$135,000 had as of Friday we have surpassed our goal, which is \$139,776.

Growing More in Faith update: total pledge to date \$13,287,455, between recurring pledges and total expected income so we're not done yet!

Commission Reports and Discussion

Church and Family Life

- **Young Adult Group:** Virginia Jeltema: held a board games event on the weekend of 1/25 at Wild Culture in Iowa City. We're also hoping to volunteer as a group to do welcome duties at a Mass/weekend sometime in the upcoming year. If your group is looking for volunteers, please contact Virginia
- **Family Camping Weekend and Potluck:** Reservations have been made by Adam O'Rourke for the weekend of May 9-11, 2025, at Sugar Bottom group campsite. More details in the future via the bulletin.
- **50 Plus Group:** Commission Chair group will be receiving an "intercommunication request" that the 50 Plus Chair will send asking them to visit the 50 PLUS Fellowship group on a 1st Friday after mass and just briefly outline how their commission members serve the parish. Norma envisions more than one Chair (or their delegate/volunteer) to present, maybe 3? Or 2 to allow for the group to ask questions and have discussion. The purpose is to get to know their role in the parish and perhaps even grow their membership. Norma was given names and emails, and will put it in an excel document and hopefully, at your "chair group meetings you can use it to add phone contacts, We will use this document for the Pastoral Council President when we go through their introduction. Obviously, it will have to be updated periodically, but either the 1st of the year or after the "voting" process is completed in June and then July the newly elected would have a chance to indicate their committee choice.

Faith Formation

This year's Bible study will be combined efforts of Faith Formation and Jim Schepker Bible Study group. This year we will be repeating the same Eucharistic Study we had done last year from Ascension Pres. This was due to an overall very successful program last year, hoping to both increase our knowledge and appreciation of the Eucharistic as we prepare for Easter.

Eucharistic Study Program is offered at STM on Sunday evenings, from 6-8 p.m. from March 2nd to April 13th.

Racial Equity Initiative

March trip to African American Museum; promotional materials/carpooling will start soon. Thomas Mason's group from Sacred Heart in Davenport is being invited. Current things in our home that are harmful stereotypes are the focus of this exhibit.

Social Justice

- February reward 5 things during the meeting. Each received \$500 which is the most ever given out.
- Next Catholic Worker House meal will be March 2nd.
- Fair Trade Sales will be expanded during spring break. The commission will be moving their display to a lower level.
- We have two days left on our collaboration with 10,000 Villages.
- SJ Habitat build will be occurring Saturday, February 15th. A few open stops still exist.
- Lent-50th anniversary of the Rice Bowl.
- Weekly themed Works of Mercy...The team is planning on utilizing QR codes each week to provide weekly Work of Mercy updates. More information to come.

Welcome Commission

- Still encouraging all commissions to sign up for one month in calendar month to be door greeters. Presently, we have door greeters scheduled through April. Sign up site @ info@signupgenius.com

Worship and Spirituality

No Update

Finance

Refer to previous discussions.

Regina Board of Education

- Regina Gala was a huge success.
- Still awaiting recommendations from Catholic School Management, a Catholic consulting firm who are reviewing survey results. They then will present their recommendation to the Regina Board concerning future growth and management.

Youth

A fundraising meeting to sponsor NCYC participants to Indianapolis will be occurring soon. In the past, they held a Marti Gras Celebration. With a silent action to raise money. Due to our building projects, this will not be occurring this year, but they are assessing the possibility of

hosting on-line silent bid auctions as a possible fund-raising event. More information to come when available

Knights of Columbus

Two new Knights were inducted as new members of the Knights this past weekend.

Stephen Ministry

Training continues for twelve new members, 3 from St. Mary's IC and 9 from STM. Presently, we have 8 Stephen Ministry's (1 male, 7 females). This new group will have 4 men and 5 women assisting the team. Training will continue through March 29th.

As part of their training, Stephen Ministry will be reaching out to locate "Care Receivers" as part of their orientation. If anyone knows of a parishioner who might need Stephen Ministry services, please reach out to members located in our bulletin.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on 3.11.25. with our April meeting being moved to April 10th.

Closing Prayer:

Wayne motioned to close with Joan seconding all approved. @ 8:15 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02.

Transforming Congregations and Communities Through Sacred Conversations

1. What?

- a. 1-1 listening sessions with no agenda, no talking points.
 - i. Active listening with some share, 80/20.
 - ii. Getting to know each other and what is important to us.
 - iii. What are our hopes and fears?

2. Why?

- a. To get to know and better understand all the members of our parish community. Relationship building.
- b. To broaden and deepen the base of support at church and in the community for Pope Francis and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops priorities and teachings on the human dignity of immigrants, workers, and the poor.
- c. These goals are supported in every aspect of the 7 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching,
- d. “As your bishops, we will advocate for your just treatment and dignity within the framework of the law. The Church will accompany and serve you at this time as much as we are able. We assure you of our prayerful support and ask the State of Iowa to do the same. You are our brothers and sisters. Please know that you are not forgotten and that your Church stands with you in solidarity.” – A Letter to Migrant Brothers and Sisters – November 19, 2024

3. How?

- a. Training of 1-1 listeners on January 18th and February 22nd.
- b. Announcement in the bulletin.
- c. Make an announcement at all masses the weekend of March 1& 2.

- d. Mail a letter explaining the initiative and laying out the process to all families in the parish. The letter would be reviewed by Fr. Chuck for approval and then sent out by Maricarla.
- e. Parishioners will have the opportunity to sign up after masses for a listening appointment, receive a call requesting an appointment, or maybe sending an email.
- f. Weekly meetings of volunteer listeners to coordinate visits.

4. Who?

- a. A cohort of 5 Catholic Churches in the Iowa City Deanery including St. Thomas More, St. Patrick's, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's (West Liberty and Columbus Junction) in collaboration with Escucha Mi Voz (Hear My Voice) and The Iowa City Catholic Worker.
- b. St. Thomas More parishioners currently committed for 1-1 listening include.

Linda Myers
 Lu Westhoff
 Barbara Swanson
 Peter Menard-Warwick
 Mike Stein
 Maureen Vasile
 Ann Houlahan
 Jan Cronin
 Jerilyn McCarty
 Cheryl Buschelman
 Marybeth Pacha
 Joan and John Garrity
 Jay Gilchrist
 Ann Tabor
 Dee Kron
 Claire Loussaert

- c. Each one of the above people was asked to talk to 5 more people who they thought might be interested in being a listener and encouraging them to come to the next training session on February 22nd at the Iowa City Public Library from 3-6:00 PM.

5. When?

- a. Initiative launch is on the weekend before Lent, March 1&2 and will continue through June.

- b. Listeners will make notes of hopes and fears or concerns of parishioners after listening sessions and there will be a discernment process that may take 1-2 months as was done with the synodal meetings that the diocese did a few years ago.

6. Where?

- a. 1-1 meetings will take place where the parishioner chooses and could occur via Facetime if the person chooses that option.
7. **Escucha Mi Voz (Hear My Voice) Iowa** is a faith-based, immigrant-led community organization that envisions a world of love thy neighbor by building the power of working-class, immigrant, and refugee communities to fight and win dignity and justice in society. You can look at some of their accomplishments here, <https://gamaliel.org/news/emv-iowa-emmy-award/>.
8. **The Gamaliel National Network** - <https://gamaliel.org>. Their “mission is to empower ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social, and economic decisions effecting their lives.” Reverend David Gerth, Executive Director of Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU), Gamaliel Affiliate in St. Louis, MO, Co-Chair of Gamaliel Directors Table, assisted with the January 18th training day and spoke with Fr. Chuck about the initiative.

Attachment 2



ESCUCHA MI VOZ IOWA

Fighting for Worker Justice
and Immigration Reform

Transforming Congregations and Communities Through Sacred Conversations Organizing Initiative

Summary: The rights of essential immigrant workers and everyday Catholics and people of faith are under attack in Iowa by the rising threat of authoritarianism, inequality, mass deportations, and family separations.

In response, Escucha Mi Voz will launch a dynamic, innovative organizing initiative to scale up our base from hundreds to thousands, in order to take on the new challenges facing our congregations and our communities.

The purpose of the initiative is to broaden and deepen our base of support - at church and in the community - for the Pope Francis and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops priorities and teachings on the human dignity of immigrants, workers, and the poor.

Escucha Mi Voz has formed a cohort of five Catholic parishes in the Iowa City Deanery. Over the next six months, members of each participating parish and congregation will be trained on Catholic social teaching, the Gamaliel method of faith-based community organizing, 1 on 1 relationship building, and the elements of a power organization.

