



## America at 250: Freedom and the Common Good

As we, the Catholic bishops of Ohio, together with all the faithful, prepare to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nation, we recall the great declarations in our founding documents to establish a free country where people can flourish. We reflect upon the promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and to worship God free from government intervention. We take seriously the truth that our rights come from God and recognize the great blessings that God has bestowed on our country. Therefore, as proud and faithful citizens of the United States, we need to take responsibility to support the common good of our country and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

### A Moral Failure

Even as we prepare to celebrate our country's founding, we are deeply grieved by the situation of our Haitian neighbors in Ohio. As many parts of their home country suffer from incessant violence and utter despair, those in Ohio and elsewhere in the U.S. may be forced to abandon familial stability, jobs, and community due to policy decisions. We find no moral justification for terminating their Temporary Protected Status (TPS) without an alternative way to adjust their immigration status. The current conditions in Haiti, noted across a wide array of sources and first-hand accounts, including the U.S. State Department's travel advisory, demonstrate that it is neither safe to return, nor reasonable to expect families not to desperately search for another option.

Further, we have witnessed the upstanding lives Haitian families have built in Ohio. They work hard, support their families, worship God regularly, and seek to live in peace. Now, they await the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, likely on technical grounds, on whether TPS will continue. Haitian parents who have children in Ohio could face excruciating decisions about whether to allow their children to remain in the U.S. or take their children with them into an uncertain future. This is a moral and social failure unfolding before our eyes.

Claims that those seeking refuge in our country do not want to contribute to the common good are simply unfounded in regard to those attending our parishes or in the success stories of refugees in Ohio. Others note the hard-working contributions of immigrants across various sectors of Ohio communities and the potential loss this would bring to employers and once-struggling towns and cities. We must do our best to ensure both citizens and newcomers can flourish in our communities.

Welcoming immigrants and refugees represents the Christian ideals our country stands on. The denial of a dignified life for law-abiding families fleeing an unstable home and contributing to the common good signifies how much easier it is to declare that we are "One Nation Under God" rather than to actually do the will of our Heavenly Father (*cf.* [Matthew 7:21](#)).

### The Need for Reform

It is obvious that our country has continued to fail in its attempts to achieve comprehensive reform of our immigration policy. As bishops, we affirm the nation's right and responsibility to regulate immigration and protect its borders for the sake of the common good and to address genuine public threats, including ensuring order in communities so that individuals and families already in our country can flourish. Immigrants who commit violent crimes or disturb the public order should not expect to stay in Ohio or elsewhere in the country, nor should any known criminal be allowed to enter or remain within the borders of the United States.

The complexity of our laws and bureaucracy for those seeking to follow proper procedures leaves little optimism for timely government responses. An immigration system without predictability or due process fosters an atmosphere where those desiring to follow the law to obtain an immigration status are left with few options but to live in the shadows of our communities. We should have the political and social will to establish and maintain an orderly immigration process while providing a place in the U.S. for those fleeing violence or severe economic hardship.

### A Path Forward

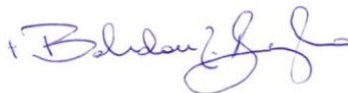
A confident nation, one that has grown over 250 years into a desirable place to live, should seek to integrate those who strive to work and raise their families in peace. Like so many of you, we yearn for political leadership that can deliberate effectively without the partisan rancor that so often seems to take precedence over legislation for the common good. Looking back over our nation's rich history, with its faith-centered values of welcoming those who seek refuge while ensuring the safety and order of our communities, can reveal a way forward.

To our immigrant brothers and sisters, we reiterate what all [U.S. bishops exclaimed](#) in November, "we stand with you in your suffering, since, when one member suffers, all suffer (cf. [1 Corinthians 12:26](#)). You are not alone!"

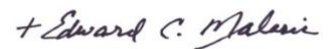
Finally, we ask Catholics in Ohio and all people of goodwill to pray for America at 250 years and to reflect on our responsibility as citizens and followers of Jesus Christ. What will Christ ask us at the end of our earthly lives? Did we contribute to a society that seeks to recognize Him in every human being? Or did we contribute to a society that seeks to close itself off from the rest of the world? As believers in Christ Jesus, may we embody what Pope Leo XIV recently wrote, "Those who believe in him are engaged in the great work of renewal that began with the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection, and they cooperate in building up the Kingdom of God, learning to embrace all men and women as brothers and sisters, children of one Father." (*Magnifica Humanitas* 49).



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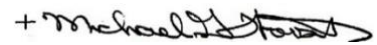
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