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Statement by Bishop Arthur Tafoya
The Immigration Raids on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 2006
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I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt prayer for the safety and well being of the children and families torn apart by unforeseen and inhuman raids upon immigrant workers that have taken place this week during this holy Advent season.

It is regrettable that instead of choosing to implement comprehensive immigration reform that can be just and equitable, we have chosen the enforcement path as our response to the immigration problem. As I have stated before, I believe that we need a strong, clear and fair immigration policy. It must serve our country's security and prosperity and at the same time be based on the moral values on which all our lives must ultimately rest.

The consequences of these actions are affecting the family. Family and friends are terrified at the sudden loss of a loved one and are in fear of who is next. Children discovered they had no parent to meet them after school, not knowing where they were. A mother learned that her husband and father of her kids is gone, she has no money to pay the bills and does not know when she and the children will see him again.

Catholic teaching upholds the dignity of every human person. Therefore immigration policy should protect the human rights and dignity of immigrants and their families, both documented and undocumented, as well as provide legal and secure means of entry for prospective immigrants and asylum seekers. Current law, which requires over ten years for a prospective immigrant in Mexico to be considered for a visa, is unworkable. Our government policy has been unsuccessful in these areas and the recent raids upon immigrants is just an example of how our policy has failed by only emphasizing enforcement and forgetting about the unfortunate consequences of an enforcement only policy.

Any responsible head of household will do what is required to provide for the needs of his or her children. Because of the way the laws are presently written undocumented immigrants are forced into acquiring false documentation in order to support themselves and their families. It is wrong to report this as "identity theft," which is a conscious preying on people by thieves.

In the words of Bishop Thomas Wenski, consultant to the US Catholic Conference of Bishops' Office for Migration and Refugee services, "To those who accused Jesus of breaking the laws of his day, he replied: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)." This teaching underscores the point that positive law, even divine positive law, is meant to benefit, not to enslave humankind. Undocumented workers have human dignity and human rights that should be respected at all costs.