The trained parish core teams will announce the project before the congregation at Sunday Mass, offer 1on1 conversations with 5,000 multi-racial, working-class parishioners, knock on the doors of 2,000 surrounding community members, and, using the VAN, send 2-3 direct mail pieces to 20,000 registered voters who self-identify as Latino or Catholic.

Through this process, we hope to meet face-to-face with 5,000 active church-goers as well as communicate directly with 15,000 "Catholic-adjacent" community members, strengthening our parishes, our organizations, and our ministries.

As part of this initiative, we have asked each participating parish for three things: 1) a \$500 donation, 2) access to the parish directory, including addresses, emails, and telephone numbers, 3) blessing to establish core teams of listeners in each parish and to schedule 1on1 conversations with each member.

CST 101 Themes from **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.



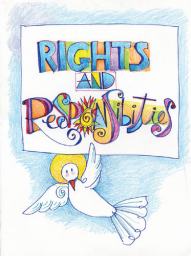
LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. Human life is threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.



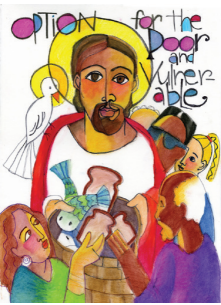
CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND PARTICIPATION

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in communities. Marriage and family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.



RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected, and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.



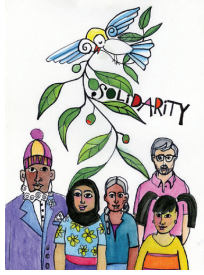
OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.



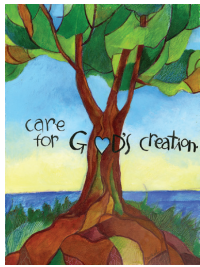
THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative



SOLIDARITY

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Blessed Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."¹ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.



CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan; it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Pope Francis supports U.S. Bishops in migrant advocacy

23/01/2025

US Bishops say some of Trump's Executive Orders are 'deeply troubling'

Pope Francis addresses a letter to the bishops of the United States, expressing his support for their efforts to protect the rights and dignity of migrants.

In a **letter** dated 10 February 2025, and addressed to his brothers in the episcopate, Pope Francis acknowledges the work of U.S. bishops in standing alongside migrants and refugees, he expresses support for efforts to uphold the fundamental dignity of every human person and he highlights the importance of pastoral accompaniment for those facing displacement.

In his letter, the Pope recalls the Holy Family's flight into Egypt and draws a parallel between their experience and that of many migrants today. Their journey, he notes, shines the light on "the phenomenon of migration as a decisive moment in history" and reaffirms "not only our faith in God but also the infinite and transcendent dignity of every human person."

Highlighting Pope Pius XII's apostolic constitution on the Care of Migrants, which describes the Holy Family as a model for all who must leave their homeland in search of safety and stability, he writes "Your work in defending migrants is deeply rooted in the mission of Christ and the history of the Church."

Uphold human dignity

In his 10-point letter, the Holy Father says he has "followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations" and commends the bishops' efforts stressing that Christian love demands recognition of the dignity of all people, regardless of legal status.

Since taking office on 20 January, President Donald Trump has announced a series of immigration-related executive orders that pave the way for a widespread effort to crack down on undocumented migrants in the US. In more than 21 actions, Trump has moved to overhaul parts of the US immigration system, including how migrants are processed and deported from the US. The Pope acknowledges the complex realities surrounding U.S. migration policies but reminds the bishops that the measure of a just society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.

"The legitimate regulation of migration must never undermine the essential dignity of the person," he writes.

The Pope also expresses appreciation for the bishops' advocacy against narratives that criminalize migrants and emphasizes their role in ensuring that policies respect human rights.

"God will richly reward all that you do for the protection and defence of those who are considered less valuable, less important, or less human," he says.

Strengthening the Church's Mission

In light of the current challenges, Pope Francis urges the bishops to remain steadfast in their work, and despite the obstacles they face, including social and political pressures, he encourages them to continue promoting solidarity and compassion.

"Your pastoral ministry is a beacon of hope for many who feel abandoned and excluded," he states.

Reaffirming the Church's mission, the Pope calls on the bishops to lead by example in fostering an inclusive and just society.

"Through your witness, the faithful are reminded that true Christian identity is expressed in fraternity and the unwavering defiance of human dignity," he writes.

