Cupich claims Church backing for all migrants

Chicago's Cardinal Blase Cupich has once again courted controversy by weighing in on the immigration controversy and giving the Catholic Church's full backing to migrants.

In a video message posted online October 21, Cupich voiced his stance regarding the current topic of immigration, an issue which has dominated headlines in the nation for months.

The Chicago cardinal said he spoke both as a "shepherd," but also "as a fellow pilgrim who shares the pain of many of our immigrant communities."

He took aim at the actions taken by immigration enforcement officers under the Trump regime, saying that "families are being torn apart. Children are left in fear, and communities are shaken by immigration raids and detentions."

Such instances "wound the soul of our city," he stated. "Let me be clear. The church stands with migrants."

He continued:

We stand with the mother who crosses borders to feed her children. We stand with the father who labors in silence to build a better future. We stand with the young person who dreams of safety and a better future. Our parishes and schools will not turn away those who seek comfort, and we will not be silent when dignity is denied in the enforcement of the law. It is essential that we respect the dignity of every human being.

Responding to the widespread crisis of undocumented migrants in America was raised as a priority for the incoming Trump administration, and Border Czar Tom Homan has consistently sought to deliver on the President's promise to regulate the nation's borders, starting with isolating and removing violent criminals.

During her very first press conference, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt informed the press that "all" of the illegal immigrants arrested by U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) are criminals "because they illegally broke our nation's laws, and therefore, they are criminals as far as this administration goes."

But Cupich wrote in defense of all migrants, including those "without documents," describing them as a key part of society. "Most of you have been here for years," he said. "You have worked hard. You have raised families. You have contributed to this nation. You have earned our respect. As the Archbishop of Chicago, I will insist that you be treated with

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dignity. Americans should not forget that we all come from immigrant families."

The timing of Cupich's statement is not to be ignored. It comes shortly after he met on at least two occasions with Pope Leo in Rome this month: also after the release of Dilexi Te, in which Leo makes a – somewhat admittedly brief – reference to migrants as "brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved."

Migration was already a hot topic under Pope Francis, and increasingly Leo XIV has given considerable airtime to the issue also. Given that Cupich was just recently named to the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State by Leo – a highly peculiar role for the non-resident American cardinal – it seems safe to assume that Cupich's activism regarding immigration has met with Leo's approval.

Cupich's wildly unspecific statement regarding the Catholic Church's support of migrants appeared to present official Church support for all attempts at immigration, whether legal or not.

In contrast, the Catholic Church's stance on the issue is much more precise than Cupich's brief message. It balances a prudential mixture of charity to the native citizens along with those seeking to enter the country for just causes.

Marking the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2001, John Paul II wrote that the exercise of the "right to emigrate … is to be regulated, because practicing it indiscriminately may do harm and be detrimental to the common good of the community that receives the migrant."

Then his successor Benedict XVI echoed this theme, writing that nations "have the right to regulate migration flows and to defend their own frontiers, always guaranteeing the respect due to the dignity of each and every human person. Immigrants, moreover, have the duty to integrate into the host Country, respecting its laws and its national identity."

Infamously, Pope Francis also took issue with Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance and Homan earlier this year when he wrote to the US episcopate about the "major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations."

Francis roundly critiqued the new administration's attempts to cut down on illegal immigration, before he himself was rebuffed the next day by Homan, who quipped: "he wants to attack us securing our border? He has got a wall around the Vatican, does he not? So he has a wall to protect his people and himself, but we can't have a wall around the United States."

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that “political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants’ duties toward their country of adoption.”

To this is added the note that “immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

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