



THE DIOCESE OF SAN JOAQUIN

ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

1300 Shaw Avenue #174 Fresno, California 93710 (559) 244-4828

A Pastoral Statement from the Bishop of the Diocese of San Joaquin on Refugees and Immigration

As bishop of the Diocese of San Joaquin within the Anglican Church in North America, I write pastorally to address the subject of refugees and immigration. I recognize that immigration is a complex matter involving legal, social, and economic concerns. Yet for the Church, it is first and foremost a biblical and pastoral issue, shaped by our allegiance to Christ and our calling to make disciples of all nations (Philippians 3:20; Matthew 28:19–20).

Holy Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Therefore, all people—regardless of legal status, nationality, or ethnicity—possess inherent dignity. The Bible repeatedly calls God’s people to welcome the stranger, care for the vulnerable, and extend hospitality to those in need (Leviticus 19:33–34; Matthew 25:35; Hebrews 13:2). Our Lord Himself knew the life of a refugee when the Holy Family fled to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–23).

At the same time, Scripture affirms the legitimacy of nations and civil authority (Romans 13:1). A faithful Christian response must therefore hold together two truths: the responsibility of governments to uphold the rule of law and protect their borders, and the obligation to treat immigrants and refugees with justice, mercy, and compassion, in accordance with God’s law (Matthew 22:21).

In my episcopal ordination vows, I pledged to be “gentle and merciful for Christ’s sake, to poor and needy people and to all strangers destitute of help” (BCP 2019, p. 504). Guided by that promise, I call the Church to bear faithful witness by loving our neighbors, advocating for the vulnerable, speaking the truth in love, and offering practical care to those entrusted to us (Luke 10:25–37; Matthew 5:13–16).

Our Anglican tradition has long affirmed the Church’s responsibility to care for refugees and immigrants while engaging society with moral clarity and charity. Respect for civil law must always be informed and corrected by God’s higher law, which calls us to justice, dignity, and mercy.

I encourage the faithful of this diocese to live into these convictions: welcoming the stranger, discipling those within our care, and assisting immigrants and refugees to live responsibly and faithfully within our communities. I pledge to engage our diocesan leadership and civil authorities with these biblical values, and I pray for the nations of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, that we may act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Eric Vawter Menees, SSC