

## **What is happening to our country?**

**1886:**

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she  
With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'"  
Inscription on the Statue of Liberty, gifted by France in

**2025:**

Endless anti-immigrant, anti "other" rhetoric demonizing racial, ethnic and religious minorities; outsiders are social menaces - subhuman "animals" who are "poisoning the blood of our country."

## **Remember Who We Are**

What is your story?

Unless you're Native American, you have immigrant roots.

What problems did your family leave behind and what dreams did they have when they arrived here?

My family left an increasingly-totalitarian Germany just before WW1, seeking safety and freedom. Eventually they settled in Beaumont, Texas – 30 miles from the Louisiana line and 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

My first experience of immigrants was in the 1960's when the Cuban Missile Crisis caused many Cubans to flee. Those of us who spoke Spanish were asked to help welcome students who enrolled in our school. We heard their stories and felt their fear – and their gratitude for safety.

In the 1970's, my husband began managing ranches in Arizona for absentee landowners. One of the landowners hired some workers from Mexico. I was the one to translate for them what he wanted them to do.

I was the one who took them to the post office every payday and helped them send money home to their families. I was the one who heard their hardship stories and their dreams for a better life – to earn enough money so maybe they could buy some land in Mexico, where their families could thrive.

Also in the 1970's, I apprenticed under a German Shepherd breeder in Seattle. Ann and her husband were

Dutch. Her family was living in Dutch Indonesia when WWII began. All of them were part of a large underground group which rescued downed American pilots and got them to safety before the Japanese could capture them. She told me how she and her family were captured and tortured; she was forced to watch several family members executed. My father was a Marine pilot stationed on aircraft carriers in the Pacific, teaching boys to fly. Her family might have saved some of those young men. One fascinating note about how we ARE very connected: in the US forces that liberated the Japanese prison camp where Ann was held, was Sheridan's Henry Burgess. After their rescue, Ann and her husband emigrated to this country, finally safe and full of dreams.

In the 1980's, our church here in Sheridan was part of the underground movement that helped Nicaraguan refugees make their way to safety in Canada. I heard those stories, too – stories of fleeing horror, stories of gratitude for any help, stories of dreams of a decent life.

And for the last 2 years, our church has sponsored a Ukrainian family who fled the terrible war in the Ukraine. I have heard their stories, seen photos of bodies left in the streets. They are very grateful to be safe, to be able to sleep all night without bombs or sirens. They, too, are grateful to be in America.

The vast majority of immigrants are like those whose stories I've told.

### **Call to Action**

Listen, really listen, to the story of someone who is different from you, especially one whose skin color is different from yours.

Enjoy a meal at our local Ukrainian restaurant or one of the other ethnic restaurants or food trucks here in Sheridan.

Concentrate on things others have in common with you, rather than differences.

Press Congress to reform ALL the immigration laws so that we have a just, fair and humane immigration system.

*As a very young child, I saw the Ku Klux Klan wearing their white robes and pointed hats and burning crosses. Please let's don't go back to that.*

**First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.**

**Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.**

**Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.**

**Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.**

Martin Niemöller, prominent German pastor who initially supported Hitler and then regretted it for the rest of his life.

*Cel Hope fell in love with the Sheridan area in 1971 and served as Religious Education director for Holy Name parish for 23 years then Director of the Dog and Cat Shelter for 9 years. She is the leader of the Holy Name parish group at that has sponsored a Ukrainian family and is helping the family become part of our community. You also may have seen her with her therapy dogs volunteering at nursing homes, the VA and with kids through a reading program she helped develop.*

## Some Facts

The overwhelming majority of immigrants in our country are documented – here legally. They work – and work hard!, pay taxes, start businesses and become our friends and neighbors. Many (such as our local Ukrainians) have come here under a government program called Humanitarian Parole. In Humanitarian Parole, ordinary American citizens (not the government, not using tax money) sponsor displaced people, contributing their own time and money to help newcomers arrive safely through legal pathways to communities eager to welcome them. More than two million Americans across all 50 states have gotten involved over the last three years through humanitarian parole. Families seeking refuge have found safety and stability while contributing to local economies and strengthening communities across America. Private sponsorship is safe, legal, and orderly. Both sponsors and the newcomers undergo security, background, and financial checks conducted by the Department of Homeland Security and other national security agencies. The majority of people who flee to the U.S. are mothers with children, young women, students, elderly, ill, and disabled individuals. They do not pose a security threat, and nothing will be gained by punishing them.

*From “Migration Ethics in the Trump Era, A Catholic Guide to Resisting Extremism and Polarization”,  
America Magazine, January 2025:*

“Our immigration debates have long been framed by narratives emphasizing security threats and social costs, despite rhetoric about liberty and hospitality. At the same time, studies regularly indicate that higher rates of immigration correlate with lower rates of violent and property crime. The rule of law rightly occupies a privileged place in the United States, yet the lack of accountability that marks Border Patrol procedures and the denial of due process to immigrant detainees belie this rationale.

“Another populist script casts newcomers as economic threats, a perception historically fueled in times of economic downturn. In fact, studies show that immigrant laborers provide a net benefit to the U.S. economy and have helped to increase jobs in recent years; all the while, the detention industry has profited from irregular migrants, further confounding the frame of economic threat. The multibillion-dollar transnational “immigrant industrial complex” raises serious questions about the financial stakes in the broken immigration system, as well as diminished public oversight and accountability. Stock prices for CoreCivic and Geo Group, two private prison companies, soared after Mr. Trump’s re-election. Estimates suggest his mass deportation plan would cost at least \$500 billion to implement, with annual losses of \$126 billion in taxes and a reduction in the gross domestic product of \$5 trillion over 10 years.

“Finally, anti-immigrant sentiment demonizes racial, ethnic and religious minorities. Representations of the outsider as a social menace signal the salience of racism and xenophobia in our national imagination. Portrayals of immigrants as public charges or a dangerously porous border have also long shaped our collective self-understanding. This past election cycle, we heard the president-elect refer to undocumented immigrants as subhuman “animals” who are “poisoning the blood of our country.”

“These diversionary tactics generally ignore structural relationships affecting migration. Reducing immigration matters to the border crossers in the Mediterranean or in the American Southwest eclipses transnational actors from view, much less blame. It refuses to consider those responsible for “push factors” like violent conflict, economic instability or climate change. Moreover, fear of difference is relatively easy to mass-market and shapes imagination in powerful ways.”

We pray Thee O God of might, wisdom, and justice! Through whom authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment decreed, assist with Thy Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude the President of these United States, that his administration may be conducted in righteousness, and be eminently useful to Thy people over whom he presides; by encouraging due respect for virtue and religion; by a faithful execution of the laws in justice and mercy; and by restraining vice and immorality. Let the light of Thy divine wisdom direct the deliberations of Congress, and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws framed for our rule and government, so that they may tend to the preservation of peace, the promotion of national happiness, the increase of industry, sobriety, and useful knowledge; and may perpetuate to us the blessing of equal liberty.

Bishop John Carroll 1735-1815