



# Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### REGULAR MEMBERS

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo  
ARCHBISHOP OF GALVESTON-  
HOUSTON

Gustavo García-Siller, M.Sp.S  
ARCHBISHOP OF SAN ANTONIO

Patrick J. Zurek  
BISHOP OF AMARILLO

Joe S. Vásquez  
BISHOP OF AUSTIN

David L. Toups, S.Th.D.  
BISHOP OF BEAUMONT

Daniel E. Flores  
BISHOP OF BROWNSVILLE

W. Michael Mulvey  
BISHOP OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Edward J. Burns  
BISHOP OF DALLAS

Mark J. Seitz  
BISHOP OF EL PASO

Michael F. Olson  
BISHOP OF FORT WORTH

James A. Tamayo  
BISHOP OF LAREDO

Robert M. Coerver  
BISHOP OF LUBBOCK

Steven J. Lopes  
BISHOP OF PERSONAL ORDINARIATE  
OF THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER

Michael J. Sis  
BISHOP OF SAN ANGELO

Joseph E. Strickland  
BISHOP OF TYLER

Brendan J. Cahill  
BISHOP OF VICTORIA

## CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS

### ALL OTHER TEXAS BISHOPS

Jennifer Carr Allmon  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ken Paxton  
Office of the Attorney General  
Attention: Opinion Committee  
P.O. Box 12548  
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

Sent via email to: [opinion.committee@oag.texas.gov](mailto:opinion.committee@oag.texas.gov).

**RE: Rep. Matt Krause's request (RQ-0454-KP) on the question of "Whether the federal government has failed to uphold its obligations to protect Texas from invasion under Article IV, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution, and whether Texas has the sovereign power to defend itself from invasion?"**

Dear General Paxton,

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Texas, united as the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, I write to offer you public comment on the letter of inquiry sent to you by Representative Matt Krause regarding the description of the situation and its impending further complication at our border as an invasion attacking the sovereignty of the State of Texas. The Texas bishops act as pastors on behalf of the many men and women who serve in the Church's ministries of outreach and assistance for migrants and refugees with a record of consistent cooperation with government authorities at local, state, and federal levels.

I wish to take this opportunity to offer comments in light of several broader principles of the Gospel as articulated in the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding just policies and practices for the protection of migrants and refugees. These principles are also the basis of a just reform of our immigration system for the common good of society. The Catholic bishops of the United States have been calling for this reform of the immigration system since 2003.

First, sovereign nations have the right to control their borders within the limits of justice established by law. The Church recognizes the legitimate right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects the exercise of such control merely to acquire additional wealth or based upon a general prejudicial disdain of foreign people and cultures. More powerful economic nations, with the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a greater obligation to accommodate migration flows. Every effort must be made to cooperate with legitimate governmental authorities of respective sovereign nations. Much more formal and constant dialogue must take place on the sharing of information and cooperative solutions with the elected officials, beginning with the President of Mexico, on critical issues both at a national, state, and local level.

The Texas Catholic Bishops ask the Federal Government to live up to its responsibility for our border with Mexico by overseeing and moderating the migration flow at our southern border within these just limits. The movement of migrants after the potential expiration of Title 42 need not be chaotic if the federal government establishes and follows an orderly process for the just adjudication of asylum claims.

The lack of attention at the federal level to our border might also compound the undue political and financial influence of international gangs and nations hostile to the United States of America. The gradual erosion of border integrity only compounds the terrible crimes of the drug trade and human trafficking perpetrated by gangs that especially prey upon vulnerable women and children. The vulnerable flee them for a reason.

The Texas Bishops object to characterizing this situation as an “invasion” because it causes many to ignore the vital distinction between refugees fleeing oppression and victims of trafficking on the one hand, with the cartels and traffickers on the other. To use the word “invasion” incorrectly implies that everyone at our border is our enemy and our nation’s sole response should be to deploy the military. There can be no approach to this humanitarian crisis that employs an “every migrant is our enemy” approach, nor can the abdication of responsibility by one level of government justify the abdication of responsibility by other levels of government.

Second, refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection. Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the larger community, as should large segments of people who must flee their homeland because of extreme poverty and harsh conditions which threaten their very life and well-being. This requires accountability and at a minimum, migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered and processed by a competent authority in a reasonable amount of time. To discern adequately migrants and refugees who are in legitimate need of protection from others who intend to bring harm requires intentional and active cooperation by every level of government: local, state, and federal.

Third, the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants must always be respected, including the rights to basic healthcare and education. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary and must be directed toward maintaining a cohesive family unit for migrants and refugees, especially when this involves young children. Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be upheld at every stage. They are too often subject to harsh treatment from both receiving and transit countries. It must be noted that many enforcement officers are burdened with undue expectations and pressures caused in no small part by the Federal Government’s inability to implement and follow an orderly system for justly deciding asylum claims.

Finally, I recognize that our nation’s unwillingness to address this issue over these past several years rests squarely on citizens and politicians of both major political parties. This polarization has brought us to a moment of crisis; there exists a legitimate concern that without each level of government discharging their respective responsibilities, the common good of the communities of our towns, state, and nation, and immigrants themselves, will continue to suffer grievously. There is an urgent need for legitimate and moral reform of our system of immigration and asylum. The experience of our Catholic Charities and outreach ministries throughout Texas has taught us that refugees are adding to the quality of life throughout the state with their cultures and talents and the gainful employment that prevents them from being added to the poverty rolls.

Nevertheless, it is vital now that all levels of government make responsible plans to avoid a rush of people flooding our border that could jeopardize the just rule of law and the capacity of governmental and non-governmental efforts to assist migrants, refugees, and the residential and native poor who are already here among us. This especially holds true if Title 42 should be permitted to expire on May 23, 2022, without due consideration for its impact on the public health of all involved and without an orderly asylum process implemented and followed by the Federal Government.

The Texas Bishops reaffirm their commitment to continue the Church's ministries of outreach and education, and to work responsibly to serve the common good of all people in the State of Texas while being especially mindful of the more vulnerable and marginalized among us. I thank you for receiving the Texas Catholic Conference's public comments in accord with the duties of your office.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Allmon". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the closing of the letter.

Jennifer Allmon

Executive Director, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops