



## UNITE CHURCH AND STATE/BRIDGE THE BORDER

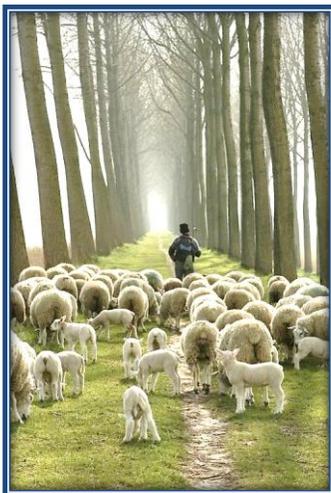
A human crisis has resurfaced at the shared border between the United States and Mexico. It is a crisis that affects the lives of human beings on both sides of that border, and as such, it demands our attention; even if we think that it has nothing to do with us because we live over one thousand miles away from that border! We are, as President Biden rightly noted before he became President of the United States: our brother's keeper, and as such we must pray and work to see that the human rights of our brothers on both sides of the border are being respected.



I mention that this human crisis has “resurfaced” and that is because an effective bi-partisan strategy was developed and implemented – with the support of the Mexican government – by the United States government during the Trump Administration. At various stages of that strategy's development and implementation, the Church in the United States applauded that policy, while at other stages, the Church opposed it. With regards to the latter, a statement from Bishop Joseph Vásquez (Austin Diocese) is noteworthy. On 10 January 2019 His Excellency wrote:

“Secure borders and humane treatment of those fleeing persecution and seeking a better life are not mutually exclusive. The United States can ensure both and must do so without instilling fear or sowing hatred. We will continue to advocate for immigration reform to advance the common good and address these issues.

Pope Francis states that migrants are not statistics, but persons with feelings that need ongoing protection. From our work serving immigrant and refugees along the U.S./Mexico border, in the interior of the United States and throughout the world, we know this to be true. We urge lawmakers to look beyond rhetoric and remember the human dignity that God our Father has given each of us simply because we are all His children.



The President and Congressional leaders need to come together and end the shut-down with a solution that recognizes the dignity of work of affected employees, respects the humanity of all regardless of immigration status, and protects the sanctity of human life.”

If our Shepherds are serious in finding that solution, then it is not enough for them to tell government-leaders to “come together”. They (our Shepherds of the Church on both sides of the border) must “bring together” those government-leaders. It is time for a Summit of Church and State. It is time for our Shepherds and government-leaders (many of whom are members of their flock like President Biden of the United States and President Obrador of Mexico) to sit down together and find the way keep our brothers safe on both sides of the border. After all, “He ain't heavy. He's my brother!”