Prayer for strength and guidance

Pope Francis concludes his letter entrusting the bishops and the migrants they serve to the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe: May she "grant us all to meet (...) as brothers and sisters, within her embrace, and thus take a step forward in the construction of a society that is more fraternal, inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all."

Please find below the full text of Pope Francis' letter to the U.S. Bishops:

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am writing today to address a few words to you in these delicate moments that you are living as Pastors of the People of God who walk together in the United States of America.

1. The journey from slavery to freedom that the People of Israel traveled, as narrated in the Book of Exodus, 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.[1]

2. These words with which I begin are not an artificial construct. Even a cursory examination of the Church's social doctrine emphatically shows that Jesus Christ is the true Emmanuel (cf. *Mt*1:23); he did not live apart from the difficult experience of being expelled from his own land because of an imminent risk to his life, and from the experience of having to take refuge in a society and a culture foreign to his own. The Son of God, in becoming man, also chose to live the drama of immigration. I like to recall, among other things, the words with which Pope Pius XII began his Apostolic Constitution on the Care of Migrants, which is considered the "Magna Carta" of the Church's thinking on migration:

"The family of Nazareth in exile, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, emigrants in Egypt and refugees there to escape the wrath of an ungodly king, are the model, the example and the consolation of emigrants and pilgrims of every age and country, of all refugees of every condition who, beset by persecution or necessity, are forced to leave their homeland, beloved family and dear friends for foreign lands."[2]

3. Likewise, Jesus Christ, loving everyone with a universal love, educates us in the permanent recognition of the dignity of every human being, without exception. In fact, when we speak of "infinite and transcendent dignity," we wish to emphasize that the most decisive value possessed by the human person surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that can be made to regulate life in society. Thus, all the Christian faithful and people of good will are called upon to consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights, not vice versa.

4. I have followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations. The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality. At the same time, one must recognize the right of a nation to defend itself and keep communities safe from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival. That said, the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness.

5. This is not a minor issue: an authentic rule of law is verified precisely in the dignified treatment that all people deserve, especially the poorest and most marginalized. The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all — as I have affirmed on numerous occasions — welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable. This does not impede the development of a policy that regulates orderly and legal migration. However, this development cannot come about through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others. What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly.

6. Christians know very well that it is only by affirming the infinite dignity of all that our own identity as persons and as communities reaches its maturity. Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups. In other words: the human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings! The human person is a subject with dignity who, through the constitutive relationship with all, especially with the poorest, can gradually mature in his identity and vocation. The true *ordo amoris* that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the “Good Samaritan” (cf. *Lk* 10:25-37), that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception.[3]

7. But worrying about personal, community or national identity, apart from these considerations, easily introduces an ideological criterion that distorts social life and imposes the will of the strongest as the criterion of truth.

8. I recognize your valuable efforts, dear brother bishops of the United States, as you work closely with migrants and refugees, proclaiming Jesus Christ and promoting fundamental human rights. God will richly reward all that you do for the protection and defense of those who are considered less valuable, less important or less human!

9. I exhort all the faithful of the Catholic Church, and all men and women of good will, not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters. With charity and clarity we are all called to live in solidarity and fraternity, to build bridges that bring us ever closer together, to avoid walls of ignominy and to learn to give our lives as Jesus Christ gave his for the salvation of all.

10. Let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect individuals and families who live in fear or pain due to migration and/or deportation. May the “*Virgen morena*”, who knew how to reconcile peoples when they were at enmity, grant us all to meet again as brothers and sisters, within her embrace, and thus take a step forward in the construction of a society that is more fraternal, inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all.

Fraternally,

Francis

From the Vatican, 10 February 2025

[1] Cf. DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dignitas infinita* on human dignity, 2 April 2024.

[2] PIUS XII, Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*, 1 August 1952: “Exsul Familia Nazarethana Iesus, Maria, Ioseph, cum ad Aegyptum emigrans tum in Aegypto profuga impii regis iram aufugiens, typus, exemplar et praesidium exstat omnium quorumlibet temporum et locorum emigrantium, peregrinorum ac profugorum omne genus, qui, vel metu persecutionum vel egestate compulsi, patrium locum suavesque parentes et propinquos ac dulces amicos derelinquere coguntur et aliena petere.”

[3] Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 3 October 2020.