



January 31, 2025

Dear Parish and School Communities,

There is much fear and anxiety swirling around related to immigration – not just from our immigrant brothers and sisters, but from staff, as well as concerned Catholics.

Immigration is a central principle of our Catholic Social Teaching and is not viewed as a political issue, despite current politics. The bishops of Washington recently issued a letter ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)) reiterating our solidarity with immigrants and the importance of recognizing the dignity of others.

Recent news reports have caused many in our community to worry about the safety of immigrants in our parishes and schools. Below are a few key points that are important for our community to know:

- The likelihood of “raids” happening at schools or parishes is very low and we seek to help calm our communities about this.
- While the likelihood of a “raid” is low, it is important for people to understand that parishes and schools are no longer “safe” places for immigrants to hide from agents. In fact, doing so attracts the attention of agents, which may place other immigrants in danger. Anything that attracts agents will also inevitably deter immigrants from attending parish or school events, which we do not wish to do.
- There are clear protocols in place at parishes and schools in case ICE or CBP agents come to a location. These are similar to how a school or parish would interact with a police officer. Only the pastor, principal, or delegate has authorization to engage with agents and they may proceed with an investigation only if they have a signed judicial warrant.
- There are many resources available for immigrants, schools and parishes, and Catholics who wish to learn more:
  - The [Archdiocesan Immigrant and Refugee Ministry](#) provides guidance, resources and more for immigrants, staff and concerned Catholics. This webpage will be updated with guidance and resources as they become available.

- Catholic Community Services offers resources including Know Your Rights Workshops and legal assistance. Reach out to your local Catholic Charities Network Builder for local resources.

We will continue to track the situation and alert you to any significant changes to our approach. Please join us in prayer for our immigrant brothers and sisters, with whom we stand in solidarity.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher J. Koehler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Chris Koehler  
Director of Missions and Immigrant Affairs