Date: January 26th, 2026

Dear People of the Diocese of Wisconsin,

I am generally wary of formally commenting as a bishop on contemporary events, particularly when they are politically charged. However, given recent events in our neighboring Diocese of Minnesota and across the USA, it would be unfaithful for me to be silent.

On Saturday, Alex Pretti was killed in Minneapolis by federal border patrol agents. Earlier this month, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents opened fire on Renee Goode, killing her. Last October, a Border Patrol agent shot and injured a US citizen, Marty Martinez. All three of these people were U. S. Citizens. We have also seen images of an elderly U. S. citizen wrongfully taken from his home, barely clothed, in freezing weather. Other questionable and outrageous tactics have been used against citizens and non-citizens alike. This is unacceptable.

There is a debate to be had about border policy, immigration policy, welcoming refugees, and related matters, and it has been going on for years. Faithful Christians of goodwill have disagreed about what the best policies might be, and members of the Diocese of Wisconsin are not all of one mind on this.

Every president of every party in recent decades has deported people who have come to this country outside the usual legal processes or who have committed serious crimes while here. There is nothing inherently wrong with that. Nations need to regulate their borders and enforce their laws – reasonably, compassionately, with due process and discretion.

Members of the Diocese of Wisconsin value the law and law enforcement. We pray for them. Some of them are members of our parishes. Many of our clergy serve as chaplains to their local police departments. But this is different. While other presidents have deported large numbers of people, no other administration – Democrat or Republican – has turned ICE, along with Customs and Border Protection, into a masked, heavily armed, paramilitary police force patrolling city streets. This would not be good even if they were better vetted and better trained. It is contrary to the spirit of a democratic republic. Their posture is often aggressive and provocative. Local law enforcement in Minnesota, Maine, and elsewhere has been critical of the unprofessional and overly aggressive tactics ICE and Border Patrol agents have employed. Those tactics have proven deadly.

Something else is different. No previous president or government official – Democrat or Republican – has used the dehumanizing rhetoric we have heard from our current leadership. Immigrants – people we believe to be created in the image of God – have been called “vermin,” “scum,” and ‘garbage” who are “poisoning our blood.” They have been

declared rapists, sex-traffickers, and gangsters, though we know that the vast majority of immigrants, regardless of how they got here, are none of these. They are simply desirous of security and opportunity for themselves and their families – the same motivations that prompted many of our ancestors to come to this country. Few of them can honestly be characterized as the "worst of the worst."

Whatever policies we promote in addressing their presence, promoting those policies by misrepresenting and dehumanizing other human beings is always reprehensible. It creates fear – not just among immigrants, but citizens of color. Such rhetoric calls into question the assertion that this is just about enforcing the law, and it is connected to the harsh, sometimes callous tactics we have seen. It must be condemned and rejected by followers of Jesus who warned us that speaking of others with disdain is related to murder and is damnable (Matthew 5:21-22).

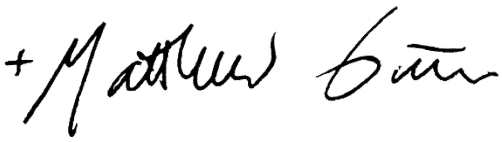
We know these people. Having them spoken of with disdain is offensive. Some of them are members of our congregations. Some are our neighbors. Others are people our congregations minister to – through Episcopal Migration Ministries, World Relief, or through one of our many feeding, clothing, and housing ministries. They are the very ones Jesus explicitly commanded us to care for. Episcopalians in Wisconsin will continue to care for the needy and vulnerable. We will advocate for them. In some circumstances, we might be called upon to protect them.

At our diocesan convention last October, I said we are called to be lightning on the horizon. As Christians, we have no choice but to stand with the poor and the vulnerable, to stand for mercy and compassion, for peace against violence, for truth against falsehood. We must do so with humility, ready to repent when we get things wrong and hold ourselves accountable. Not everyone is called to do the same thing. But I call on you to do something.

- Pray.
- Join peaceful demonstrations in your communities. Do it boldly – but in the way of Jesus – peacefully, with love toward those whose actions you are protesting.
- Consider donating to World Relief or ministries in your community that offer aid to those in need.
- Contact your legislators.
- If you disagree with what I have written here, I still urge you to pray.

Remember that we are resurrection people who trust that God is indeed working all things for good. Truth and love will prevail in the end because our Lord is Truth and Love.

Under the Mercy,



The Right Reverend Matthew Gunter
Bishop of Wisconsin
The Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin